Calling Changes by Name: The Massachusetts Family Viewed through an Onomastic Lens, 1660-1860

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Abstract

This study addresses the unique naming patterns found among Massachusetts families from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth and connects the changes in these patterns to broader shifts in religious and cultural beliefs. One scholar described names as “an ideal cultural metric,” because they are universal (everyone has one), usually permanent (few people change them), and can easily be tracked across space and time using birth records. Naming reflects the intentions and ideals of the namer rather than the named, but has a psychological effect on both. Parents must adhere to what society considers acceptable for the sake of their children. The types of names used and the relatives who acted as namesakes provide insight into parental expectations for their children, the differences imposed by gender roles, and the relationship between members of the family.

Earlier scholars analyzed New England naming, especially that of the first Puritan settlers, beginning in the nineteenth century. Most focused on the families in a single town, and examined either the descent of names from parents and grandparents or the types of names parents chose, not both. This study focuses on a branching network of one thousand, four hundred children in two hundred and twenty-five families, spanning two hundred years, and covering much of eastern Massachusetts. It embraces a wider circle of possible namesakes (including parents’ siblings), which affects the timing and scale of the decline of familial names. It also treats non-familial names in distinct categories, in order to better analyze parents’ selections, adding greater complexity to the general progression of name types.
observed by previous students of New England names. Additionally, this study considers the written accounts of twenty-five men and women who recorded the logic guiding the selection of names for seventy children.

These sources facilitated an investigation of the intersection of names and belief systems in three specific areas over time: the balance of familial and non-familial names, and variation within those categories; the names of the dead, and their relation to gravestone iconography and concerns about the afterlife; and the different name choices for boys and girls in conjunction with their expected gender roles. Familial naming and the use of the Old Testament as the primary source of names both started to decline in the late 18th century, and continued into the 19th century, but the reasons driving these changes are more complex than simple secularization or individualization would suggest.
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Introduction

The term 'onomastics' designates the study of naming patterns, and includes in its scope anything someone can assign a name to. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines it as “the science or study of the origins and forms of words... [especially] of proper names of people and places.”\(^1\) Some earlier scholars preferred to refer to their work as ‘onomatology,’ a roughly analogous descriptor that has fallen out of favor in recent years.\(^2\) Although related to both linguistics and philology, onomastics differs in its emphasis on the cultural standards and beliefs guiding the act of naming - an act by its nature both public and personal. One scholar distinguished names from other cultural indicators as “a free commodity, the consumption of which is obligatory.”\(^3\)

Naming is an act of considerable import. It has psychological implications for both the namer and the named. Parents bestow names on their children at birth, and, in most cases, they retain those given names until death.\(^4\) While naming does entail a certain degree of personal choice, it also reflects the community’s social norms.\(^5\) The name-giver must operate within the constraints of existing cultural ideology or else risk criticism, effectively encouraging conservatism for the sake of the child.\(^6\) When analyzed collectively, naming patterns reflect a society’s guidelines for acceptable choices. By choosing to use a name with existing cultural significance parents imply

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\(^2\) For relative frequencies of the two terms, I consulted the Google Books Ngram Viewer, searching books in English from 1500-2008, with smoothing of 1:


\(^4\) There are, of course, exceptions. Those relevant to this study can be found in Massachusetts, Office of the Secretary of State, *List of Persons Whose Names have been Changed in Massachusetts, 1780-1892* (Boston: Wright and Potter, printers, 1893).


their consent and approval of that meaning, just as the use of a familial name acknowledges the connection to a particular relative. The types of names used and their relative proportions in the completed family at different moments in time offer a window into the parents’ beliefs about the role of children as a part of the family, expected gender roles, and the role of the name itself in relation to the individual. Changes in these patterns illustrate a widescale shift in collective values, reflecting deeper cultural trends. For this reason, one scholar described names as an “ideal cultural metric,” characterized by “sensitivity; ubiquity; durability; simplicity; purity; and accessibility.”

That such changes occurred in New England is an uncontested fact. Earlier studies have demonstrated the changing character of name selection in Concord, Hingham, and Charlemont, Massachusetts, and Guilford, Connecticut, among others. My own examination of Massachusetts naming patterns, while genealogical rather than geographical in scope, traced many trends similar in shape to those previously observed. Additionally, all of these researchers have established the distinctiveness of New England onomastics, which emerged, *sui generis*, in the colonies’ first decades. Naturally, the types of names assigned and relatives named for did not remain static, but why did the character of New England naming change in certain

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ways at specific points in time? If names serve as an index of popular beliefs, then the timing of change should align with other observed ideological turning points.

At root, naming exemplifies the interplay of social acceptability and personal choice and the balance of these forces in people’s lives. Each name represents a single expression of parental choice. When considered together, they mirror the community’s collective mentality. Relatively few parents recorded the logic behind their onomastic choices for posterity. Only through quantitative analysis of a large number of families can one tease out a cohesive picture from the disparate strands. This, in turn, depends on genealogical knowledge of the family of origin and its antecedents, as well as the time and place of name bestowal. The process of family reconstitution requires scrutiny of the birth families of the generation prior to the children whose names are under consideration - no simple feat. Once identified, these details provide the context to situate each nuclear family in relation to the wider community and across successive generations.

Examining the onomastic selections of Massachusetts parents revealed three distinct periods of change. The first occurred at the beginning, setting the Puritans apart from their forebears in England and also from other English colonists. For New England’s first Puritan settlers, religion played a critical part in the choice of names, as it guided so many other facets of their lives. By naming children for themselves and other pious relatives, and by giving them names drawn from the Old Testament, these parents firmly established their place in the community of believers. Onomastic continuity served as a reminder of the need to strive for salvation, linking to children to role models who exhibited godly virtues.

The second shift came in the second half of the eighteenth century, overturning the established practices that had stood largely unchanged for more than a century. As the rational ideas of Enlightenment thinkers joined with the fervent revivals of the

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Great Awakening, many New Englanders embraced a new world-view. Trusting in God’s love and mercy, they placed greater emphasis on the role of the individual in his or her own salvation. Children no longer needed a connection to an antecedent of assured piety to stake a claim to heavenly reward. Parents could now turn to other sources for names. New Testament choices and the names of non-biblical saints became common as time had weakened their connection with the Catholic tradition the Puritans had sought to repudiate. These characters reflected the personal religious commitment that eighteenth century people admired. Additionally, the Republican ideology surrounding the American Revolution weakened the grip of patriarchal authority, giving mothers greater responsibility for the instruction of their children. As women played a greater role in the selection of names, their choices grew more innovative, especially for daughters.

The opening decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a sharpening of the trends that began in the century before. The evangelical Protestantism of the Second Great Awakening made salvation accessible to all. Parents came to view their children as inherently innocent, and naming lost much of its religious significance as they turned to secular sources. A reduction in completed family size allowed these parents to devote more time and energy to each child, resulting in greater respect for individual uniqueness. Familial naming declined, and the purpose of such namesakes shifted from continuity to commemoration. The growing popularity of the ‘Cult of Domesticity’ gave mothers unprecedented power in the home and reoriented the definition of family from extended kin to the nuclear unit in a single household. Now mothers took over the task of naming their offspring, and they selected names for sons and daughters based on the separate spheres they would occupy as adults. Additionally, rising literacy and the spread of print culture presented parents with a variety of new names to choose from. No longer confined to familiar Biblical
characters, the name pool grew to include prominent men and women on both sides of
the Atlantic, as well as the heroes and heroines of Romantic literature.

No single factor defined the transitions in New England naming, nor was its
path inevitable. Overall, Massachusetts parents shifted their choices from familial and
Biblical to non-familial and secular, but the data defy such generalization. Throughout
the time period under study, parents selected names that aligned with their value
systems, even as those values changed. A closer look at the forces guiding name
selection provides insight into the complex onomastic reality.
Historiography

Before embarking on an explanation of my decisions regarding the organization and structure of my own study of names, necessity requires me to situate the new study in the context of previous works on the subject. A cursory examination of the vital records for any Massachusetts town quickly makes clear the repetition of names among those with the same surname.¹ Flipping through any one of the many published genealogies reveals the transmission of names matrilineally as well as patrilineally, and also a general shift in the types of names bestowed across the generations. From this informal entree into the realm of New England naming, logically, I turned to more scholarly works on the subject.

Charles Wareing Bardsley first described the peculiarly Puritan commitment to Biblical names as “the Hebrew invasion.” Technically, he referred to an upswell in use of both Old and, to a lesser extent, New Testament names at the expense of those deemed “Pagan and Popish” in the wake of the English Reformation.² The spread of such names, he contended, hinged on the availability of the Geneva Bible after 1560, and was matched by a concurrent decline in the use of nicknames and diminutives.³ He found the so-called Puritan “eccentricities” (those names evocative of a certain virtue or expressing a command) particularly fascinating, attributing them to the desire to signal one’s religious nonconformity, as well as the influence of particular clergymen.⁴ He mentioned American given names only briefly, in the context of Puritan emigrants.⁵

¹ For this I am particularly indebted to the Massachusetts Vital Records to 1850 series, affectionately known as the ‘Tan Books.’ They are readily available at most public libraries in Massachusetts, and some have been digitized and placed online.
³ Bardsley, Curiosities, 49-54, 59-63, 76-78, 82-83. He did find a partial resurgence of nicknames during the Commonwealth period and Cromwellian Protectorate; see pp. 90-92.
⁴ Bardsley, Curiosities, 118-119, 126-127, 138-139, 155-156, 166-169. Among the latter type he classed the hyphenated hortatory names, such as “Praise-God” and “Hate-Evil.”
⁵ Bardsley, Curiosities, 201-212.
Overall, Bardsley took an exploratory rather than a systematic approach, furnishing the precedents for New England naming in the Old World. Drawing on selected vital records and literary works, he illustrated changes in English onomastics without documenting the numbers. While his examples prove the presence of heretofore unknown names, they do not speak to the prevalence of the Anglican majority. Nor did he attempt to place the new names into a chronological or geographical progression. Despite arguing that these names followed the spread of Puritan zeal and the preaching of individual clerics, Bardsley offered no suggestions as to why different ministers might have popularized particular names.

Donald Lines Jacobus brought the study of Puritan onomastics across the Atlantic in 1923. Echoing Bardsley’s reasoning for their rejection of most traditional English names, he explained known exceptions as evidence of commitment to familial custom or a specific relative. He portrayed the popularity of Old Testament names in New England in religious terms, highlighting the importance of a name’s connotations to account for the predominance of some names and the rarity of others. Yet Jacobus glossed over the continued use of the perennial New Testament favorites: John, James, and Thomas, describing them as “thoroughly Anglicized.” He noted the division of names signifying moral qualities according to sex, speculating on the concurrent definitions of male and female virtue. By the middle of the eighteenth century, he observed, the traditional English names were returning, along with a host of new monikers culled from literature, at the expense of Biblical selections. These changes, he proposed, resulted from a combination of deviation from Puritan

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7 Jacobus, “Nomenclature,” 10-11. This explanation for the perseverance of certain New Testament names seems contradictory, as his argument for the prevalence of Old Testament names hinges on the Puritan desire to distance themselves from the Anglican Church and the traditional English names. Perhaps he meant to imply a sense of cultural reappropriation.
8 Jacobus, “Nomenclature,” 11-12.
orthodoxy, increased contact with Britain and the other colonies, and a rise in literacy.\(^9\)

Without citations, Jacobus’ remarks lack measurable applicability. His reputation as the father of modern genealogical scholarship lends credence to the accuracy of the individual cases mentioned, but leaves in question whether they mirror name usage in New England more generally.\(^{10}\) Jacobus’ illustrative approach served to humanize the Puritans, but left more thorough examination of the phenomenon of their names to future scholars. He set the tone for later studies, paying close attention to gender separations and carefully excluding later, non-English immigrants.

In 1948, George Rippey Stewart published the first quantitative study of personal names in Massachusetts, focusing on the male settlers of Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay colony, and the first few generations of their descendants.\(^{11}\) He relied on a comparative approach, tabulating the names of a portion of the boys born in London in the middle of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and juxtaposing these with the names of adult male settlers of Massachusetts and their descendants born in Boston and Plymouth colony prior to the eighteenth century.\(^{12}\) His data revealed a modest increase in the incidence of Biblical names in mid-seventeenth century London, mirrored by the early immigrants to Massachusetts. Among the children and grandchildren of these immigrants, however, Biblical names, especially those from the Old Testament, comprised an overwhelming majority.\(^{13}\) Stewart detected a range of local variation across Massachusetts towns, as well as a periodic


\(^{10}\) David L. Greene, “Donald Lines Jacobus, Scholarly Genealogy, and The American Genealogist,” The American Genealogist, 72, Nos. 3-4 (July/October 1997): 159-180, especially 159-160. As founder of the New Haven Genealogical Magazine, later The American Genealogist, Jacobus read widely of early Connecticut records, which likely formed the basis of this article.


\(^{12}\) Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 110-112, 115. Stewart asserted that the London data was representative of English naming before and after the ideological impact of the English Reformation and the rise of Puritanism, since the city was “a focus of Puritanism.”

\(^{13}\) Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 118-119. This contradicted Bardsley’s declaration that Biblical names predominated after the Reformation.
ebb and flow over the years, which he attributed to generational periodicity and the influence of individual ministers.\textsuperscript{14} He counted virtue names, which he termed “English Meaningfuls,” as a tiny segment of the onomastic body, yet stressed the importance of meaning to a name’s popularity.\textsuperscript{15} Seventeenth century Massachusetts parents, he concluded, favored names from the Old Testament, preferably Hebrew, belonging to characters in good standing, and without ties to the Catholic church.

Compared to earlier scholarship, Stewart’s methodology is impressively scientific. His dissection of particular names, with attention to both the actions of the Biblical originator and the Hebrew meaning, reveals the characteristics Puritan parents hoped to evoke in their children.\textsuperscript{16} However, the absence of female names from his work is striking.\textsuperscript{17} Also, Stewart’s analysis only counted fluctuations in the frequency of individual names over time, not of the different name types, obscuring the timing of changes in onomastic tradition.\textsuperscript{18} Similarly, he downplayed the differences in naming between Boston and Plymouth, discounting any possible cultural significance.

Thirty years later, Stewart compiled a dictionary of American names, with a history of their use as well as meaning and origin.\textsuperscript{19} In the prefatory essay, he outlined the history of naming among English-speaking people, from the Anglo-Saxons to twentieth-century America.\textsuperscript{20} Recapitulating many of his earlier assertions regarding

\textsuperscript{14} Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 120-122. He defined generations at twenty year intervals.

\textsuperscript{15} Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 124-132. He rejected the idea that parents blindly selected Biblical names at random, though he commented on the “numbers game” of Biblical naming, noting that Old Testament names are more numerous than New Testament ones. Sheer statistical chance would make the former more common, but the favoritism of particular Old Testament names suggested otherwise.


\textsuperscript{17} Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 109, 124. He collected data on female names as well, but assumed that the same conclusions would apply to them as to men’s names. He did comment on the greater frequency of virtue names among girls born in Plymouth compared to their male counterparts.

\textsuperscript{18} Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 119-121, especially note 6. He does go a step beyond Daniel Kilham Dodge, who he cited as focusing on New England names in toto, without distinction between the first settlers and their descendants. Dodge concluded from an examination of the most popular names among New England Puritans, that there was no significant divergence from earlier practice. For Dodge’s full analysis, see “Puritan Names,” \textit{The New England Quarterly}, 1, No. 4 (October 1928): 467-475.


\textsuperscript{20} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 3-10.
New England names, he added a comparable description of female names, and applied similar analysis to other regions of colonial America.\textsuperscript{21} Examining the names of Harvard undergraduates in the eighteenth century, he found Old Testament names replaced by New Testament ones, as well as traditional English names, names made famous by notable individuals, and a smattering drawn from classical literature.\textsuperscript{22} Stewart depicted nineteenth century naming as a natural continuation of the previous century, marked by the widespread use of middle names, the abandonment of most Old Testament names, and correspondent growth in the incidence of New Testament and Norman names, among others.\textsuperscript{23} In the twentieth century, he found even greater variety, with the chaos of original (invented) names and a growing selection of ethnic appellations.\textsuperscript{24} Stewart’s collection of personal names represented the first serious academic attempt at documenting and defining the idiosyncrasies of American onomastics.\textsuperscript{25} Although brief, his introduction to the history of naming in the United States provided a valuable assessment of the link between names and folk culture.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{21} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 12-21. These ethnic customs included: Dutch in New York, German in Pennsylvania, African among slaves, traditional English in the Virginia colony, and Scots-Irish along the frontier, prefiguring the distinctive regional cultures presented by Fischer in \textit{Albion’s Seed}. Lists of the first settlers of Roanoke and Jamestown served as counterpoint to the list of early Massachusetts men.

\textsuperscript{22} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 22-27. Stewart turned to marriage registers in an effort to document women’s names, and relied on Continental Army muster rolls and lists of Princeton students as a basis of regional comparison.

\textsuperscript{23} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 28-35. The revival of Anglo-Saxon names and increasing use of surnames as given names increased the list of possible choices.

\textsuperscript{24} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 37-42. The twentieth century lies outside the scope of my investigation. I mention Stewart’s attention to it only to give a sense of ongoing change.


\textsuperscript{26} Stewart was a founding member of the American Name Society in 1951 and edited their journal, \textit{Names}, for several years. He (and those who followed him) found the reasons for naming a more compelling subject than the etymology. See William Bright, “George Rippey Stewart,” in \textit{Who Was Who in North American Name Study} (American Name Society, 23 November, 2007) http://wtsn.binghamton.edu/onoma/Default.htm#Stewart (Accessed 16 September 2013).
Shortly before Stewart completed his dictionary, David W. Dumas delved further into the onomastic practices of New Englanders in the antebellum Republic. Focusing on the descendants of the early English colonists, he avoided the complication of later immigrants by selecting Charlemont, Massachusetts, a rural town in the western part of the state, and largely free of non-English residents. Dumas sampled the names of children born in three decades: 1780-1789, 1810-1819, and 1840-1849, without respect to familial affiliation, and tabulated separate results for boys and girls. He traced the precipitous decline in Biblical names, sharper between the first two periods than the second, and steeper for boys than girls. From these results, Dumas argued for the loss of religious fervor among the descendants of the Puritans, as first the neoclassical revival of the Early Republic, and later British cultural faddism claimed sway over New England naming habits.

At first glance, Dumas’ onomastic case study seems to follow in Stewart’s footsteps, yet he offered no indication of familiarity with Stewart’s work. While Dumas classed names from the Old Testament, New Testament, and those roughly analogous to Stewart’s “Meaningfuls” separately, he preserved this distinction only in the raw data, omitting it from the accompanying tables and charts. By choosing such a small, isolated community as his focus, he limited the generalizability of his results. Charlemont experienced little migration for the period under consideration and lacked religious divisions. Although these factors allowed for a simpler model, they defy the complexity displayed throughout most of New England during these years, presenting

29 Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 201-202. Traditional English names resurged to take their place, and classical names gained early on, only to fade later, especially among boys.
30 Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 201, 203. The end of the War of 1812 firmly established American independence, making the adoption of British fashions less threatening to the new nation’s identity.
31 He utilized many of the same name categories as Stewart, limited his focus to New England, and repeated the connection between name choice and ideology; but neither the text nor the footnotes make any mention of Stewart.
a sanitized portrait.\textsuperscript{32}

In the early 1980s, John J. Waters carried out a study of the naming patterns of colonial Guilford, Connecticut.\textsuperscript{33} Acknowledging the cultural significance of names, he examined families reconstituted from a list of taxpayers between 1732 and 1740.\textsuperscript{34} Concerned primarily with the nuances of Biblically inspired names, Waters associated them with the Puritan commitment to the “new Israel,” and connected their signification with the values Puritan parents projected onto their children.\textsuperscript{35} He also documented the tradition of naming children for their parents, though the number was higher for males than females. From the data, Waters isolated four fundamental patterns of naming: “bilateral” (repeating names of parents and grandparents), nuclear (perpetuating parental names only), “biblical virtue” (bestowing names of religious significance, and only one parent), and “eclectic” (using a mix of Biblical and non-Biblical, none from kin).\textsuperscript{36} He stressed the simultaneous presence of these varied traditions, coupled with the sheer number of extant given names, as evidence of the creative, dynamic fusion of religious injunctions with conventional English practice.\textsuperscript{37}

Waters situated his evaluation of Guilford onomastics within a broader framework of sociocultural analysis.\textsuperscript{38} Although he recognized the limitations of his

\textsuperscript{32} Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 204-210.


\textsuperscript{34} Waters, “Naming and Kinship,” 162-163. That is not to say that the children received their names during the 1730s, only that the male heads of household appeared on the rolls in at least one of those years.


\textsuperscript{36} Waters, “Naming and Kinship,” 172-174. Of the 123 families reconstituted, only 97 included information about the grandparents of the children named. The percentages of families following each of the four systems were, respectively, 42\%, 31\%, 21\%, and 6\%.

\textsuperscript{37} Waters, “Naming and Kinship,” 174-176.

\textsuperscript{38} He cited two of his other papers on the historical population of Guilford. Waters was the first trained historian to publish a study of New England naming, affiliated with the University of Rochester. Jacobus held a Master’s degree in English, Stewart a PhD in the same; Dumas earned a Master’s in Classics. See, respectively, Greene, “Jacobus,” 160, Bright, “George Rippey Stewart,” and University of Rhode Island Special Collections and Archives, University of Rhode Island Library, “Guide to the David W. Dumas Papers, 1982-1998 (Mss. Gr. 151).” www.uri.edu/library/special_collections/political_papers/msg151.xml (accessed 4 September 2013).
data, both in terms of sample size and bias towards the propertied, wealthy members of society, Waters failed to recognize the problems inherent in his comparison with Virginia onomastics. Distilling his results to a snapshot in time, he acknowledged change only by stating that the first settlers discarded undesirable “royal and papal” names. Additionally, he created a separate category for names that occurred in both the Old and New Testament (which held most of the Biblical names he recorded), obscuring parental preference for one over the other. From the simultaneous existence of the four systems of naming, Waters concluded that onomastic conventions were in transition in mid-eighteenth century Guilford.

Daniel Scott Smith’s first printed investigation of New England naming appeared in his doctoral dissertation on Hingham, Massachusetts, families in the early 1970s. He proposed that naming held key significance for understanding demographic change over time. Following overwhelming reliance on Biblical names in the seventeenth century, he marked an increase in non-Biblical names after 1740 (more pronounced among boys than girls). Although he found a concurrent drop in the proportion of first children named for parents and grandparents, the most striking downturn in familial naming came in the mid-nineteenth century. Showing the connection between names and social trends, he conjoined these trends, and the rise in middle names, with the fertility transition and the individuation of children. Wealth, he observed, affected the transmission of familial names, with richer men naming more

41 Daniel Scott Smith, “Population, Family, and Society in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635-1880” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1976). Naming was only one of the patterns Smith delineated, as he sought to explain changes in demographics, social structure, and familial relations.
of their children for kin; this practice shifted in the nineteenth century, when poorer families more frequently named the first daughter for her grandmother than rich ones. From this, he posited that parents hoped for financial gain (as a bequest) from the namesake, but cautioned that elite status might also encourage conservatism.\(^{45}\)

Smith’s research design aimed to connect onomastic change and shrinking family size, postulating a symbolic link with the shift from “traditional” to “modern” family orientation (lineal and extended to nuclear and conjugal).\(^{46}\) Naming served as one marker of this change. Since Smith was modelling a broad conceptual framework, he equated the decline of Biblical names with secularization, without seeking other markers of religious change.\(^{47}\) From the class differential in familial naming he concluded that the use of such names reflected efforts at parental control, and thus their decline signalled the crumbling of parental authority over their adult children. However, this did not fully account for the nineteenth-century anomaly of girls named for their grandmothers.\(^{48}\) Finally, Smith contended that the appearance of middle names weakened the passage of familial epithets; the child might share a middle name with a relative, but only the immediate family would know that.\(^{49}\) In his effort to fit naming into major demographic shifts, Smith overlooked other plausible causes of onomastic change.

Smith focused solely on tabulation and analysis of given names in a separate

\(^{45}\) Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 318-322, 344. The tradition of naming a son for his father proved the exception to this pattern, cutting across socioeconomic lines in its pervasiveness.


\(^{47}\) Smith, Population, Family, and Society,” 258.

\(^{48}\) Smith, Population, Family, and Society,” 318, 320. Smith argued that this preference for passing on the names of female relatives stemmed from a parental desire to align themselves with those relatives more likely to offer material assistance.

\(^{49}\) Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 343. There is no reason to believe the bestowal of a family name as middle name would be any less clear to the extended family and friends than that of a first name.
paper, published in 1985, revolutionizing the field with its scope and its reach.\(^{50}\)

Guarding against the inclusion of later immigrants of non-English ancestry, he counted only the descendants of families who resided in Hingham prior to 1800. He expanded on his earlier conclusions to address the practice of assigning necronyms (the names of previously deceased children born to the same parents).\(^{51}\) Examining the small set of seventeenth-century parents who did not have a namesake child, he found that most had non-Biblical names.\(^{52}\) From his data, he distilled a set of rules governing the naming of children: each living child must receive a different name, a man had the exclusive right to pass his name to a son, and, by extension, boys were much more likely to share their names with a maternal grandfather than a paternal one.\(^{53}\) From the decline in familial names in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Smith deduced that parents came to recognize them as unique individuals rather than parts of the collective.\(^{54}\) Defying a linear progression from traditionalism to modernity, he found the shift away from Biblical names and the widening of the name pool did not synch with the decline of familial naming.\(^{55}\)


\(^{51}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 543-546. This practice was more pronounced among children named for a parent, and reached its zenith in the eighteenth century.

\(^{52}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 544. This suggested that religious concerns trumped familial ones.

\(^{53}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 546, 551-553. Smith found a single exception to the first rule. For other (rare) instances of same name siblings, see John G. Hunt and Donald Lines Jacobus, “Brothers and Sisters of the Same Given Names,” *The American Genealogist*, 36 (1959): 158-159, and Jacobus, “Siblings of Identical Names,” *The American Genealogist*, 37 (1960): 62-63. It should be noted that most of these cases involved families where one parent died, and the surviving spouse remarried and had more children, i.e. most same-name siblings were actually half-siblings. The sole prerogative applied only to sons, not daughters.

\(^{54}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 556-557.

\(^{55}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 559-560.
Although Smith’s approach to New England names was much more thorough than earlier studies, he recognized the need for additional research to determine the extent of the patterns. Significantly, his analysis of parental motives privileged first children of each sex over later ones, despite the persistence of large families into the late eighteenth century; the choice to give the name of a relative to a child indicated a desire to mark the connection, regardless of birth order. Additionally, Smith calculated the percentages of Biblical and non-Biblical names with no regard for whether or not children shared those names with kin, clouding the motivation behind the choice.

In a companion piece to his analysis of names, Smith delineated the methodology that guided his work. Stressing the differences in naming across cultures, he emphasized the link between attitudes and behaviors. When gathering names, he highlighted the importance of exact recording, keeping variant forms separate for later analysis. He defined the concept of “at-risk” kin with regards to naming - those known relatives who could share their names with the child. Additionally, he warned against overstating name sharing due to the popularity of a relatively small list of given names. Interpretation of the meaning of change, he concluded, could only follow understanding of the shape of change, which required

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57 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 545, 559. He does mention the disjunct between the decline of Biblical names and that of naming for relatives in the text.


59 Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 17-19. He found the variant onomastic traditions of Protestants, and even Puritans, significant.

60 Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 19-22. In this context, popularity referred not to voiced public opinion regarding a particular name, but to its sheer statistical frequency within a population. Popularity could induce parents to select a given name irrespective of whether or not another family member shared it, and this would skew the percentages of children with familial names by calling into question the motive for assigning those names.
meticulous documentation.\footnote{Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 24-25.}

While intended as instructions for onomastic investigation in general, this served to outline Smith’s own study of names. Heeding his advice about variant forms, he combined them when assessing familial naming, but counted only the full name in the calculations for Biblical naming.\footnote{Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 19.} This dealt with the problem of intended meaning without addressing the reason for using a nickname - was it just a pet form or was it meant as a name in it’s own right? Further, his caution against overstating the practice of naming for kin on account of the popularity of certain names complicated the comparison New England naming to other regions, where the concentration of children holding the most common names was higher.\footnote{Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 22.} Simple probability increased the likelihood of name-sharing, but parents still chose namesakes.

Answering Smith’s call for additional local studies of New England naming patterns, David Hackett Fischer used Concord, Massachusetts as a case study.\footnote{David Hackett Fischer, “Forenames and the Family in New England: An Exercise in Historical Onomastics,” in Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History, eds. Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Ralph J. Crandall (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 215-241. This work had been available previously in Chronos 1 (Brandeis University, Fall 1981): 76-111. Unlike Smith’s “Child-Naming Patterns,” it seems not to have circulated widely prior to the second publication - according to WorldCat, only three libraries hold copies of Chronos http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/8612687 (Accessed 15 September 2013). Fischer’s reconstitution data came from a series of undergraduate projects on Concord, which he supervised during the 1973-4 academic year. See David Hackett Fischer, ed., Concord: The Social History of a New England Town, 1750-1850 (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University, 1983) 1-13.} Stressing the dynamism of naming, he defined alternating periods of abrupt radical change and gradual developments that followed in New England.\footnote{Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 217-231.} Like Smith, Fischer traced the passage of names through the family, but he placed greater emphasis on the types of names, like Stewart.\footnote{Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 217-231.} While the timing of Fischer’s observations closely followed those of Smith, they differed on the specifics of

\footnote{The first such change came with the first settlers, the second in the years preceding the American Revolution. Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 217-219, 224, 232-233.}\footnote{In addition to Biblical names, he discussed “Teutonic” names (equivalent to Stewart’s English traditionals), Grace/hortatory names, and new inventions.}
magnitude and timing. Moreover, he identified a shift in the balance of name sharing in the nineteenth century from paternal to maternal kin, echoed only weakly among Smith’s Hingham families. Going one step beyond Smith’s isolation of the disjunct between the “traditional” and the “modern” family, Fischer found that changes in naming did not coincide with industrialization, urbanization, or increased immigration.

Unfortunately, Fischer offered no comment on the presence or absence of non-English families in his Concord data set. Since the trajectory of onomastic change in Concord roughly paralleled that of Hingham, relative uniformity seems likely. Unlike Stewart, he asserted that some parents chose names at random, citing the examples of “Notwithstanding Griswold” and “Maybe Barnes.” Additionally, Fischer suggested that parents matched names to their social standing, he found the names of Biblical patriarchs and kings relatively scarce, yet both Smith and Waters documented these names in much higher frequencies. In short, the differences Fischer described cautioned against assumptions of a monolithic New England onomastic tradition.

Fischer reiterated many of his earlier conclusions about the unique nature of the naming pattern adopted by New England’s first Puritan settlers in Albion’s Seed. Delineating New England’s peculiarities in contrast to the other regional cultures of British North America, he pointed to origins in the area’s East Anglian heritage.

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67 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 225-227 (notes 20, 21, and 23). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table 2) and 549 (Table 3). Parental naming was never as common in Concord as in Hingham, and its decline was well underway by 1800. Likewise, naming for grandparents was more popular among eighteenth century Concord families, but dropped more sharply in the nineteenth century. Concord families also rejected the practice of using necronyms earlier than their Hingham counterparts.
70 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 219. He likely borrowed this idea from Jacobus, who used the same examples in “Nomenclature,” 11-13.
71 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 220-221. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 565 (Appendix 1); Waters, “Naming and Kinship,” 169 (Table 3). Since Fischer mentions a wealth bias associated with these names, it is possible that the reconstituted families of Hingham and Guilford skew more towards the upper class than those of Concord, but the presence in both cases of such names in the top 15 suggests otherwise.
rationalizing the rarity of hyphenated hortatory names since they were favored by Sussex Puritans. Fischer also highlighted the importance of the absence of godparents among the Puritans to the popularity of parental names. Though not intended as a thorough onomastic analysis, this work illustrated the potential implications of naming for a study of regional belief systems and fit them into a broader context. Also, the comparative format of Albion's Seed invited further investigation of names as one aspect of distinctive local culture.

After the flurry of scholarly interest in naming patterns in the 1970s and 1980s, the study of New England names experienced a brief lull; this ended in 1994, when Smith’s final paper appeared. To paint a broader picture of Massachusetts names than that drawn from the Hingham data, he scrutinized the 1771 tax lists of eighty-four towns (supplemented with the names of female taxpayers from an additional fifty-eight communities), he tied the diversity of naming across individual towns to the persistence of particular names in certain families. He observed less concentration of among Massachusetts names than among the English, yet the top ten men’s and women’s names still accounted for a majority of the population. Biblical names still

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74 Fischer, Albion's Seed, 96,310. Godparents were frequently namesakes among Anglican children. See also, Rutman and Rutman, “In Nomine Avi,” 249-252.


76 Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity, 68-70. These tax lists include communities in Maine, which was then part of Massachusetts, and identified 14, 496 males and 363 females.

77 Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 71-73. The exact figures were, respectively, forty-six and sixty-eight percent. Smith referred to Withycombe's Dictionary of Names, which stated that the top three male and female names in England accounted for more than half of the population.
ruled the day, but some of the English traditional names had returned.\textsuperscript{78} Aside from slight variation in the incidence of particular names from one town to the next, the system of Massachusetts onomastics was largely homogeneous.\textsuperscript{79} Furthermore, names did not correlate with wealth, since there was wide variation between bearers of the same name.\textsuperscript{80} Within individual towns, men who shared their surnames with many others were more likely to bear less common given names, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{81}

Testing the frequency of particular names against geographic, economic, and demographic differences, Smith recorded an absence of systematic variation and concluded that these factors did not impact naming.\textsuperscript{82} However, he admitted the data was too sparse to allow a definitive conclusion in the event that the status signification of a given name in one town reversed that found in another.\textsuperscript{83} Finally, Smith proposed that the lack of class distinctions in the naming pattern indicated that “names lacked meaning to those who did the naming.”\textsuperscript{84} This intuitive leap makes sense only if one believes onomastic choice should reflect such differences, discounting other possible mechanisms.

Gloria Main contributed to the conversation about New England naming with a broad survey of families found in published genealogies from the early colonial period

\textsuperscript{78} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 74-80. The latter occurred more frequently in towns where the concentration of people sharing the most popular names was higher. Statewide, William was the only non-Biblical choice in the top fifteen, and Jane, the most popular non-Biblical female name, tied for seventeenth place. Smith linked the variance in name type across towns to the influx of Scots-Irish immigrants to certain parts of New England in the mid-eighteenth century. See Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 606-609, 633-637 for the timing and distribution of these immigrants, and 683-686 for their onomastic customs. In a rebuttal to critics of \textit{Albion’s Seed}, Fischer specifically mentioned the cultural life of these “backcountry” settlers in a handful of New England towns in “Albion and the Critics: Further Evidence and Reflection,” \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, 3rd ser., 48, No. 2 (April 1991): 301.

\textsuperscript{79} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 80-85. Specific variants included the prevalence of Aaron, Moses, and Eleazar along the Connecticut River, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob among Middlesex County men.

\textsuperscript{80} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 86.

\textsuperscript{81} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 88-89.

\textsuperscript{82} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 85.

\textsuperscript{83} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 86-87. The scarcity of women in the data set prevented any generalization of regional differences in their names.

\textsuperscript{84} Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 91.
to the brink of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{85} Main divided the families based on their residence during their child-bearing years.\textsuperscript{86} Like Smith, she placed special significance on the names of firstborn children, but her data set revealed a far lower incidence of parental names than Smith’s or Fischer’s for the seventeenth century. Conversely, she noted a larger share of children bearing the names of their grandparents, although the use of both declined over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{87} Challenging both Fischer’s argument that New England naming followed the dominant East Anglian practice, and the idea that it was distinctly Puritan, she demonstrated a range of local variety.\textsuperscript{88} Affirming Stewart’s conclusions about the popularity of Biblical names for children not named for kin, Main marked their persistence at high levels until the middle decades of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{89} Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Main explained, shrinking family size coupled with the proliferation of new names to create greater diversity. Combining these observations with analysis of the meaning of specific names, she deduced changing gender roles from the divergent types of names parents selected for their sons and daughters.\textsuperscript{90}

By limiting her study of the transmission of familial names to firstborn children, Main precluded the inclusion of necronyms. While she argued that this narrow focus reduced the risk of overstating the use of family names due to large family size, she did

\textsuperscript{86} Main, “Naming Children,” 2, 27.
\textsuperscript{87} Main, “Naming Children,” 3-5, 12-14. The rate of parent to child name transmission among American-born New Englanders, she observed, was still three times higher than that in England. By the numbers, the percentage of girls named for their mothers was nearly the same as that sharing names with grandmothers by the marriage cohort of 1715-1734. A similar convergence among boys occurred in the generation preceding the American Revolution.
\textsuperscript{88} Main, “Naming Children,” 5-8.
\textsuperscript{89} Main, “Naming Children,” 15-17. She also commented on the use of hortatory/virtue names for girls more often than boys, and their demise concurrent with the downturn in Biblical naming. These names accounted for most of the differential in Biblical names for boys and girls prior to 1750.
\textsuperscript{90} Main, “Naming Children,” 20-25. Smaller families during these decades resulted from the fertility transition, discussed above.
admit the possibility for more nuanced comparison involving later children.\textsuperscript{91} Her rejection of the connection between New England custom and East Anglian antecedents ignored Fischer’s claims for cultural crystallization in the heart of the Massachusetts Bay colony.\textsuperscript{92} Instead, Main linked the bestowal of parental names with concerns about their baptism, yet left unclear the church membership status of the families in her data set.\textsuperscript{93} She also understated childhood mortality, significant for the imputed survival of children’s names.\textsuperscript{94} While Main introduced new ideas to the study of New England onomastics, she left plenty for future scholars to examine.

Turning back to the precursors of Puritan onomastics in early modern England, Scott Smith-Bannister penned a quantitative examination one hundred years after Bardsley’s qualitative work.\textsuperscript{95} Building on earlier English scholars, he constructed a data set drawn from parish registers, necessarily relying on sampling.\textsuperscript{96} Smith-

\textsuperscript{91} Main, “Naming Children,” 2-3, 14. She cited the Rutmans’ Virginia findings, wherein first children were more often named for grandparents, and later children for parents, saying that only 15-20\% of New England parents who shared their own names first named a second child after his or her grandparent.
\textsuperscript{92} Fischer, “Albion and the Critics,” 271-272. Main reconstructed the nominative preferences of Windsor, Wethersfield, New Haven, and Wallingford, Connecticut; Barnstable and Plymouth in the Plymouth Colony; part of Rhode Island; and Weymouth, Rowley, and Woodstock, Massachusetts (which later became part of Connecticut - See Clarence Winthrop Bowen, The Boundary Disputes of Connecticut (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882) 53-56, 60-64). Moreover, the collating of all pre-1700 births blurs any differences that could have emerged in successive generations.
\textsuperscript{93} Main, “Naming Children,” 10-12. She argued that naming for a parent acted like a half-way covenant, securing an inherited right to divine protection, which fit well with both Smith and Fischer’s reasoning for the origins of parent-centric naming (the absence of godparentage and application of covenant theology to the family, respectively). However, it does not account for Congregational particularism or the upswing in naming sons for fathers in the 1750s.
\textsuperscript{94} Main, “Naming Children,” 14-15. Main stated that Virginia parents lost one third to one half of their children, while parents in England and New England lost only one fifth or one sixth of theirs. While child mortality was certainly higher in Virginia, the accepted rate for New England is closer to thirty percent. In the seventeenth century, there was a sharp urban-rural differential, which diminished over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Peter Gregg Slater, Children in the New England Mind in Death and in Life (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977), 15-16; John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 65-66; and Maris A. Vinovskis, “Angels’ Heads and Weeping Willows: Death in Early America,” Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 86, No. 2 (October 1976): 279, 282, 284, 286.
\textsuperscript{96} Smith-Bannister, Names, 3-11, 19-21, 135. Among these is Tyacke, who stressed the fact that a name reflects the beliefs of the name giver, not necessarily of the name bearer. He also emphasized the narrow geographic and chronological popularity of Puritan hortatory and grace names. For his refutation of Bardsley, see “Popular Puritan Mentality,” 77-92.
Bannister addressed the sharing of names between children and family members (and godparents), the relationship between naming practices and social status, and the types of names bestowed. Rejecting many of Bardsley’s claims, he traced the rise in Biblical names to the seventeenth century, and found that the Puritan “eccentricities” as early as the 1530s. He concluded that changes in the percentage of children named for their parents and godparents accounted for most of the variation in English naming during this period.

Significantly, Smith-Bannister did not establish mutually exclusive categories of names. Thus, for example, he enumerated boys named John three times - once with “traditional English” names, once with saints’ names, and once with New Testament names. The nature of changes he sought to document required the establishment of such overlapping categories, but this does bear on the visual representation of the data. His calculations for name sharing only included parents, godparents, and previously deceased siblings from the same parish, though evidence of naming for other kin, especially paternal relatives, did figure into the discussion anecdotally.

Smith-Bannister touched on New England names only once, citing the Puritan tradition there as uniquely American.

Returning to the interplay between New England naming patterns and the fertility transition, J. David Hacker investigated the selection of names as an index of religious belief in nineteenth century America. Relying on statistical analysis of the

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97 Smith-Bannister, *Names*, 155-174, 181-182. This negated the attribution of such tendencies to the Henrician Reformation or the spread of the Geneva Bible. Further, the “eccentricities” were never a majority. The data set begins in 1538, the result of a mandate for recording births, marriages, and deaths. Henry VIII had spurned papal influence, but the new Anglican Church remained theologically conservative. England did not simply become Protestant (let alone Puritan!) overnight, suggesting some other motive for conferring such names. See Philip Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State, 1460-1660* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England and New York: Palgrave, 2001) 161-169.


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1850 and 1880 IPUMS samples, he sought a correlation between family size and the proportion of children with Biblical names among native-born Americans. He used the seating capacity of each denomination’s churches in an area as an index of religiosity. Since so many New England children were named for parents and grandparents in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, he proposed the primacy of familial considerations; but by the nineteenth century, he asserted, when familial naming had fallen into decline, names served as a strong signifier of cultural preferences, including religious beliefs. Hacker claimed the turn away from Biblical names evinced a growing trend towards secularism. New England, however, presented a special case because of its religious composition. Although the percentage of Biblically-named children correlated positively with increased family size, the connection was much weaker than in other regions. The onomastic customs of New England in 1850 differed markedly from those of 1650, yet remained persistently distinct from other regions of the United States.

Unlike earlier studies of New England names, Hacker’s work relied on a nearly complete record of the families in the region at two moments in time - a broad sweep, but lacking in depth. The limitations of the census meant that parents were the only relatives at risk to transmit their names, skewing the accuracy of his regression

103 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 340-341. For more on the IPUMS data, see http://usa.ipums.org/usa; the available data packages are sufficiently complex to necessitate a series of instructional tutorials, and a robust FAQ.
104 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 344-347. Hacker did not limit his study to a single region, facilitating comparison across sectional boundaries. His calculations divided the United States into New England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Midwest, the South, and the West. By the middle of the nineteenth century, he found, the incidence of Biblical names was higher in the South than in New England! From the census data, he deduced that parental naming was about as frequent in the South as in New England in 1850, and only slightly rarer in 1880, though he was unable to make any determinations regarding children sharing their grandparents’ names (361, note 13).
105 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 350-358. It also exhibited a positive correlation between number of church seats and reduced family size, inverse to the situation in other regions, and had higher literacy and age at marriage, fewer Biblically named children, and greater proportions of Congregational, Unitarian, and Universalist church seats. The relationship between availability of church seats and reduced family size was negative in 1880, though not statistically significant.
The impossibility of determining whether a specific name’s Biblical significance motivated parental choice also complicated his results. Additionally, the use of only native-born children of native-born parents did not entirely preclude the inclusion of a foreign element. Many nineteenth-century immigrants perpetuated their own set of religious and ethnic preferences for several generations. Finally, the apparent uniqueness of conditions in New England suggested different motivations driving fertility control and name bestowal there than in other regions, leaving the mechanism guiding these changes unclear.

Focusing primarily on twentieth-century American onomastic history, Stanley Lieberson identified name selection as analogous to fashion choice, but without the monetary concerns guiding other consumer trends. He asserted that by the beginning of the twentieth century, names were subject to changing tastes, shifting from “customs” to “fashions.” The fluctuating popularity of specific names, Lieberson argued, resulted from collective unconscious action, as parents raised a name’s

106 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 348-349, 358. Since Hacker was interested in names only as indicators of religiosity, and not for their own sake, this incomplete onomastic record was less problematic. He recognized the problems inherent in the absence of full child mortality figures, suggesting his results as a lower-bound estimate for fertility.
107 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 348. The names in question were John and Thomas for boys, and Mary and Elizabeth for girls. His struggle with how to deal with such names had troubled earlier authors too. Eliminating them would compromise the accuracy of the data set, but keeping them would be problematic. After removing these names Hacker concluded that families who used such traditional names or passed on their own names were less likely to control their fertility, but the large number of individuals with these names meant his sample was greatly reduced.
109 Hacker, “Child Naming,” 348, 358. He admitted that proxies were an imperfect measure, but also that historical demographers must work with the limitations of available records. That he generated conclusive results for the other regions under consideration attests to the value of his method.
111 Lieberson, Matter of Taste, 4-5, 9, 33-36. Inherent in this is recognition of a specific kind of change, one not driven solely by prescription or proscription.
standing in public opinion by choosing it.  A complex set of external events, internal changes, and special circumstances at a particular place and time shaped this process. His analysis found that the major changes in naming patterns were not tied to urbanization or education, but did roughly correspond to changing family size. Describing the various mechanisms that guided tastes, Lieberson stressed the role of sound, as well as meaning, in name selection, along with ethnic and class differentials. However, he cautioned against mistaking correlation for causality.

Despite its twentieth-century vantage point, Lieberson’s study offered a new interpretive framework for the types of changes that affected naming patterns in the nineteenth century. Taking the impetus behind American first names from ideology to collective preference, he outlined a similar transition to that identified by earlier scholars. Yet his argument hinged on the rejection of a purely social meaning for changes in naming tastes, a complete reversal from the colonial period. Additionally, he did not deal with New England directly, so his conclusions do not account for its regional peculiarities.

Since 2000, no one, aside from myself, has conducted an investigation of New England onomastics. Smith remains the oft-quoted authority on the subject, cited by authors including Lisa Wilson, Alfred Young, and Stephen Mintz in broader works on

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112 Lieberson, *Matter of Taste*, 154-157, 242-248. Fluctuations in the popularity of certain names, he declared, stemmed from changes in their appeal, and the mechanisms that brought a name up the ranks were not the same as the ones that kept it there.


114 Lieberson, *Matter of Taste*, 36-55, 66. He also found no correlation between the emergence of mass media in the twentieth century, and the attendant growth in shared popular culture, and the shift from custom- to fashion-motivated naming.

115 Lieberson, *Matter of Taste*, 117-122, 130-142, 147-154, 172-176, 184-185. He used terms such as “symbolic enhancement” and “symbolic contamination” to describe the first step of the process, but also emphasized the complex factors at work which made retrospective analysis must easier than predictions about the future of a name’s fortunes.

116 Lieberson, *Matter of Taste*, 21, 81-84, 165, 267-270. He provided the analogy of the decline of men’s dress hats, highlighting the difference between plausibility and validity.


children, the family, and colonial New England. These authors accepted the
generalizability of Smith’s conclusions, “content to offer snippets couched in Smithian terms.” Yet the existing studies left large swaths of New England uncounted at various points in time. Furthermore, theories regarding the decline of Biblical and familial naming made no mention of specific religious change, an issue of supreme importance to the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and their descendants. Clearly, the narrative of New England naming had yet to yield all of its mysteries.


120 Rutman and Rutman, “In Nomine Avi,” 244 (note 2).
Methodology

Anyone who has spent time examining old New England records has seen the oddity of Puritan names - the persistence repetition across generations and commitment strange-sounding, obscure Biblical references. Later records reveal a different pattern, less Biblical and more fanciful. What formula dictated the shape of these changes? Although my own interest began with genealogical curiosity, the complexity of the changes I observed demanded a more rigorous approach. Proceeding from existing literature on the subject, I aimed to test the theory of a unified New England naming system by combining the chronological reach previously applied only to studies of a single town with a wider geographical range.

My original study traced the onomastic patterns of a cluster of inter-related families in eastern and central Massachusetts to determine the effect of familial tradition and its interplay with local customs on name choice. It spanned the decades from the generation after initial settlement to the middle of the nineteenth century. The bulk of the data, however, lay between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Setting the bounds of inclusion at the borders of Massachusetts satisfied a dual purpose. First, it ensured relative ease of access to primary records, crucial to building the data set; second, it side-stepped the problem of distinct regional cultures.

affecting the name choices of parents.\textsuperscript{2} Despite their Massachusetts origins, a couple might adopt the local customs of their new residence. Furthermore, structuring the data set genealogically allowed for greater focus on the descent of names through the family, including those in the matrilineal line. The use of published genealogies expedited the process, facilitating the documentation of more families in a short period of time than would have been possible from vital records alone. It also relieved some of the difficulties involved in tracking individuals who moved from their birthplaces.

Most of the family units under consideration made their homes in Dedham, Medfield, and Sturbridge, though some did reside in neighboring towns including (but not limited to) Norwich, Shrewsbury, Walpole, Medway, Wrentham, and Sherborn. Although most of the existing scholarship on the subject confined itself to a single town per study, the genealogical aspect of this project led the research across the Massachusetts countryside, providing a wider range of data.\textsuperscript{3} This broader reach smoothed over any town-specific variation. The Wight family formed the skeleton of my research, alongside the families of Hamant, Plimpton, Smith, Adams, Clark, Fisher, Ellis, Morse, and Harding, among others.\textsuperscript{4} Ties of blood or marriage conjoined all of the family units under consideration, revealing the kinship network that undergirded the social life of early New England.

Concentrating on completed families, by definition, necessitated collecting information on all children born to a couple, including all given names, dates of birth,


\textsuperscript{3} The notable exception being Main’s “Naming Children,” which relied on genealogies to examine distinctions between towns in the seventeenth century, as well as across the region thereafter.

\textsuperscript{4} For a more detailed description of the families that comprised my data set, see Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 35-45.
and dates of death for those who died in childhood. Furthermore, determining the full extent of naming for relatives required the names and lifespans of a couple’s parents and siblings as well. Previous investigations, by contrast, had looked only to parents, grandparents, and previously deceased children within a given generation as possible sources of familial names. These known relatives formed the group of “at-risk” kin, the people who could be identified as sharing a name with the child. Preliminary research suggested that New England parents did regularly name their children for their own siblings. Taking this into account, I expected to find a higher incidence of familial naming than others had encountered. Furthermore, I anticipated greater complexity to emerge from the general decline in the use of familial names that earlier studies traced to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Each generation, it seemed, looked to its immediate predecessors for potential familial names. Like the decorative elements on one of Boston’s elegant nineteenth-century homes, each row of blocks builds only on the previous layer, but a succession of layers reveals a complete panel-brick design.

For Daniel Scott Smith and Gloria Main, naming priority translated to a predictable shift in the position of the name in the birth order, not necessarily its

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5 Some narrowed the scope even further, as Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” and Main, “Naming Children,” who privileged the names of the firstborn of each sex above all other children.
6 Daniel Scott Smith, “Child-Naming Practices as Cultural and Familial Indicators,” Local Population Studies, 32 (Spring 1984): 21, defined the concept of “population-at-risk,” which he borrowed from the field of demography. Put simply, one can only determine whether or not a child shared his or her name with a particular relative if the name of that relative is also known.
7 Smith observed this practice among the daughters of brothers in “Child-Naming Patterns,” 551-552. For another example, see Christopher M. Jedrey, The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), 85, 178 (Table 8).
8 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 224-226, identified the years between 1780 and 1820 as a period of “revolution,” whereas Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” isolated two moments of transition in familial naming - a minor one in the 1720s and a larger one between 1820 and 1860. The latter he termed “definitive.”
presence or absence. My investigation focused more closely on which names the parents chose to pass on. Why did parents decide to reuse or ignore a family name? The choice to bestow the name of a particular relative on a child who arrived later in the birth order differed markedly from the decision not to use that name at all. Likewise, Smith viewed the use of a distinct middle name with a familial first name, or vice versa, solely as a means of injecting individualism into the onomastic landscape. Although the adoption of this practice denoted a partial shift in the impetus for naming, it did not represent total abandonment of family tradition. Hence, I counted all children sharing a portion of their given name with kin among those “familially named.”

This commitment to recording a wider range of “at risk” relatives than other authors increased the amount of time and effort required to reconstruct each family unit, reducing the number of families included in the data set. The availability of partial information for many families, especially those of the immigrant generation, necessitated their exclusion. While John Waters addressed the problem of timely data collection by limiting his investigation to families present on the tax roles in one town during a single decade, and David Dumas chose to confine his work to a small community in three (presumably) representative decades, I selected a core group of genealogical sources to compile a broad collection of individuals. Using these works

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9 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 548, 556. Main, “Naming Children,” 2-3. Main asserted that controlling for birth order provided a better means of comparison across families of different sizes, especially when comparing colonial New England to Virginia, where higher child mortality resulted in smaller completed families.

10 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 556. He omitted children so called from his calculus of familial naming, stating that the use of the first names of other relatives as middle names would have obscured the connection for those outside of the immediate family.

11 John J. Waters, “Naming and Kinship in New England: Guilford Patterns and Usage, 1693-1759,” New England Historic-Genealogical Register, 138 (Jul. 1984): 163. He traced the families of 123 individuals who appeared on the tax rolls of Guilford, Connecticut, between 1732 and 1740. Since these taxpayers were in various stages of life during those years, the time period during which their children were named is longer than the initial dates suggest. David W. Dumas, “The Naming of Children in New England, 1780-1850,” NEHGR, 132 (July 1978): 198. He tabulated the names of approximately 200-300 children from 1780-1789, 1810-1819, and 1840-1849. A project on the order of Smith or Fischer’s reconstitution of the families of an entire town was not a possibility for me, as I had a single semester to accumulate the data and no means to hire assistants.
in conjunction with vital records enabled this exploration of Massachusetts names.

In contrast with other onomastic analyses for New England, vital records alone did not compose the foundation of research. While ideal for performing an investigation of a single town, they did not easily lend themselves to the reconstitution of widespread families, especially of children who migrated away from the town of their birth. Earlier studies had excluded these children, since many of them simply disappeared from the town’s official records. Published genealogies often revealed where they went. Additionally, the family ties illuminated by genealogies situated individuals in the context of extended, rather than merely nuclear families.

Published genealogies, like any historical source, presented their own set of biases and potential errors. Most of them were published in the nineteenth century, before modern standards guiding historical research were widely acknowledged. These works, Smith observed, did not aim to satisfy the needs of statistical demographic inquiry. Rather, they chronicled the lives of descendants from a single (usually seventeenth-century) immigrant couple, often with dubious connections between individuals. Recent researchers have evaluated some of them, flagging the most problematic and stressing the importance of using them in conjunction with

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12 Daniel Scott Smith, “Population, Family, and Society in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635-1880” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1976), 20. In “Child-Naming Patterns,” 542, 561 (note 6), Smith cited the work of Lemuel Shattuck, Memorial of the Descendants of William Shattuck, the Progenitor of the Families in America that Have Borne his Name (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1855) 31-35, wherein he distinguished between “Historical” and “Philosophical” genealogy. The former referred to the type of family record common to most genealogical publications, while the latter included statistical analysis, though it hinged on a problematic conception of genetic distinctions bordering on eugenics.

13 Many tried to link all individuals of a particular surname in one region of the United States to a shared ancestry, possibly to boost sales of the finished product. See Kory Leland Meyerink, ed., Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records (Salt Lake City: Ancestry Publishing, 1998) 610-613, for a list of criteria to consider when evaluating published genealogies.
contemporary records. Cross-referencing some of the people in each generation with vital records helped to ensure the validity of the nuclear families included in the study. Most discrepancies between these records and the published genealogies were minor (variance in the spelling of a name or the date of a vital event). In the few cases where a person did not appear in the vital records as the genealogy stated, the problem generally stemmed from the underregistration of births and deaths, endemic in the eighteenth century and present throughout the period under consideration. This was especially pronounced among families who lived far from the center of town.

Focusing on Massachusetts limited the data set not only to families who originally settled there, but also to those who stayed there. As settlement density increased and land scarcity became a problem in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many descendants of Massachusetts’ original settlers migrated out of the state, and outside the bounds of this study. The genealogies used for this project had to include a large proportion of nuclear families who remained in Massachusetts until the middle of the nineteenth century. They also needed to include full given names for all children, not just initials. Finally, they had to cover the descendants of daughters over several generations, as well as sons. One work with which I was already familiar, 

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14 The most well-known example of an error-riddled genealogy is Abner Morse’s *Memorial of the Morses: Containing the History of Sevens Persons of the Name, who Settled in America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston: William Veazie, 1850), which I steered clear of, despite the presence of members of the Morse family in my data set. To Morse’s credit, these errors were not intentional, as he attested to his care in the compilation and attested to its accuracy only in the generations prior to 1750 (vi-vii). In 1903, the Morse Society published a revision of that work, prepared by John Howard Morse and Emily Wilder Leavitt, correcting most of the earlier mistakes. See J. Howard Morse and Emily Wilder Leavitt, Morse, J. Howard, and Emily W. Leavitt. *Morse Genealogy, Comprising the Descendants of Samuel, Anthony, William, and Joseph Morse, and John Moss: Being a Revision of the ‘Memorial of the Morses,’ Published by Rev. Abner Morse in 1850* (New York: The Morse Society, 1903-1905; Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2002).

15 For the historiography of this phenomenon, as well as its application to Hingham records, see Smith, “Population, Family and Society,” 20-25, 37, 46-49. Gloria L. Main, “Rocking the Cradle: Downsizing the New England Family,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 37, No. 1 (Summer 2006): 38-39, addressed the role of gender imbalance in this problem, as she found it affected the count of daughters more than sons.

William Ward Wight’s *The Wights*, satisfied all of these criteria. The *Fiske and Fisk Family Record*, the genealogical appendix to William Tilden’s *History of the Town of Medfield*, and the published vital records of various Massachusetts towns prior to 1850 served to link the families of females who married into the Wight clan and the families of those who married Wight daughters (‘allied families’). Published in response to a mandate of the Massachusetts legislature for public access to town records, the ‘Systematic Series’ of vital records prior to 1850 covered most towns in the state. This project drew heavily from those for Medfield, Dedham, Sturbridge, Walpole, Wrentham, Medway and its later suburbs of East and West Medway, Shrewsbury, Milford, Dover, Marlborough, Sherborn, Bellingham, Sudbury, Mendon, and

17 William Ward Wight, *The Wights: A Record of Thomas Wight of Dedham and Medfield and of his Descendants, 1635-1890* (Milwaukee: Swain and Tate, 1890), 354-357. Wight also included brief ancestral sketches of intermarrying families, making it easier to determine the composition of both parents’ families of origin. Additionally, he cited many of the sources used in compiling the text and appended a “List of Authorities,” a practice few other nineteenth-century genealogists followed. A book notice in the Dedham Historical Register pointed to this work as exceptional for its time; see Erastus Worthington, “Book Notice, The Wight Family,” *Dedham Historical Register*, 1, No. 4 (October 1890): 154.

18 Frederick Clifton Pierce, *Fiske and Fisk Family: Being a Record of the Descendants of Symond Fiske, Lord of the Manor of Stadhaugh, Suffolk County, England, from the Time of Henry IV to Date, Including all the American Members of the Family* (Chicago: the author, 1896). Most of the Fiskes left Massachusetts by the beginning of the nineteenth century, limiting the usefulness of this work. William S. Tilden, *History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886, with Genealogies of the Families that Held Real Estate or made any Considerable Stay in the Town during the First Two Centuries* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1887), 279-525. Tilden provided critical insight into the destinations of those who left Medfield, but omitted some vital details, so his genealogies could only act as a guide. This last, the *Massachusetts Vital Records to 1850* series, often referred to as the ‘Tan Books,’ had separate sections for births, marriages, and deaths, and were organized alphabetically by surname within each section. They are widely available in Massachusetts libraries, and were digitized and made available for free online through the New England Historic-Genealogical Society (2001-2010) at www.americanancestors.org/search.aspx?Ca=344&Da=190 (Accessed 5 October 2013).

19 They included all births, marriages, and deaths from each town’s official register, as well as church and cemetery records, and some records of such events kept by private individuals. For more on the institutions that published these record books, see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, “Massachusetts Vital Records,” *FamilySearch Research Wiki*, http://www.famsi.org/learn/wiki/en/Massachusetts_Vital_Records (Accessed 5 October 2013). According to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst Library’s *Genealogy Research Guide* (updated 14 September 2012), a 1902 law required the state to buy and distribute freely the first 500 copies of any published town vital records. See http://www.guides.library.umass.edu/content.php?pid=944&sid=81419 (Accessed 5 October 2013).
Holliston. The distributed range of my study responded to the call for additional surveys to determine general trends in Massachusetts naming patterns, and also covered the formerly-neglected central part of the state.

My data set consisted of a branching web of two hundred and twenty-five families who bore one thousand, four hundred and two children between 1660 and 1860. The distribution of the families under scrutiny concentrated most heavily on the period from 1700 to 1850, with about twenty formed before 1700 and only five after 1850. In any given decade therein, the average number of families lay between thirteen and fourteen; twenty-five from 1791 to 1800, and six from 1841 to 1850 formed the upper and lower limits. Of the children included in the data set, seven hundred and three were girls, while six hundred and ninety-three were boys. While a slightly higher percentage of families contained only daughters than only sons, the limited size

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21 Smith recognized that his conclusions from the timing of change in Hingham could only serve as a hypothesis for New England at large until other towns had been analyzed. See Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 559-560. Main, “Naming Children,” 5-8 challenged the concept of a single, unified, New England pattern by comparing the percentage of families in each place she investigated who named the firstborn child of each sex for a parent, a grandparent, or neither. Her results revealed a variety of unique local practices, but is complicated by the fact that the majority of New England families could expect to have more than one child of each sex. Main did not provide a similar comparison for completed families. Although she covered a wider area, she still did not include families from central Massachusetts. Dumas, “The Naming of Children,” 197, was an exception to the eastern focus. However, Charlemont lay in the far western part of the state.

22 In the early period, the small size of my sample resulted from the difficulty of tracing the names of a couple’s parents and siblings (fewer families available with complete information). Towards the end of the period under study, reduced family size caused by the fertility transition truncated my data set.
of the sample prevented any meaningful interpretation in terms of the opportunities presented for assigning names. The decade from 1661-1670 witnessed the highest fertility, with an average of nearly ten children per family. This figure declined over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such that the completed family size for 1841-1850 averaged between two and three children. By comparison, Smith marked a high of slightly more than ten children for the years between 1666 and 1670, and a low of about three children on average in the period from 1841 to 1860 among Hingham families.\textsuperscript{23}

Like David Hackett Fischer, I arranged nuclear families into decennial cohorts, but based on the date of birth of a couple’s first child rather than the date of marriage.\textsuperscript{24} The same technique applied to families formed via subsequent marriage of one or both parents, with each set of half- and step-siblings treated separately. These short, consecutive cohorts allowed closer attention to the timing of change than possible from Smith’s twenty- or forty-year cohorts or Dumas’ method of recording a single decade of births at twenty year intervals.\textsuperscript{25} Identifying precisely the moments of change elucidated how shifting onomastic trends fit into the wider milieu of societal change.

Although quantitative analysis formed the backbone of my study, qualitative description balanced out the numerical data, showing what the changes looked like in terms of individual children and their families. Whereas Smith aimed to “raise [people] to the level of numbers,” I held that statistics and examples could produce a stronger

\textsuperscript{24} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 221 (note 13), 225 (note 20). As most of the larger families took more than a decade to reach their completed size, the decade assigned to the family does not necessarily reflect the birth years of the majority of the children.
\textsuperscript{25} Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 545, 547. His cohorts were also based on the date of marriage, rather than the date of birth. Perhaps the grouping of data into longer periods was influenced by the magnitude of change in Hingham, a reflection of grouping for analysis rather than collection. The small size of my data set sometimes necessitated combination of data from more than one decade to obtain a clearer picture of general trends. For the graphs representing the various aspects of familial and non-familial naming in “Invention and Convention,” I calculated averages for every fifty-year period after 1700 and for the forty-year period between 1660 and 1700. Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 201-202. He did not attempt to analyze familial name sharing, so the absence of completed families did not negatively affect his data.

A preliminary survey of the Massachusetts published vital records suggested that the majority of ‘old’ families were related by blood and marriage, with a large proportion of the same surnames recurring from one town to the next.\footnote{Daniel Scott Smith, “All in Some Degree Related to Each Other”: A Demographic and Comparative Resolution of the Anomaly of New England Kinship,” \textit{The American Historical Review} 94, No. 1 (February 1989): 44-79 discussed this at length within individual towns. This phenomenon fluctuated to some extent with the geographic distance between the towns. However, it also illuminated the connection between newer and older settlements, as more distant portions of the original land grants were set off as separate towns. See, for example, the relationship between Sturbridge and Medfield described by Tilden, \textit{History of Medfield}, 133. Also the map in Kenneth A. Lockridge, \textit{A New England Town, The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736} (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970), facing page xi.} The evidence confirmed these connections between New England families. These connections stemmed, in part, from the large size of New England families in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the relatively small size of the seventeenth-century immigrant population.\footnote{Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 25-26 demonstrated the interconnectedness of the families of Puritan migrants prior to their departure from England. Most settlers came in nuclear families, but the arrival of groups of extended kin was not uncommon either.} As early settlers spread across the countryside, they looked to their neighbors for potential spouses.\footnote{Jedrey, \textit{World of John Cleaveland}, 71-73, 151 delineated the additional limitations of religious and economic standing in choosing marriage partners, as parents encouraged their children to marry those from “goodly and godly families.”}

Regardless of the degree of relation, these families lived in awareness of each other, sharing in the obligations and benefits of community life. A complex economic, social, and religious hierarchy guided this interaction, though the families in my data
set exhibited greater uniformity than society at large.\textsuperscript{31} The majority of the families investigated here belonged to the upper strata of society, as only the well-off could afford to publish a genealogy solely in honor of their ancestors.\textsuperscript{32} Despite some variation in fortunes across the generations, many of these people occupied a well-respected position among the local elite. All of them descended from Puritan progenitors who arrived during the Great Migration of the 1630s.\textsuperscript{33} While this limited the applicability of my results somewhat, it also established the collective identity critical to assessing the ideology and motivation driving onomastic changes. Additionally, it united the Massachusetts towns under a single governing class who spread their common cultural values through public influence.\textsuperscript{34}

This class bias differentiated my data set from those examined in other onomastic analyses. In an entire town, with its full complement of socioeconomic strata, one would expect a variety of practices based on those circumstances.\textsuperscript{35} These families represented the top, not the entirety, of New England society. Yet, they still exhibited individual idiosyncrasies, characterized by a wider range of life experiences.

\textsuperscript{31} Lockridge, \textit{A New England Town}, 71-77, 94-103, 143-154, provides a clear picture of how the relationship between members of the community changed over the course of the colonial period.

\textsuperscript{32} Most nineteenth-century genealogies were privately printed, funded either by subscription of living descendants or at the author’s out-of-pocket expense. Pierce, \textit{Fisk and Fiske Family}, and Wight, \textit{The Wights}, both relied on this tactic.

\textsuperscript{33} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 27-28 emphasized the social origins of Massachusetts’ first settlers among the “middling sort.” As these families established themselves in the New World, however, a new set of class distinctions developed. Shattuck, \textit{Memorials of the Descendants of William Shattuck}, 16, reinforced this claim, asserting that the only poor Shattucks were “colored persons [emphasis in original] ... the descendants of a manumitted slave once belonging to the family...” For a description of the religiously-sanctioned inequality inherent in Puritan society, see Lockridge, \textit{A New England Town}, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{34} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 39-42 outlined the disproportionate influence of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s spiritual and political elite, maintained through their “solidarity” and familial ties. While none of the families in my data set occupied the upper echelons of Massachusetts government, they did repeat this pattern on a provincial scale.

\textsuperscript{35} Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 318-322, 344-345 discussed the effect of parental wealth on naming patterns, finding a higher incidence of familial name sharing among Hingham’s richer residents.
at each generational remove from their shared ancestors. Furthermore, all historians face an element of wealth bias in the study of the family. Traditionally, the preservation of records has privileged white, male property owners. Fischer admitted the difficulty of reconstituting the families of the poorest thirty percent of Concord residents, and Smith noted the critical problem of some heads of families not reporting vital events to the town registrar, or reporting them only after a lengthy delay. Transience added an extra measure of difficulty to tracing the families of the poor and landless; poor laws in New England employed the practice of “warning out” the impoverished to reduce the burden on the town. Those at the bottom of the social order drifted from one town to the next, seldom staying in one place long enough for the records to contain all of their children. Even if the family did manage to remain in a single town, their existence on the fringe of society made record-keeping a low priority.

Genealogy database software provided the means of organizing the families

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36 Main, “Naming Children,” 2 (note 3) pointed out the absence of socioeconomic information in published genealogies, aside from probate records, prohibiting their use in analyzing the families they contain along those lines. In my experience, these also lack comprehensive accounting of church membership and religious affiliation. These families descended from English Puritan stock, but the religious upheaval and ensuing fragmentation of the Great Awakening affected them in different ways.

37 David Hackett Fischer, conversation with author, 18 March 2008. Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 22-24, 26-27. In cases where a child died before his or her birth had been registered, the death was seldom registered, leaving gaps in the record. Statistical techniques may offer an adjustment to birth and mortality rates based on estimates of such occurrences, but they cannot recover the names of these infants.

38 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 176, 178. Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1991), 130, commented on the sharp increase in the number of those warned out in the middle of the eighteenth century, such that the system was abandoned in most New England towns by 1800. Writing on the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Jedrey, World of John Cleaveland, 63-64, described landlessness as a common characteristic of young men who had yet to inherit or old men who had already deeded their property to heirs. Those for whom landlessness was a permanent condition, he found, seldom stayed in Chebacco for long.

39 One prominent case is that of George Robert Twelves Hewes. Of his fifteen children, the names of eleven are known, and fewer still appear in Massachusetts vital records. See Alfred Fabian Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 27, 68-69. When asked by biographer Hawkes about the condition of his family on the eve of the Revolution, Hewes replied that “we had several children, the exact number I do not recollect.” In the absence of official records, the names of these children were lost forever with the memory of their living relatives. In Wrentham, where Hewes resided after the war (and at least a handful of his children must have been born), the vital records contain only one son. Thomas W. Baldwin, ed. Vital Records of Wrentham, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, Vol. 1, (Boston: Stanhope Press / F. H. Gilson Company, 1910), 123.
under study. Family reconstitution sheets, which most of the authors of earlier studies of New England naming used to sort the individual members of their data sets, did not allow for expression of complex relationships between nuclear families. Additionally, the digital index and search functions made possible the sorting of children according to various criteria, a feature other authors did not have at their disposal.

For purposes of analysis, the names of the children in my data set fit into a series of familial and non-familial categories. This distinction between familial and non-familial naming served to separate those children consciously linked to a maternal or paternal relative (or both) from those with names not found in the nuclear family of either parent during the previous generation. It rested on the assumption that parents would not choose a name with an undesirable meaning for their child, even if that name had familial precedent, nor would they bestow an otherwise unobjectionable name if it belonged to the family's black sheep. Parents could also choose to emphasize one branch of the family over the other, and they could decide to seek namesakes among deceased relatives or draw on the names of the living. The classes of familial names referred to the different namesakes a child could have - parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and previously deceased siblings (necronyms). When considering the various classes of non-familial names, I did not include those names that acknowledged a familial namesake. Although the types I defined could apply to these names as well, their signification for the family trumped the connotations of the name itself.

Children who shared their names with more than one relative were recorded separately, but small sample size necessitated attributing more meaning to some namesakes over others. Drawing on the findings of earlier scholars of New England

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40 Main, “Naming Children,” drew her data from a sample of published genealogies, but did not take advantage of the possibility they offered for examining the transmission of familial names beyond those of parents and grandparents.

41 The advantages of computerized sorting and the accessibility of resources in the digital age gave me a competitive edge over earlier scholars.
onomastics, I granted the prerogative to the transmission of the name of parents over grandparents in cases where both parties had the same name. This primarily applied to linkages between a child, parent, and the parent’s own same-sex parent, though some overlap with the father’s mother and mother’s father did occur due to the popularity of certain names and their relative weight in the pool of potential choices.\(^{42}\) Earlier scholars have demonstrated the distinctive prevalence of child-parent name sharing in New England.\(^{43}\) Smith noted the particular ambiguity of preference in cases of parental/grandparental name sharing, comparing the selections of those parents who shared their names with their own parents with those of parents who did not. He concluded that the high frequency of parental naming by both groups outweighed the slightly heightened use of the shared name; such cases reflected the persistence of a parental name across multiple generations.\(^{44}\)

By contrast, children whose names matched those of a grandparent and an aunt or uncle counted in the calculations for both groups. Variations in the percentages of children named for individual classes of parental siblings (eg. mothers’ brothers, fathers’ sisters, mothers’ sisters, fathers’ brothers) prevent sweeping generalizations, but relatively few children bore the names of only a single grandparent, with more carrying the name of an aunt or uncle alone. The proportion of children named for their parents’ siblings appeared lower than that of children named for parents or grandparents, but the calculations relied on different ratios. For parental and grandparental naming, the numbers reflect the percentage of families with a child

\(^{42}\) For the relative popularity of the top one, five, and ten names by sex for the period under consideration, see Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 229 (note 26); for a list of the top five names for boys and girls by decade, see 221 (notes 13-14), and 228 (note 25). For similar statistics from Hingham, see Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 565 (Appendix I) and 566 (Appendix II).


\(^{44}\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 548. He proposed using those named for their paternal grandmothers and maternal grandfathers as a test case for the popularity of grandparental naming.
named for each individual. Since parents could have multiple brothers and sisters serve as namesakes, however, the percentages derive from the total number of children born in each decade. Necronyms received the same treatment, since many of the children whose names were reused had themselves borne a familial name. In cases where the child had more than one given name, I counted each as a possible necronym, and also considered each name separately if it referred to a different namesake. Although none of the parents in my data set gave two successive children the same combination of first and middle names, some did combine and recombine familial first and middle names. One should not discount the plural significance of a name for parents, as they may have favored a name precisely because it belonged to more than one relative. The observed onomastic patterns belie the complexity of motivation guiding name choices. No single namesake achieved ubiquity, leaving room for the expression of the unique considerations of each nuclear family.

Following the examples of Stewart and Dumas, I also classified non-familial names into a set of types. For children with multiple given names, I recorded the type of each name separately if they differed, or if the full name combined familial and non-familial elements. Stewart’s *American Given Names* and *A Dictionary of First Names*, by Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, provided the most frequent assistance in sorting

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45 Stewart, *Men’s Names,”* 117-118, 123-125 categorized names as Biblical (further subdivided into Old and New Testaments), “English Traditionals” - drawn from medieval English tradition (such as William, Richard, Robert, Ralph, Edward, George, Edmund, Harry, and Henry), and non-Biblical saints such as “Ambrose, Austin...Bernard, Christopher...Dennis, Erasmus, Francis, Gilbert, Hugh, Humphrey...Lawrence, Leonard, Martin, and Nicholas.” He initially left other names unclassified due to their occurrence in small numbers. He later identified among these “family” names (surnames assigned as given names), and “English Meaningfuls.” George R[ipphey] Stewart, *American Given Names: Their Origin and History in the Context of the English Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 22-34, extended the discussion of name types beyond the seventeenth century, adding those of classical origin, those rooted in the Romantic literary tradition (including Anglo-Saxon and Scottish names), and those borrowed from foreign cultures. In “Naming of Children,” Dumas defined his types as “Religious-Biblical-Old Testament,” “Religious-Biblical-New Testament,” “Religious-Biblical-Calvinist or Puritan theological significance,” “Classical or Neo-Classical,” family surnames, “English” names (which included Stewart’s list as well as a host of “Anglo-Saxon” names popularized in fiction), and “Miscellaneous.”
the names.\textsuperscript{46} Further, Biblical names split into two subgroups: Old Testament and New Testament names.\textsuperscript{47} Among the latter group I also counted those names drawn from the Apocrypha.\textsuperscript{48} Since some names appeared in the Bible more than once, and in different testaments, I attached each to the earliest book that contained it.\textsuperscript{49} Alongside these were Grace names, a category roughly analogous to Stewart’s “English Meaningfuls” and Bardsley’s “eccentricities,” including all names describing a virtue (eg. ‘Patience’), hortatory exclamation (eg. ‘Praise-God’), or circumstance of birth (eg. ‘Seaborn’).\textsuperscript{50} Another class embraced what Stewart referred to as “English


\textsuperscript{47} To establish the location of Biblical names in either the Old or New Testament, or the Apocrypha, as well as the characteristics associated with the name, see James Hastings, John A. Selbie, John C. Lambert, and Shailer Matthews, ed., \textit{Dictionary of the Bible} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937). Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 228 (note 24) highlighted the usefulness of this source.

\textsuperscript{48} Stewart, \textit{American Given Names}, 9, identified the use of names from the Apocrypha as evidence of Catholic influence, since the Puritans’ Bible did not contain these books. See also Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 133, where he links the Apocrypha with “Papistry.”

\textsuperscript{49} Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 117, 126-127, debated how to deal with such names. He split the occurrences of Joseph, dividing the count between the Old and New Testament, but counted Elias and Jeremy as Old Testament names, since the New Testament occurrences referred directly to Old Testament characters (Elijah and Jeremiah). Later, he concluded that the Old Testament Joseph probably held more significance for seventeenth-century Puritans, and that the Hebrew Nathanael echoed its Old Testament formation of Elanathan. In addition, he suggested that John, Thomas, and James, while properly belonging to the New Testament, had a long history of use in the English tradition, and could fit in that class too. Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 198, placed Joseph only among the Old Testament names. Scott Smith-Bannister, \textit{Names and Naming Patterns in England, 1538-1700} (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 156-157, addressed the problem by using categories that were not mutually exclusive. For instance, he enumerated John as “a traditional English name, the name of scriptural and non-scriptural saints, as well as a name found in the New Testament.” As a result, the percentages of children with each type of name in his study sum to a total more than one hundred percent. Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 19, advocated the preservation of detail so that names could be analyzed across multiple categories, separating names that occurred in both Testaments from those that appeared only in the Old or New. It is unclear how he treated these possibilities in practice. His “Child-Naming Patterns,” 544-545, presents children with Biblical names those with non-Biblical names as distinct groups, impinging no overlap between them.

Traditionals” and the names of non-Biblical saints. Classical and classical-sounding names comprised another category. Teutonic or “Anglo-Saxon” names evocative of the medieval past formed the next class. Other names of literary distinction composed a category of their own, as some authors promoted rare or foreign names, or coined something entirely new. The final group contained the names of non-familial namesakes. Many of these took the form of surnames as first names (eg. ‘Luther’ and ‘Calvin’), but as the use of middle names expanded, some parents bestowed the namesake’s full name on their children.

The irregular spelling and orthography typical of the early records, compounded by the use of nicknames, sometimes made it difficult to determine what name parents intended. Whenever possible, I combined variant forms of the same name. Smith cautioned against lumping common nicknames with their unshortened forms in evaluating name type (e.g. Biblical or English traditional), but affirmed the practicality of doing so when considering whether or not a child bore a familial name. This seemed to contain an inherent contradiction - if the link between nickname and full name attested to a continuation of meaning in one case, then why not in the other? Nicknames prevailed in England from the time of the Norman Conquest, even among

51 Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 117-118. These names had deep roots in Anglo-Norman culture, and included George, William, Robert, Edward, Charles, Catherine, Lucy, Jane, Nancy, Margaret, and Anne.
52 Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 200, noted that some of these names had no antecedents in classical literature, but suggested a connection through Latin endings. Stewart, American Given Names, 22, stressed the relative unpopularity of names with dual male/female forms (e.g. Julius and Julia).
53 Dumas, “Naming of Children,” 200, classed these with the other English traditional names. Stewart, American Given Names, 33, recognized them as stemming from a separate impulse. They included Alfred, Edwin, Edith, and Matilda, among others. Unlike the English traditional names, which enjoyed continuous use in some parts of the English-speaking world, most of the Teutonic names had long since fallen into obscurity and were revived by authors of Romantic literature.
54 Pamela, Clarissa, Miranda, and Horatio, for instance, owed their popularity to widely-known fictional characters. See Stewart, American Given Names, 84-85 “Clarissa,” 141 “Horace/Horatio,” 195 “Miranda,” 207 “Pamela.”
55 Nationally and internationally known figures were most easily recognizable, but some parents looked to those of local prominence, or even named their children after friends and neighbors. If a name looked like a surname or full name, and did not reflect that of another family member, I turned to an assortment of biographical indices to seek the namesake.
56 Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 19.
the more exotic Puritan hortatory names of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{57} Appellations such as Molly and Polly (Mary), Peggy (Margaret), Sally (Sarah), Nabby (Abigail), Betsey/Betsy and Betty (Elizabeth), Hitty/Hetty (Mehitabel), and Patty (Martha) were commonly used from earliest times, and just as available to New England parents as to their counterparts in old England.\textsuperscript{58} Disregarding the connection between nicknames and their full forms would hasten and sharpen the observed decline of Scriptural names.

A few specific names presented a conundrum that could not be resolved easily. Due to the nature of the early New England pronunciation, the Biblical name Hannah was often recorded as ‘Anna’, which could also signify the English Traditional saint’s name ‘Anne.’ In cases where the provenance of the name remained uncertain, I accepted alternate spellings in accounting for possible familial names. Likewise, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century compilers of the records often confused ‘Ame’ and ‘Ama’ with ‘Anne’ and ‘Anna.’ The former could stand as alternate spellings of ‘Amy,’ but could just as easily represent a misreading of ‘Anna’ or ‘Anne.’\textsuperscript{59} In such cases, I opted for consistency within the family, but did not try to determine which of the names the parents had originally intended. Similarly, Simon and Simeon, Zechariah and Zachariah, and Elijah and Elisha sounded very similar, leading to potential error on the part of the original recorder.\textsuperscript{60} Given the general Puritan rejection of New Testament names, I usually decided in favor of the Old Testament variant in cases


\textsuperscript{59} Smith, “Cultural and Familial Indicators,” 19, advised proceeding from the most conservative estimate of congruency between variant forms to the most radical, observing the changes that emerged with successive admissions to the group.

\textsuperscript{60} In the latter two cases, both characters originated in the Old Testament, so misidentification made no difference to my calculations, but in the first instance, Simeon belonged to the Old Testament and Simon to the New. Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 109-110 (note 2) advocated the application of personal judgment to this problem, while acknowledging the potential of introducing errors by doing so. He combined Zachariah with Zechariah, Eleasar with Eliezer, and Shobal with Shubael.
where the origin of the two possibilities differed.

Building on this earlier project, I sought specific connections between onomastic patterns and broader changes in the religious, political, and cultural milieu. The choice of names was a deliberate process based on a variety of specific beliefs that reflect culturally shared assumptions about the position of individuals and balance of power within the family, as well as the family’s role in the community. No single factor could account for the full sweep of changes in the onomastic record, but certain circumstances exerted greater influence on particular aspects of onomastic change. Analyzing these shifts alongside wider societal changes provides a nuanced understanding of the expression of ideology in the lives of ordinary people.

Mapping parental explanations of name selection onto contemporary patterns established through statistical analysis allowed for examination of the intersection of personal beliefs and wider cultural values. Finding written records that discussed parents’ motivation for naming their children, however, proved quite challenging.\(^61\) Harriette Merrifield Forbes’ *New England Diaries* seemed like a logical starting point, but furnished few useful sources.\(^62\) *American Diaries* proved more reliable.\(^63\) The indices of the *New England Historic-Genealogical Register*, both printed and digital, turned up more valuable information, as did the collections available through the

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\(^61\) Earlier onomastic studies provided references for a few; Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 222-223 quoted the diaries of Samuel Sewall and Ebenezer Parkman. Waters, “Naming and Kinship,” discussed William Bentley’s recognition of his namesake and Lyman Beecher’s (in his autobiography).


\(^63\) Laura Arksey, Nancy Pries, and Marcia Reed, *American Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of Published American Diaries and Journals*, vol. 1, *Diaries Written from 1492 to 1844* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983).
Internet Archive and Google Books.\textsuperscript{64}

In general, the limited scholarly interest in the field of onomastics meant that neither the indices of most published works nor the scope and content notes of archival finding aids specified whether a collection contained a discussion of naming. This resulted in much unproductive searching, further complicated by the geographic and chronological limitations of the study.\textsuperscript{65} Unfortunately, none of the individuals in my original data set left behind personal records describing the naming of their children.

Ultimately, this analysis is based on the writing of twenty-five diarists who discussed the name selection for approximately seventy children. They were distributed across the time period under consideration, with two major gaps. These lacunae - the first between 1771 and 1800 and the second between 1821 and 1840, attest to the scarcity of written records which addressed onomastic concerns.\textsuperscript{66} In any given decade, a single diarist often supplied the only evidence. Moreover, none of these individuals provided the logic behind the naming of all of their children; many discussed only the names of one or two, often those with a specific namesake.\textsuperscript{67} Some related the significance of their own names, as far as they knew, while others

\textsuperscript{65} Stephen M. Frank, \textit{Life with Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North} (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1998), 109-111, 208, cited a half dozen archival collections that discussed the selection of a child’s name. However, none of these fell within the limits of my study.
\textsuperscript{66} Most of the Massachusetts diaries that survive for the last quarter of the eighteenth century deal with the events of the American Revolution and its aftermath. Although contemporary records of family life may have existed, the political and military history of the new nation was deemed more important to preserve.
\textsuperscript{67} In some cases this reflected omission on the part of the author, while in others it resulted from gaps in the record. Few complete diaries have survived. For example, see Milton Halsey Thomas, ed. \textit{The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729}, Vol. 1 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973) 45, which states that Sewall’s diary is missing from July 1677 to February 1684/5. During this time, his wife bore four children.
commented on the names of their friends’ and neighbors’ children.  

As with the families that constituted my original data set, these diarists did not embody a cross section of New England society. If anything, they occupied an even narrower segment of the population. Although literacy was much higher there than elsewhere in the English-speaking world, especially during the early colonial period, more people could read than could write. Thus, the very nature of the sources skewed the data towards the educated few. The majority of the diarists were upper-class white males, men with the knowledge and wherewithal to record their thoughts and observations. Only five of the diarists were women, and only one of them began writing prior to the nineteenth century. Part of this class and gender bias resulted from the reality of past record-keeping; fewer women and lower class men could write, and thus fewer of them left behind documentary evidence of their lives. The conscious decisions of early archivists and historians also played a role, privileging the papers of certain groups as more important, and worthy of preservation, than others. As such, one must exercise caution when generalizing from the opinions of these diarists, mindful that they did not represent the totality of the New England community.

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68 Although this knowledge was second-hand, it still indicated contemporary perceptions of the motivation guiding name choice, even if incorrect.
69 Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 130-131, declared that in 1660, two thirds of men and one third of women in Massachusetts signed their wills. One hundred years later, those numbers had risen to nearly eighty-five percent of men and half of all women.
From the Familial to the Invented

Massachusetts parents faced a multitude of choices when deciding on names for their offspring, and time only expanded their options. The motivations guiding the first Puritan settlers necessarily differed from those of their eighteenth and nineteenth century descendants. Religious beliefs performed a central function in these choices, with the spirit of the First and Second Great Awakening driving wider changes in cultural ideology. Although the practice of naming children for relatives never fell out of use entirely, the relatives most commonly named for, and the reasons for choosing a particular namesake, shifted considerably over the course of the time period under consideration. As parents increasingly turned to outside sources for their children's names, they embraced a larger collection of possibilities, dictated by personal preference and social acceptability. Taken together, these changes chart the trajectory of the New England mentalité.

The first settlers of New England participated in a radical onomastic change, setting it apart from other regions of colonial America and much of Britain in its almost exclusive reliance on the Old Testament for selecting names.¹ From the New Testament, only John, Thomas, Mary, and Elizabeth survived this purge, given their centrality to the Christian faith. These Puritans also eschewed most of the traditional English names, many of which designated New Testament or Medieval saints as

“Popish.” Additionally, the Puritans rejected the concept of godparents as a Catholic tradition, instead asking the gathered congregation to stand witness to the baptism of their children. In colonial Virginia, by contrast, godparents (usually relatives of one kind or another) selected the baptismal names of a couple’s offspring.

Additionally, New England parents focused on perpetuating the lineage, almost always naming children for themselves. They often named children for the mother’s parents or siblings, and the father’s sisters, as well. Brothers, however, usually respected each other’s exclusive privilege of giving his own name to a son, except in cases where the brothers lived in separate towns, making them more distant from each other. If a man died without marrying, or failed to produce sons, no rules seem to have decreed which of his brothers could pass on his name, and this sometimes created identically-named first cousins. Finally, assigning necronyms was common, as parents recycled the names of their previously deceased children. Despite the primacy of giving children the names of kin, few families relied exclusively on their relatives as a source of names. Even with the large families typical of early New England, parents were unlikely to run out of potential namesakes, so the decision to

\[\text{In many cases, parents avoided bestowing familial names unless they originated in the Old Testament, even if that meant forfeiting the privilege of naming sons and daughters for themselves. Among the families I studied, the decade from 1661-1670 marked the lowest incidence of familial names prior to the transitional period of the mid-eighteenth century. See Kaila Knight Schwartz, “Invention and Convention: A Genealogical Approach to Massachusetts Onomastics” (Senior Honors Thesis, Brandeis University, May 2008), 61-62, 74-75. Also, Daniel Scott Smith, “Child-Naming Practices, Kinship Ties, and Change in Family Attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1641 to 1880,” Journal of Social History, 18 (Summer 1985):543-544, and Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 222. However, Donald Lines Jacobus, “Early New England Nomenclature,” New England Historic-Genealogical Register, 77 (January 1923):10, noted a few examples where parents chose to perpetuate English traditional names.}


\[\text{Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 93-94 (Figure 7). Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 226 (note 21).}


\[\text{Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 223-224 (note 17). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 546-547 (Table II).}

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draw selections from outside of the ancestral pool suggested additional motivation. Family was important to the Puritans, but spiritual striving was more important.

By relying heavily on the names of Old Testament saints, Puritan parents sought to reinforce the differences between their religious values and those of the Church of England. Winthrop’s “city upon a hill” was built on a community of visible saints, and the names they passed on reflected this Godly purpose. As one contemporary minister asserted, “a good name is as a thread tyed about the finger, to make us mindful of the errand we came into the world to do for our Master.”

Perhaps invoking this sentiment, Samuel Sewall called one son Joseph, “in hopes of the Prophecy, Ezek. 37th...and not out of Respect to any Relation, or other person, except the first Joseph.” Knowledge of the Scriptures enabled many to effectively reproduce Biblical relationships within their own families. When Cotton Mather’s wife bore twins, he readily settled upon Martha (a familial name) for the girl; he “then thought, who was Martha’s Brother; and that Eleazar was the same with Lazarus; and a priestly Name; and the Child must be led to look for the Help of God, which is in the Signification of the Name.”

In similar fashion, Joseph and Mary (Allen) Clark named two sons Aaron and Moses, after the Biblical brothers, and another pair David and Solomon, for the father and son. While they worked to create an emulable model for English society,

10 Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724*, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 7th ser., vol. 8 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912), 251. This was also the name of Mather’s “excellent Uncle,” but the unity of the twins’ names seems to have mattered just as much as the familial connection.
11 William S. Tilden, *History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886, with Genealogies of the Families that Held Real Estate or made any Considerable Stay in the Town during the First Two Centuries* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1887), 347-348 (side numbers 2, 19-22). Aaron and Moses Clark were twins; their brothers David and Solomon were sequential births, with Solomon preceding David by two years. Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1 “Aaron,” 306 “Solomon.”

For these Puritan families, all hope for the future success of their religious experiment rested on the children, and parents took great pains to instruct them in the service of God.\footnote{Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 97, 132-133. Philip Greven, \textit{The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 51-55.} Thomas Shepard prefaced his \textit{Autobiography} with the wish that his “dear son Thomas,” by reading his words, would “learn to know and love the great and most high God, the God of his father.”\footnote{Thomas Shepard, \textit{God’s Plot: the Paradoxes of Puritan Piety, Being the Autobiography and Journal of Thomas Shepard}, ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 33. The elder Thomas Shepard’s unspoken desire was that his namesake would join him among the elect.} In a subsequent journal entry, he prayed “especially to see the conversion of my poor children, especially of my eldest [Thomas].”\footnote{Shepard, \textit{God’s Plot}, 169, 172.} When Increase Mather’s son fell ill, he pled for God to revive him, declaring, “Hee is not onely my child, but through yi wonderfull grace Hee is yi child.”\footnote{Samuel A. Green, ed. \textit{Diary by Increase Mather, March 1675-December 1676, together with Extracts from Another Diary by Him, 1674-1687} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1900), 7-8. Mather went on to say that he “put him into ye Lords hands, yt Hee wld blesse him both now & forever.” Nathaniel did recover.} Biblical names were intended to provide their bearers with a constant visible bond to their life’s purpose. It may have seemed odd that “chosen leaders of Israel passed through the critical stages of teething,” but parents recognized the fleeting nature of childhood compared to the eternal life of the soul.\footnote{Bardsley, \textit{Curiosities}, 52.} By inspiring commitment to Puritan ideology and dedicating the next generation to doing God’s work on earth, parents hoped to secure their salvation.

Recognizing the value of connecting children to familial antecedents, parents invoked the names of those they believed would enhance their children’s chances at achieving sanctification. In practice, at least for godly parents, this meant sharing their own names with their sons and daughters. Prior to 1700, ninety-five percent of the
families in my data set named a son for his father and a daughter for her mother. These figures dropped off slightly during the first half of the eighteenth century, but remained near eighty percent. Now that parents assumed full responsibility for their children’s religious edification, their concerns included setting the best possible example for them. After the birth of his first son, Ebenezer Parkman wrote, “God gave Me a Son, which I have set up for my Ebenezer, for hitherto the Lord hath Helped Me.” Other relatives could contribute their names if doing so would bolster the namesake’s chances of leading a godly life. Cotton Mather named a son Increase, “in Honour to my Parent,” and felt confident “that this Child shall glorify my Lord Jesus Christ, and bee with Him, to behold His Glory.” Similarly, Ebenezer Parkman called his son Breck, “in honour of my worthy and Reverend Father in Law.” When naming his daughter Judith, Sewall noted “the Signification of [her name] very good,” and prayed “that she may follow her Grandmother Hull, as she follows Christ.” Sometimes, coincidence allowed parents to acknowledged more than one pious individual with the same name. Joseph Green named his second son Joseph, it “being my father Gerrishes name as well as my own - & also ye name of my wifes

18 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 55. Smith observed ninety percent of Hingham families contained a son named for his father and ninety-five percent a daughter named for her mother during the same years, see “Child-Naming Patterns,” 549 (Table III). Fischer found seventy percent of Concord fathers named a son for themselves and eighty-five percent named a daughter for their wives, see “Forenames and the Family,” 225 (note 20).
19 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 57. The numbers for Hingham and Concord for this period were analogous to my own.
20 Francis G. Walett, ed. The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782, first part, 1719-1755 (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 27. He continued, “We have indeed a great deal of Reason to praise and magnifie the name of our gracious God who So Signally and mercifully appears for us, and lays us under ten thousand the strongest obligations to him.” Tending to the spiritual needs of the child numbered among these obligations. Ebenezer was an unusual name in that it referred to a place in the Old Testament rather than a person; it seems that Massachusetts parents were the first to bestow it. See Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 134-135.
21 Cotton Mather, Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681--1708, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 7th ser., vol. 7 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1911), 307-308.
22 Walett, Parkman Diary, 190. This was Parkman’s eleventh living child, and fifth son, and the explanation of his name indicates that parents invested as much thought into the names of those high in the birth order as they did the first- and second-born.
Not all families, however, adopted the new pattern of naming. Some persisted in preserving the non-Biblical names of their ancestors. Sewall named three of his children Henry, Stephen, and Jane after members of his own family of origin, despite the lack of Biblical precedent.\textsuperscript{25} Even John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, named a son William, which “signifies a common man.”\textsuperscript{26} Such a description stands in marked opposition to the meaning John Hull attributed to his daughter Hannah’s name, which “signifies merciful, taking rest or graciousness.”\textsuperscript{27} Perhaps Winthrop hoped to encourage humility, but most Puritans stressed the unique nature of their covenanted society and its extraordinary connection with God.

For others, cementing the familial connection trumped any spiritual concerns. Joseph Green christened a daughter Anna “for the sake of my wife’s mother,” and a son John “for ye sake of my father John Green.”\textsuperscript{28} This ensured a measure of continuity, both within individual communities and across the countryside as families dispersed. For immigrant families, it preserved the connection with relatives left behind in England, many of whom they would never again see. Moreover, early New England society valued consistency and uniformity, so they likely viewed the repetition of familiar names as reassuring.\textsuperscript{29} Indeed, Mary Cleaveland had rejoiced when her brother’s wife gave birth to a son “to bare up the name of my dece’d father glory be to


\textsuperscript{25}Samuel Sewall, \textit{Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1700}, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th ser., vol. 5 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1878), xvi-xxi. Sewall’s brother Stephen had a namesake son of his own, and he also named a son Samuel, as did their brother John. Sewall referred to these boys as “my namesake,” suggesting they were named for him. See Thomas, \textit{Sewall Diary}, Vol. 1, 245, 277. Stephen Sewall and his family resided in Newbury.


\textsuperscript{29}Lockridge, \textit{New England Town}, 4-6, 11-13, 17-19, 24.
God that he has not left us with out name and memory.” Some families reused the same name generation after generation, creating long chains of namesakes. Jeremiah Bumstead remarked at the baptism of his neighbor Edward Bromfield’s son that he was “named Edward, it being ye grandfather’s name also,” undoubtedly a common situation. Among the families of my data set, a string of paternally-named David Wights stretched over six generations, ending in the childhood death of the final David and his parents’ failure to produce another son. Another line, descended from an English emigrant named John Plimpton, encompassed five generations. Maternally-named daughters could form a similar multi-generational line, though the change of their surnames through marriage obscured the linkage.

Although Smith asserted that the practice of naming sons for brothers, particularly childless ones, and even nameakeless grandparents carried the expectation of financial gain, this was not always the case. To be sure, some did benefit, like William Bentley, whose maternal grandfather, William Paine, funded his

32 The first David Wight was born on August 16, 1733, and named for his mother’s brother, who died young, and unmarried, in 1731. The last, David Earle, was born August 9, 1873, and died August 21, 1878. See William Ward Wight, The Wights: A Record of Thomas Wight of Dedham and Medfield and of his Descendants, 1635-1890 (Milwaukee: Swain and Tate, 1890), 37 (side number 85), 55 (side number 184), 102-103 (side number 388), 181 (side number 904), 265 (side number 1811), 305 (side number 2705), 309 (side number 2997).
33 Tilden, History of the Town of Medfield, 456-458, side numbers 1, 4, 14, 460, side numbers 22, 47.
34 One family preserved the maternal name Lydia across at least six generations: Lidiah (___) Morse, Lydia (Morse) Wight, Lydia (Wight) Partridge, Lydia (Partridge) Smith, Lydia (Smith) Marsh, and Lydia (Marsh) Harding. Wight, The Wights, 9-10 (side numbers 7, 37, note 2), 184 (side number 925, note). Tilden, History of Medfield, 449 (side numbers 2, 11), 484 (side numbers 22, 51), 512 (side numbers 7, 23).
35 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 552-553. Daniel Scott Smith, “Population, Family, and Society in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635-1880” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1976), 85, 317-318. Following the same logic, he declared that “Naming a son for a wife’s brother, for example, surely made less sense if the uncle lived 50 or 100 miles away rather than just down the road.” For the families I encountered, the opposite seemed to hold true, with more boys sharing the names of their relatives if those relatives lived at a distance. This undermines the centrality of monetary benefit to the namesake tradition.
In at least a few instances, the choice of the name honored a family member who had died before the child’s birth, leaving a bequest to the parents.

Joseph Green baptized his son Edward, “for ye sake of my Grandfather Mitchelson, & also my Brother Edwd Green, who dyed about 10 years ago & gave me a legacy wherewith I procured my Lybrary.”\(^37\) Others seemingly desired only goodwill. Shortly after Parkman named a son Alexander, “In Commemoration of my Mothers Father, and my youngest Brother,” he joined his brother in Boston to settle their mother’s estate; to his disappointment, the elder Alexander “never mention’d my little Boy, which with so much affection I nam’d after him.”\(^38\) A few apparently feared that the brother in question would fail to produce a son, thus allowing the name to die out. Ebenezer Cleaveland named his first son John, causing his childless brother John to comment that he “has fairly beaten his two elder brothers in the business of procreation...we ought not to be discontented under the allotments of providence.”\(^39\)

Preserving the ancestral names was closely tied to the maintenance of the family itself.

The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed a significant shift in the naming customs of Massachusetts families. Far fewer children bore the names of parents and grandparents, and those that did possess the names of kin did so for different reasons than in the past. As the importance of a visible onomastic connection to the family declined in religious terms, the practice of familial naming was

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\(^36\) Edward Stanley Waters, John G. Waters, and Alice G. Waters, ed., The Diary of William Bentley, D. D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 1, April 1784-December 1792 (Salem: The Essex Institute, 1905), ix, 44.

\(^37\) Morison, “Joseph Green Commonplace Book,” 251. Rutman and Rutman observed that few Virginia children named for grandparents could expect to inherit from them as a result because three quarters of namesake grandparents were already deceased at the child’s birth. Did these names belatedly pay respect for a bequest previously given? See “In Nomine Avi,” 248, 254.

\(^38\) Walett, Parkman Diary, 150, 155. The brothers struggled with unresolved tension regarding the business at hand, and Parkman attributed Alexander’s “Disregard” of his namesake to “this Disturbance and Ruffle about the Estate.”

\(^39\) John Cleaveland, Jr., to Parker Cleaveland, 10 April 1778, John Cleaveland Papers, Series III, box 2, folder 5, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, quoted in Christopher M. Jedrey, The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), 160. John had been married for four years, and his wife was still not pregnant, so the concern was valid.
transformed from a religious to a secular act. Increased emphasis on forming a personal relationship with God lessened the need for an onomastic role model. Commemoration and honor began to take the place of reminders of exemplary piety. People still worried about their sins, but placed greater faith in God’s will to absolve them. At the same time, the individuation of children brought about the decline of necronymns (and, to a lesser extent, the names of other relatives) as a means of maintaining familial continuity.

John Adams demonstrated the reorientation of naming priorities towards beloved ancestors when he christened his first son John Quincy in 1767 “on the day of the Death of his Great Grandfather, John Quincy of Mount Wollaston.” Similarly, Elizabeth (Porter) Phelps noted at the baptism of a son of Esquire Porter and his wife in 1768 that they “Named him Moses after the Name of my Father who Died in the war in the year of 1755.” The aforementioned examples illustrate the emergence of middle names during this time period. By the end of the eighteenth century, they had become the norm in Massachusetts. This trend effectively doubled the number of names parents could bestow, though declining marital fertility eroded these gains.

Stout, New England Soul, 209-211, 229-231. Main, “Naming Children,” 11-12, linked the custom of parental naming to concerns over access to baptism, declaring that the name served to secure an inherited right to divine protection for the child.


Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 229-230 (note 28). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 558 (Table VI). There were, of course, exceptions to this trend, with a few children like Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin Pond and George Robert Twelves Hewes bearing middle names (multiple ones at that) earlier in the eighteenth century. For Pond, see Jacobus, “Nomenclature,” 11. For Hewes, Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 16.


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Familial and non-familial naming alike felt the impact of the possibility for additional names. Although the adoption of middle names by a large percentage of the population coincided with a period of onomastic diversification, the relationship between the two was not necessarily one of cause and effect. Parents could just as easily have chosen to bestow the names of more relatives, or drawn more heavily from the wide variety of Old Testament names used so extensively by previous generations. Instead, many combined familial and non-familial names and different non-familial types to give each child a unique name. Titus and Atarah (Hamant) Smith gave their son the first name George for Titus’ father and the middle name Metcalf, which was Titus’ mother’s maiden name, combining multiple familial names to create something new.\(^{45}\) Smith attributed such choices to the emergent recognition of children as distinct individuals.\(^{46}\) While this almost certainly served as one motivator for the change, it was not the only one. If, as Stewart claimed, middle names were seldom used in daily life, few would have experienced the sense of distinction they theoretically offered.\(^{47}\)

Middle names had appeared in England as early as the sixteenth century, confined almost exclusively to royalty and nobility and expressed in the form of a second given name (ie. two ‘first’ names).\(^{48}\) Other members of the British upper class granted a surname, usually that of the mother’s family or a godparent, as the middle

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\(^{46}\) Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 342-344. He also noted that rich men were more likely than their poorer counterparts to have a namesake son without a middle name, especially at the start of the nineteenth century.


\(^{48}\) Bardsley, *Curiosities*, 215-221. Other early middle names included ‘Posthumus’ to designate a child born after the father’s death, and ‘Maria,’ which either invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary or established a connection with a prominent Godmother of the same name. The latter would have been unthinkable for Puritan families.
The latter served as a formal, visible link between the parties involved. As Massachusetts parents looked to British precedents in the English traditional names, they borrowed this custom as well, first for familial names, and then for non-familial ones. John Adams, for instance, named a son Thomas Boylston, leaving no question as to who his namesake was. Similarly, Henry and Kezia (Plimpton) Harding named their daughter Abigail Plimpton, after Kezia’s sister who had died in early adulthood. In the first years of the Early Republic, as people rebelled against the concept of aristocracy and proclaimed the equality of all, middle names spread through all ranks of society. Rather than reducing everyone to a single given name, they granted multiple epithets to all. Middle names served as the great equalizer, giving even the poorest citizens a sense of personal importance. Some parents borrowed directly from the practices of the royal family, mimicking the habits of the same monarchy they had repudiated. William Henry Clark and William Henry Hamant both shared their names with King William III, as well as later members of the House of Hanover. Likewise, the parents of Mary Antoinette Pond and Charlotte Sophia Hull bestowed the names of (in)famous queens. Children so named were undoubtedly aware of
their namesakes, if not the significance of their status.

The typical name choices for children not named after relatives began to change as well, and they also increased significantly in number. Despite gains in the use of parental siblings as namesakes, non-familial names absorbed most of the losses from necronymic, parental, and grandparental naming. Parents diversified their selections from the Old Testament and grace names that had dominated the scene for more than a century, returning to the New Testament and the traditional English names their ancestors had spurned. As religious revivalism swept across the cities and towns of Massachusetts, people challenged clerical authority and rejected religion that relied on reason rather than feeling. The same emphasis on the personal connection with the divine and the emotional experience of spirituality that worked to sever the linkage between individual salvation and the influence of an elect namesake also cast doubt on the reliance on the names of Old Testament characters. Puritan parents had favored these names for their righteousness and strength of character, but the new sensibility privileged other qualities. Warnings about the danger of an “unconverted ministry” called into question the rote practice of religion, and this logic easily extended to onomastic tradition, as parents wondered if they were selecting names for the right reasons. Over time, the New Testament and English traditional names had lost most of their “Papish” overtones, and became more closely aligned with ‘Britishness,’ especially when New Englanders faced an external Catholic threat from French Canada. The distinctly French names held by the enemies of New England helped to dissociate the English forms from the Catholic tradition - Jacques

56 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 94, (Figure 7), 118-119 (Figure 9).
58 Stout, New England Soul, 186-188, 212.
59 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 221-222, 227-228.
was not the same as James. The association of many of the English traditional names with non-Biblical saints and martyrs likely added to their popularity among proponents of evangelical Protestantism, as such exceptional dedication to religious principles resonated with them.

Once the monopoly of religious sources on the selection of names had been broken, the onomastic landscape grew increasingly diverse. The years surrounding the American Revolution introduced the names of the classical antiquity, as people turned to the philosophy of the Greeks and Romans to frame the democratic government of the new republic. These works brought classical names into the American lexicon, as evidenced by Horace Richardson, Pliny Freeman, Augusta Wight, and Emilia Cleaveland. At first glance, such pagan names stand in stark contrast to earlier expressions of piety in the choice of appellations. However, the ideology of the Revolution itself held religious significance for many New Englanders. Drawing on the concept of their status as ‘chosen people,’ they aligned the preservation of liberty with the establishment of Christ’s kingdom in America. The new nation could not succeed without a virtuous population, committed to serving God and creating a functional form of self-governance. Like the earlier selections of Massachusetts parents, these names still represented a set of virtues and ideals they wished to instill in their children. When parents bestowed the names of the military

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63 For Horace Richardson, see *Vital Records of Medway, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston: NEHGS, 1905), 113; for Pliny Freeman, *Vital Records of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston: NEHGS, 1906), 55. For Augusta Wight, see Wight, *The Wights*, 103 (side numbers 907 and 908); for Emilia Cleaveland, *Vital Records of Medway*, 40.


65 Hatch, *Sacred Cause*, 80-81, 88-89.

and political heroes of the Revolution on their sons, they positioned them as their successors in the great democratic experiment. Undoubtedly, boys like Schuyler Gilead Clark, Anthony Wayne Cleaveland, and Stanley Griswold Wight would learn and remember the deeds of their namesakes. Similarly, although the popularity of grace names waned during these years, a few new ones, such as Liberty and Independence, reinforced this commitment to the duties and privileges of citizenship.

To a large degree, the spread of print culture enabled the flowering of new names. More people began relying on newspapers to keep up with the developing political situation in the 1760s, and this habit continued after the war. The number of newspaper titles printed in America quadrupled between 1790 and 1810, and appealed to all levels of society. In addition to fueling the growth of partisan politics, they accelerated the spread of cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic. Now the universe of possible names expanded beyond the local or provincial level, and transcended the familiar set of Biblical characters. As the locus of knowledge shifted from the college-educated ministry to the general public, people emphasized their own abilities to exercise reason and decide things for themselves.

This society placed new value on individuality rather than uniformity, encouraging


66 Jacobus, “Nomenclature,” 12, mentioned boys named “Freedom, Liberty, or Independence.” Also, Liberty Fisk(e) is a late example, born in 1818 to Silas and Susanna (Wight) Fisk(e). See Wight, The Wights, 181-182.

68 Jacobus, “Nomenclature,” 12, mentioned boys named “Freedom, Liberty, or Independence.” Also, Liberty Fisk(e) is a late example, born in 1818 to Silas and Susanna (Wight) Fisk(e). See Wight, The Wights, 181-182.
diversity in name selection as in other aspects of life.\textsuperscript{72}

The nineteenth century witnessed further increases in the availability of the written word. Improvements in transportation facilitated the spread of printed material, first road and canal, and later by railroad. Separate publications sprang up to address the interests of specific groups, as everyone clamored to have his or her voice heard.\textsuperscript{73} Mechanized production reduced the price of books, pamphlets, and newspapers, making them more readily available.\textsuperscript{74} More widespread education, especially for women, meant that more people could read than ever before.\textsuperscript{75} Boston in particular became the center of New England’s literary culture, and its influence radiated into the towns of central and western Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{76}

By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the naming customs of Massachusetts families bore very little resemblance to that of their Puritan forebears. The practice of naming children after their parents and grandparents decreased, and necronyms all but disappeared.\textsuperscript{77} However, among the families I studied, the percentage of children with familial names rebounded slightly, bolstered by the use of the names of parents’ siblings, and by the new habit of granting ancestral surnames as middle names.\textsuperscript{78} By bestowing the names of lateral rather than lineal kin, parents

\textsuperscript{72}The percentage of the population with the most common names started to decline in the 1770s. See Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 229 (note 26); Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 545 (Table I).
\textsuperscript{73}These included many dedicated to various religious denominations. See Hatch, Democratization of American Christianity, 73, 75-76, 125-127.
\textsuperscript{76}Ronald Story, “Class and Culture in Boston: The Athenaeum, 1807-1860,” American Quarterly, 27, No. 2 (May 1975): 188-189, 196-197. Local print culture also expanded, and included works of general interest in addition to those with a town or region-specific focus (eg. newspapers, almanacs). See Gilmore, Reading Becomes a Necessity, 196-200.
\textsuperscript{78}Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 91, 93, 96, 98, 105.
privileged the personal relationships they shared with their siblings over the cross-generational replication of the family. No longer driven by obligation to preserve the familial hierarchy, they were free to give more consideration to an emotional connection.\textsuperscript{79} Fanny (Appleton) Longfellow remarked that her second daughter’s middle name, Mary, “was added for her two aunts’ sake.”\textsuperscript{80} Moreover, as necronyms faded, the task of keeping the names of those who died in childhood alive fell to their siblings. To some extent, the names of the dead (and especially the namesakeless) had always been an attractive option.\textsuperscript{81} Now, as people glorified the affectionate bonds formed in the home, they took on even greater significance. The ideology of the ‘Cult of Domesticity’ romanticized the nuclear family, within the sheltered world of the home, as a haven from the tumultuous, vulgar realm of public life.\textsuperscript{82} Under these conditions, namesakes served a sentimental, rather than an obligatory or spiritual function. There was no expectation of reciprocity or financial gain. Similarly, those children who did share their names with parents or grandparents indicated the devotion their parents felt towards each other or their own parents.\textsuperscript{83} When Lyman Beecher’s first daughter was born, he wrote, “We called her Catharine Esther, the first


\textsuperscript{80} Fanny Appleton Longfellow, \textit{Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals}, edited by Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Longman, Green, and Company, 1956), 174-175. Fanny’s sister, Mary (Appleton) Mackintosh, was living in Antigua at this time, so the onomastic link may have been intended to relieve some of the longing created by distance in their relationship.

\textsuperscript{81} Samuel Sewall, for instance, named a daughter Sarah, since “Mother Sewall had a sister Sarah; and none of my sisters of that name.” Thomas, \textit{Sewall Diary}, Vol. 1, 324.

\textsuperscript{82} Ryan, \textit{Empire of the Mother}, 45-46, 48.

\textsuperscript{83} By the 1840s, advice literature for women stressed the centrality of love to marriage. See Ryan, \textit{Empire of the Mother}, 37-38. For the special relationship between mothers and children, see Peter Gregg Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind in Death and in Life} (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977), 100, 111-112.
from Aunt Benton, my foster-mother, the second from my own mother.\textsuperscript{84}

In addition to honoring family ties through the names of children, Massachusetts parents also turned to another class of potential namesakes: close friends.\textsuperscript{85} Deep, personal friendships between women, and to a lesser extent between men, grew in importance during the nineteenth century, as associations of equals replaced the strictly hierarchical society of the colonial period.\textsuperscript{86} When naming his third son in 1807, John Quincy Adams gave him the middle name Francis, “as a token of honour to my old friend and patron judge Dana.”\textsuperscript{87} Such declarations became rarer as the nineteenth century progressed, as each man strove to succeed based on his own abilities and efforts. In place of earlier relationships of patronage and deference, individuals forged strong bonds with their peers in their youth, often maintained for the duration of their lives.\textsuperscript{88} Friendships could extend to both members of a couple, intertwining the lives of all involved. Elizabeth (Payson) Prentiss reported to her friend

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\textsuperscript{84} Charles Beecher, ed. \textit{Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc. of Lyman Beecher, D. D.}, Vol. 1, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865), 125. Beecher’s mother had died when he was still a baby, and his father, David, left him with his aunt and uncle, Lot and Catherine Benton, who had no children of their own. David Beecher remarried and had more children (including a daughter named Esther), but Lyman grew up as an only child. See Barbara A. White, \textit{The Beecher Sisters} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 1-2, 6.

\textsuperscript{85} Without narrative sources, it was impossible to determine whether or not any of the families in my data set employed names in this manner. Any children whose name matched that of an unrelated person (either a surname as given name or a corresponding first and middle name) fell into the category of those named for notable individuals. Some of these were local figures, and I could not determine whether the name reflected the prominence of the namesake or a personal relationship between him or her and the parents. Isaiah and Sarah (Clark) Smith, for instance, named a son Sabin Mann Smith and a daughter Mary Mann Smith; Sabin Mann had served in the American Revolution, operated a local tavern, and owned considerable property. He and his second wife, Mary, lived in Medfield, as did the Smiths, though he died more than ten years before the Smiths’ son was born. Sabin and Mary Mann left no namesake children of their own. See Tilden, \textit{History of Medfield}, 427 (side number 6), 488-489 (side numbers 117, 156, 157). \textit{Vital Records of Medfield}, 93.


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Mrs. Elizabeth L. Smith, that the latter’s husband, Henry Boynton Smith, “will tell you when he gets home how he baptized his namesake on Sunday.” (Smith was a minister.)

While few people fulfilled such a public role in relation to their namesakes, the parents undoubtedly would have notified them of the occasion and perhaps invited them to attend.

In other cases, friendship touched only women, whether married or single. Sarah Newman (Connell) Ayer, who began writing in her diary at the age of sixteen in 1805, recorded the breadth and depth of her association with female friends throughout her life. Even though she relocated several times across New England, she maintained these friendships. Increased outmigration threatened the face-to-face aspect of such relationships, as people dispersed across the countryside, but they continued through correspondence and periodic visits.

On one occasion, Ayer observed that the moment that separated me from friends so tenderly beloved will never be obliterated from my mind...

Whether near or far, friends figured prominently in the private life of the domestic sphere. As men’s work moved outside of the home, women formed their own social networks centered around their common domestic interests. Naming a child for a friend acknowledged the primacy of this connection, and helped to preserve the memory of distant friends. Ayer named one of her daughters Harriot Osgood, “for the dear friend of my early childhood, the companion of my schooldays.”

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89 George Lewis Prentiss, ed. *Life and Letters of Elizabeth Prentiss* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1882), 179-180. It seems that this friendship crossed gender boundaries, as Mr. Smith and Mrs. Prentiss corresponded with each other as well as with each other’s spouses (p. 468).


91 M. H. Jewell, ed. *Diary of Sarah Connell Ayer: Andover and Newburyport, Massachusetts, Concord and Bow, New Hampshire, Portland and Eastport, Maine* (Portland, Maine: Lefavor-Tower Company, 1910), 17. Earlier she had remarked “Sweetly do the moments pass in the society of friends from whom we have been long separated.” (p. 4)

92 Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 12-14.

for her, and referred to one of these girls as her “dear little namesake.”94 On some level, such namesakes may reflect parental nostalgia and a desire to recapture their own idealized childhoods.

In addition to the rising popularity of non-familial namesakes, the percentages of children with English traditional and Teutonic names also grew in the nineteenth century.95 The occurrence of the former among prominent figures of the Early Republic may have factored into their later success.96 The latter had originated in the British literature of the Romantic movement and quickly spread to the United States.97 Both underscored the cultural connection between America and Britain through their shared past. Romantic authors like Sir Walter Scott and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow painted an idyllic portrait of history, glorifying distant figures and events.98 Additionally, the sentimentality in these narratives appealed to the virtuous ideals of personal improvement that became popular with middle class Americans in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. The new democratic approach to Protestantism encouraged people to strive for the betterment of themselves and those around them, contributing to a host of nineteenth century reform movements.99 By portraying the past as part of a continuum with the present, Romantic authors attempted to provide a historical basis for this spirit of improvement, securing the position of the English-speaking nations at the pinnacle of civilization’s progress.

94 Jewell, ed. *Diary of Sarah Connell Ayer*, 149, 157, 327, 348. These included Sarah Connell Davis, Sarah Ayer Leavitt, and the daughter of Lydia Kettell. The last was another childhood friend from Newburyport.


96 Without the additional qualifier of a surname as middle name, it is impossible to determine how many of the boys named George were intended to invoke Washington, for example. Washington himself was part of a contingent named for the English monarch. See Stewart, *American Given Names*, 32, 127 ‘George.’ This cannot, however, explain the growing number of girls with such names.


As immigrants surged into American cities and then took up residence in mill towns across New England, the native-born population defined themselves in opposition to the newcomers, who they viewed with apprehension. Although the rise of English traditional and Anglo-Saxon names in New England predated this influx, it likely worked to perpetuate the trend. The descendants of the Puritans looked to the illustrious deeds of their ancestors to defend their privileged position in New England society, deflecting blame for the negative aspects of urbanization and industrialization onto the “racially inferior” immigrants. This nativist mentality also manifested itself through the establishment of local historical and genealogical societies that stressed the continuity between their members and the first settlers. The dedication to New England’s history included a religious element, invoking their claim as the legitimate heirs to the Puritans’ ‘chosen’ status. Most of these individuals were wealthy scions of long-established families, similar to those in my data set. For these families, names acted as another means of distancing themselves from the immigrant other. Teutonic and English traditional names tied them firmly to their Anglo-Saxon roots and perpetuated the ethnic divide.

Over the course of the period under study, the names of Massachusetts children shifted from a strong orientation towards religious duty and the lineal family to

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101 Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 5-12, 21-22, 31. Solomon focused primarily on Boston, and the force of her arguments concerned immigration in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The origins of the perceived racial divide, however, arrived with the first wave of Irish immigrants in the 1830s and 1840s.
103 This was rooted in the rhetoric of the American Revolution, and the theme emerged even earlier in the jeremiads that celebrated the first Puritan settlers. See, Hatch, *Sacred Cause*, 72-73, 43-47. Jenks, *Address to NEHGS*, 16-18.
104 See, for example, Charles Deane and Charles C. Smith, eds., “Members of the Massachusetts Historical Society,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1 (1791-1835): xii-xlix. Most of the members had postnominals or a title.
emphasize instead the nuclear family and a distinctly American value system. A combination of Protestant and Republican ideology drove these changes, revealing the effect of lofty ideals on everyday events like the selection of a name. The range of possibilities expanded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as parents encountered new sources of names. Furthermore, the new privilege afforded to individual expression allowed for greater creativity and flexibility in naming children. Although familial naming experienced great losses, an increase in the number of children named for parental siblings indicated that families still believed in the importance of perpetuating the names of previous generations.\textsuperscript{105} By the middle of the nineteenth century, personal tastes acted as the primary determinant of names. As one author observed, those concerned with religion still relied on the Bible when naming children, while the “sentimental” would “borrow the name of a favorite hero or heroine,” and others were motivated by patriotic spirit.\textsuperscript{106} Despite the emphasis on individual choice, parents still paid attention to connotations of virtue, choosing names that embodied their values. Rather than interpreting the decline of Biblical names as representative of secularization, one should consider them in light of new developments in American Protestantism and the faith inherent in the ‘spirit of democracy.’

\textsuperscript{105} Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 110-111. Among the families in my data set, a majority of children continued to bear familial names, even in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Of Necronyms and Gravestones

Death is part of the universal human experience, though people interpret it through a variety of religious and cultural lenses. Determining individuals’ towards death often requires the use of indirect evidence, since few people left written records on that (or any) topic. Puritan ministers wrote extensively about death and salvation, but looking to other sources, such as funerary art and the use of the names of the dead offers valuable insight into the impact of this theology on the lives of ordinary people. When considered alongside each other, these two cultural markers follow a trajectory with similar implications for the underlying belief system.

Puritan parents frequently assigned the names of previously deceased children, necronyms, a practice that most modern scholars find odd. Treating these names like those of any other deceased relative, they added a sense of permanency to the naming pattern by ‘replacing’ children who died young.1 Necronyms arrived in Massachusetts with the first settlers, fell into decline after the close of the eighteenth century, and had all but disappeared by the second half of the nineteenth century. This change, along with a series of other modifications to the Puritan naming scheme, emerged most sharply in the final decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth, connoting a shift in the underlying cultural values driving naming practices.2 Comparing the timing of the decline of necronyms with key points in the theological debate on the nature of children facilitates deeper understanding of the meaning behind this shift. This change signalled a transformation in beliefs


2 For the timing of this change in Concord, see Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 224-230. Fischer termed this sudden transformation a “Revolution.” In Hingham, see Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 54 (Table II). For a detailed description of the decline of necronyms among the children in my data set, see Kaila Knight Schwartz, “Invention and Convention: A Genealogical Approach to Massachusetts Onomastics” (Senior Honors Thesis, Brandeis University, May 2008), 51-56.
concerning the meaning of names, the role of children within the family, and the religious implications of death for infants and young children.

Alongside the use of necronyms, trends in gravestone motifs described by James Deetz and James Hijiya indicate a wider intellectual shift among the descendants of the Massachusetts Puritans.\(^3\) Deetz sketched the rise and decline of three basic types of gravestone art - the death’s head, cherub, and urn and willow - in Massachusetts between 1680 and 1820. He linked the changing popularity of these designs, as well as regional differences, to shifting religious beliefs.\(^4\) Hijiya added three additional types - plain style, monumentalism, and modern plain style - and carried the analysis through the twentieth century. Although he agreed that most gravestone decoration held symbolic meaning, he argued that each design could represent more than one motive.\(^5\)

The demographic trends of the New England family offer a lens for interpreting these changes.\(^6\) Differences in fertility and mortality rates necessarily impacted choices regarding naming by altering the size of the completed family and the number of opportunities for the use of necronyms. When combined with existing analyses and indices of cultural and ideological change in Massachusetts, they present a unique perspective on the emergent New England mentality.

My data, Daniel Scott Smith’s, and David Hackett Fischer’s all concur on the prevalence of necronyms during the first century of Massachusetts settlement, though

\(^4\) Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten, 95-100.
not on the magnitude. Generally, Fischer’s Concord families and those in my data set behaved similarly in assigning necronyms, using them somewhat more frequently than Smith’s Hingham parents.\(^7\) Prior to 1700, parents transmitted roughly seventy percent of the names of children who died on to future offspring. Fischer observed necronymic succession as eighty percent of opportunities in Concord, while Smith marked this at fifty-two percent in Hingham. My study and Fischer’s depended on relatively few cases during these years, while Smith drew on a larger sample, making his results more representative.\(^8\)

The loss of a child who held a familial name often motivated parents to assign the same name to a later child. Among seventeenth-century Hingham families, parents reused the names of seventy-one percent of their own namesake sons and daughters.\(^9\) When Thomas Shepard’s wife bore him a second son shortly after the death of the first in 1635, he named him Thomas, “which name I gave him because we thought the Lord gave me the first son I lost on sea in this again, and hence gave him his brother’s name.”\(^10\) Shepard explicitly acknowledged the connection between the two boys, but did not attribute any impetus to the fact that the name was also his own. Similarly, after his son John died, “which was no small affliction and heartbreaking to me,” Shepard recorded that on “April the second, 1646, [the Lord] gave me another son, John...”\(^11\) He later recorded his reasoning thus: “…I gave this name because the Lord seemed to make up the breach and repair the loss of my first John, and it may be

\(^7\) Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 227 (note 23). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II). Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 51-53, especially 52 (Figure 1). Part of this variance may result from statistical deviation, as the number of families included in the Hingham study far outranks that of Fischer’s and my own. Conversely, perhaps this speaks to fundamental differences between the earlier coastal settlements and those of slightly later origin in the interior of the state.

\(^8\) Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 227 (note 23). He found only five opportunities for bestowing necronyms in the seventeenth century. My data set contained eleven opportunities for this time period. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II) noted seventy-one cases.

\(^9\) Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II). There were twenty-four instances.


\(^11\) Shepard, God’s Plot, 69-70.
hath and will hear all the prayers for the first in the second.” Shepard’s older brother, who took responsibility for his education after the death of their parents, had also been named John; yet he made no mention of the namesake in conjunction with either son. By contrast, when Samuel Sewall named a second daughter Judith more than ten years after the death of his first child by that name, he recorded only the name’s familial significance, declaring he did so “in Remembrance of her honoured and beloved grandmother Mrs. Judith Hull.” For Sewall, it would seem, the earlier namesake held more importance than the deceased child.

The use of necronyms was not confined to the names of children who died young. Smith recorded nearly equal numbers of ‘recycled’ names from those who did not live to their first birthday and those who survived the first few years of life. Jonathan, the son of Jonathan and Mary (Ellis) Adams died at the age of fifteen on July 5, 1694. His parents welcomed their final child, whom they also named Jonathan, on May 7, 1696. The impulse to have a namesake son may have contributed to their decision. Deacon John Paine revealed his dedication to necronymic replacement by perpetuating a name with only a tenuous familial antecedent; when his wife gave birth to their final child (a son) on May 18, 1714, they named him “Benjamin: in Remembrance of my dear Son Benjamin who latly [sic] departed this life.” The first Benjamin had died the previous December, after suffering an injury on a whaling

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12 Shepard, God’s Plot, 81. Shepard wrote these lines in a chronology of the birth of his children that preceded his journal. It seems likely that they were added after the fact.
13 Shepard, God’s Plot, 37-39.
14 Milton Halsey Thomas, ed. The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729, Vol. 1 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973), 459-460. For the birth, baptism, and death of Sewall’s first daughter Judith, see 264-266 in the same. Had Sewall felt so inclined, he had many chances to bestow necronyms; eight of his children died before the birth of a same-sex sibling, but only Judith received a necronym. The others also bore familial names.
15 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 546, 547 (Table II). This trend became more pronounced later, as parents reused more names from older children than younger ones through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
16 William S. Tilden, History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886, with Genealogies of the Families that Held Real Estate or made any Considerable Stay in the Town during the First Two Centuries (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1887), 280 (side number 3). Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1903), 11, 190.
voyage. He was sixteen years old at the time of his death. 17 John Paine’s sister, Dorcas, had married Benjamin Vickery, but neither Paine nor his wife had a blood relative of that name. 18

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the total incidence of necronyms in my data set held constant near two thirds. Smith described a higher rate (near eighty percent) for Hingham, while Fischer noted an average of around seventy percent in Concord. 19 Nevertheless, the persistence of familial names as necronyms among the families that I studied remained near ninety percent. In contrast to the values for total necronyms, this statistically outstripped Smith’s observations. 20 As in the previous century, if parents had intended to preserve a certain familial name, the loss of the child so-named usually did not sway them from trying again. 21

One case exhibits the complexity inherent in such interpretations. The Reverend Samuel Dexter and his wife, Catherina (Mears) Dexter, lost their three and a half year old son, John, on November 5, 1731. Their next male child was born on August 12, 1735. On this occasion, Dexter wrote, “I purpose (by God’s Leave) to Call his Name John, to bear up the Name of his Dear Brother, whom we buryed.” Religious motivation played a key part in the selection of this name. Of the first John, Dexter exclaimed, “Oh that he might be a Beloved Disciple...;” of the second “May He be a

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20 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II). Significantly, Smith only considered parental names in his exploration of necronyms with prior familial significance. Since Fischer did not distinguish between familial and non-familial necronyms, his data has no bearing here.
21 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 223 (note 17), described the Hartwell family; Ephraim and Abigail (Stearns) Hartwell lost all five of their children to the throat distemper in October, 1740. Over the next fourteen years they re-granted all of these names.
Beloved Disciple, a Jedediah, beloved of the Lord.”22 Dexter’s father had also been named John, and he had died in 1722.23 However, despite the shared name, Dexter did not state the connection between either boy and his grandfather. Whether he failed to mention the name’s familial significance because it was obvious or because he felt the religious meaning was more important remains unclear.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the use of necronyms in my sample population had fallen only slightly from the previous period, resting just below sixty percent.24 Likewise, Smith found almost no change in the occurrence of necronyms during the same years.25 At this point, the pattern appeared firmly entrenched. Fischer’s data for the period as a whole reflected a similar trend; however, he isolated a significant reduction in the preference for necronyms during the last decade of the eighteenth century. This marked the beginning of the period he referred to as an onomastic revolution.26 Once again, the difference in frequency between those with and those without familial names remained significant, but this time the inverse held true. During these years, parents in my data set re-granted less than fifty-five percent of familial names of deceased children. Strikingly, Smith observed this trend in reverse in Hingham in the second half of the eighteenth century. Despite the reduction in necronyms, he marked a sharp increase in the number of children named for deceased siblings with familial names to over ninety-five percent. This reversal proves difficult to explain, as it runs counter to both my own results and the Hingham data as a whole.27 Perhaps this particular group of parents held a deeper affinity for the names of their relatives, or perhaps they had a stronger commitment to the traditional ways.

25 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II).
27 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” Table II, 547. This suggests a dichotomy in Hingham between conservative parents, who remained steadfast in their adherence to the tradition of preserving family names, and onomastic innovators, who abandoned the old pattern outright.
The experience of Ebenezer and Abigail (Ellis) Clark attests to the degree of parental dedication to preserving a particular name. Ebenezer and Abigail’s first child, Olive, was born on June 21, 1771, and died in 1776. Her same-name sister, born December 17, 1779, died within a few days of birth. She was followed by the third Olive, who was born on October 23, 1791.\footnote{Tilden, History of Medfield, 358-359 (side numbers 229, 233, 237). Vital Records of Medfield, 37, 203.} Tragically, this daughter also died before she reached the age of twenty, and never personally passed her name to the next generation. The name had originally belonged to Abigail’s sister, who had died in childhood.\footnote{Vital Records of Medfield, 49, 208. Abigail’s father was also named Oliver; he lost both of his sons in childhood, as well as Olive whose name may have been intended as a female variant of his own, since she was the next child born after her brother’s death. Ebenezer also had a brother named Oliver who died in childhood, and the Clarks did name their first son, born after the death of the second Olive, Oliver. See Tilden, History of Medfield, 355 (side number 169), 358 (side number 234), 377 (side number 43). Tilden mistakenly listed Ebenezer’s sibling as ‘Oliver’ rather than ‘Olive.’ He also accidentally omitted Abigail’s sister, Olive. For the births and deaths of these children, see Vital Records of Medfield, 35, 37, 49, 203, 208-209.} One cannot help but wonder if the parents of such children feared they would meet the same fate as their namesakes, as they undoubtedly associated memories of the deceased child with the experience of his or her death. The health (both spiritual and bodily) of the previous namesake may have softened their worries.

In another instance of parents choosing to preserve a name with familial significance, on March 17, 1769, Benjamin Smith’s son was “Baptized Ben. after one that was Drowned last Summer.” Since Elizabeth (Porter) Phelps, a member of the same Hadley church as Smith, reported the naming, the balance between the name’s significance as Smith’s own given name and that of the child’s necronymic antecedent remains unknown.\footnote{Elizabeth Porter Phelps, “The Diary of Elizabeth (Porter) Phelps,” eds. Thomas Eliot Andrews and James Lincoln Huntington, NEHGR 118 (April 1964): 113.} Benjamin Smith apparently did not leave behind his own account.\footnote{I was also unable to locate a genealogy that included his family, due in part to the commonness of his surname among many unrelated individuals. Further, Hadley’s vital records were not part of the ‘Tan Book’ series, and remain unpublished, so the age at death of Smith’s first son Benjamin, and the other details of his family are a mystery.} Still, Phelps’ description of this incident illustrates the continued prominence of necrons in Massachusetts society. Knowing that Smith’s son
Benjamin had died during the previous year, Phelps readily grasped the connection between the two when Smith offered his new infant for baptism.

The first half of the nineteenth century attended a precipitous fall in the popularity of necronyms. Smith marked actual necronyms at close to fifty percent, and my average lay near that figure. Fischer found a much lower incidence - approximately twenty percent for Concord. The proportion of familial necronyms in my data set again lay below that for all necronyms by ten percent. Smith also recorded a decline of familial necronyms in these decades, although the total still lay above seventy percent. Although a majority of parents still assigned familial necronyms, the jump down from the previous era represented a major shift.

The use of multiple given names in the latter half of the eighteenth century brought a new element to the tradition of necronyms. Although the rising popularity of middle names offered the potential to effectively double the use of necronyms, they actually fell into decline shortly after this innovation took hold, highlighting the strength of the rejection. During these years, parents sometimes chose to preserve the onomastic uniqueness of their children while simultaneously carrying on the tradition of reusing children’s names by conjoining a necronym with a name that had no precedent in the family. Peter and Anna (Marsh) Belknap called their second son Linus Lathrop. Their first son, Linus, had died almost three years before. Some families, like that of Wales and Lucy (Morse) Plimpton combined a necronym with another familial name. They named a daughter Lucy Caroline on January 9, 1832, with her first name honoring her mother and her middle name her half-sister, who had

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34 Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 342-343, discussed the same trend in regard to parental names. After 1840, few Hingham children bore the same combination of first and middle names as their parents. Prior to that, more girls than boys had names that exactly matched their parents’. Vital Records of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850 (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1906), 20, 305.
died the previous June.\textsuperscript{36} Parents could also separate the first and middle names of the deceased child, effectively creating two distinct necronyms. The family of David and Olive (Smith) Clark proceeded to name sons Henry and James William after the loss of their son William Henry.\textsuperscript{37} In both of these cases, parents modified tradition to produce distinct names for each of their children, reinforcing the changing motivation guiding the bestowal of necronyms.

After 1850, my calculations relied on a very small set of data; as sample size dwindles, so too does any grasp at validity for the population at large. Of the two potential cases for the use of necronyms I noted for the cohort between 1851 and 1860, neither was actually assigned; the Reverend Edwin Silas Tingley and his wife, Jane Elizabeth (Wight) Tingley had two more sons after the death of their young son, Albert Edwin. The boy was named for both his mother’s brother and his father, yet his two younger brothers, William Herbert and Frederic, did not receive either portion of his name, or share their names with another relative.\textsuperscript{38} Fischer also ended his exploration here, but Smith continued his until 1880, when he found the total rate of necronymic survival at fifty percent and that for familial necronyms at under twenty percent.\textsuperscript{39} Nonetheless, by the dawn of the Civil War, necronyms verged on extinction among the families Fischer and I studied.\textsuperscript{40}

Although the results from all three studies display differences in the exact timing and compass of necronyms’ decline, they agree that the popularity of this custom faded dramatically from the early colonial era to the latter half of the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{36} Vital Records of Medfield, 81, 83, 230. Caroline Plimpton was Wales’ first daughter from his previous marriage, and had been a few months shy of her twentieth birthday when she died.
\textsuperscript{37} Vital Records of Medfield, 36, 39. Tilden, History of Medfield, 360 (side number 223).
\textsuperscript{38} William Ward Wight, The Wights: A Record of Thomas Wight of Dedham and Medfield and of his Descendants, 1635-1890 (Milwaukee: Swain and Tate, 1890), 204 (side number 1072), 281 (side number 2054). The two necronymic possibilities here refer to the deceased child’s two given names, not the number of children of the same sex born to his parents after he died.
\textsuperscript{39} Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 547 (Table II).
\textsuperscript{40} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 227 (note 23). Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 52 (Figure 1), 56.
century, when it all but disappeared. Variation in necronyms’ demise likely reflects a combination of local praxis and familial preference. Fischer suggested the presence of place-specific variations to the onomastic pattern, dependent on the influence of individual ministers.  

Likewise, Gloria Main documented a range of local practice in the namesakes of firstborn children across New England, rooted in the regional English cultures the early colonists brought with them. These local customs persisted long after those who introduced them had died. Moreover, the perseverance of certain names, infrequently used by the population at large, in particular families, illustrates the imprint of personal choice on Massachusetts onomastics.

The decline in necronyms towards the end of the period under consideration indicates definite changes in the reasoning parents exercised when granting a particular name. The absence of identical successors in the age of middle names suggests the acceptance of children as unique individuals who could not be replaced. Cases like that of the aforementioned Benjamin Smith and John Dexter stressed the centrality of the name of the deceased child, even when that name had additional familial connections. In the later years, parents seemingly bestowed necronyms to keep the name alive in the family, evinced by the disappearance of non-familial necronyms. Emphasis shifted from replacing the child to the name itself.

Unfortunately, I did not find any firsthand accounts recording parents’ reasons for choosing not to use a necronym, making it more difficult to ascertain why they fell into

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42 Gloria L. Main, “Naming Children in Early New England,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27, No. 1 (Summer 1996): 5-8. Her findings refuted Fischer’s assertions of parental naming’s East Anglian roots, since towns settled predominately by West Countrymen also exhibited this propensity.


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disuse in the nineteenth century.

In conjunction with changes in the frequency of necronyms, changes in contemporary gravestone motifs provide corroborating evidence for shifting beliefs concerning death and the spiritual afterlife. Like names, gravestones carry the gravitas of intended permanence, embodying a convergence of art, artifact, and textual record. Existing scholarship on Massachusetts headstones has confirmed the progression of three major decorative motifs, culminating in the rejection of elaborate imagery in favor of undecorated monuments. While Deetz did not distinguish between the grave markers of children and those of adults, his observations evinced striking parallels to contemporary onomastic change. Specifically, he dated the ebb of Death’s Heads in favor of Cherubs to the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and the flourishing of the Urn and Willow design at the expense of the Cherub to the first decade of the nineteenth century, reflecting the timing of the initial decrease and sharp downturn in the assigning of necronyms. By the middle of the nineteenth century, undecorated obelisks and plainly lettered white marble or limestone slabs displaced the Classical Urn and Willow, coinciding with the final disappearance of necronyms.

Deetz attributed the falling popularity of the Death’s Head after the midpoint of the eighteenth century to the slackening of orthodox Puritanism in the aftermath of the Great Awakening. Following the emphasis on emotional religion and a personal connection with the divine that revivalist preachers promoted, the use of the Cherub on tombstones signified greater assurance of heavenly reward. Supporters of the Awakening stressed the physical experience of grace, and established ministers had

Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten, 95-100. Hijiya, “Gravestones and Attitudes,” 341, 355. Deetz illustrated the serial progression of gravestone design in terms of “battleship curves,” showing the proportion of each style in any given decade.

Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten, 96-99.


Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten, 96. He repeated Allan Ludwig’s conclusion that the Puritans preferred earthly representations of death due to their aversion to the idolatry that could result from depicting heavenly beings. See Allan I. Ludwig, Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 4-5.
to adopt some of the emotive rhetorical strategies used by itinerants in order to maintain authority over their congregations. In Deetz’s calculus, the Death’s Head represented the harsh reality of death, while the Cherub embodied a softening of this belief. Where the earlier stones were inscribed with phrases like “Here lies...” or “Here lies buried...,“ later ones began “Here lies the body of...,” reinforcing the transition from tangible mortality to the separation of body from spirit. Although revivalists upheld the doctrines of innate depravity and the unconditional election, their message inspired increased concern with salvation, which ended for many people in a conversion experience that assuaged their worries.

Hijiya concurred that the Death’s Head served as a constant reminder of human mortality, but echoed earlier scholars in balancing the fear of death with the joy of potential salvation in the Puritan mind. This tension, he averred, preserved a critical sense of stasis. Rather than inducing immediate horror, the Death’s Head provoked contemplation of death and the afterlife, which he summed up in a word as “Awe.”

For Hijiya, the Cherub (which he called the Angel) had more to do with the Enlightenment than the Awakening. Despite the threat of hellfire preached by the likes of Jonathan Edwards, the Cherub motif symbolized the comfort of expected salvation inspired by appeals to a rational God. Whether rooted in the Great Awakening or the Enlightenment (or both), the replacement of the Death’s Head iconography with the Cherub indicated greater hope for heavenly reward.

The shift to the Urn and Willow style of gravestone art, Deetz argued, signaled a

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51 Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 97-98.
53 Hijiya, “Gravestones and Attitudes,” 346-347. This balance, he argued, served to anchor the Puritan world-view, preventing the extremes of hopeless despair and assurance beyond reproach.
54 Hijiya, “Gravestones and Attitudes,” 341, 347-348. He contrasted the sanitized form of this iconography with that of the late Medieval *transi*, which depicted grossly decaying bodies.
move towards the depersonalization of death. These stones frequently bore the words “In memory of...” or “Dedicated to the memory of...,” indicating their commemorative purpose. By combining classical imagery with a message that glossed over the death itself, the people who selected these markers displayed a degree of secularization in their funerary practices. Specifically, they focused on the earthly life of the deceased, without attention to the possibilities of the afterlife. Hijiya carried this a step further, explicitly linking this decorative style with the act of mourning. Alleging that the expression of grief was greater in the nineteenth century than it had been in previous centuries, he declared that the relationships between people had taken primacy over the relationship between an individual and God. Whereas previously the sorrow of death was tempered by the acceptance of God’s will and the image of the deceased enjoying spiritual repose, now the primary focus was on loss and feelings of remorse. Immortality was to be gained through memorialization rather than through spiritual means. Later in the nineteenth century Hijiya noted the rise of monumental gravestones - large, ornate, individualized tributes to those buried beneath them. These aimed to ensure the remembrance of the deceased with all of their unique qualities. Gone were the introductory phrases of earlier periods; these stones related only the person’s name, date of death, and age, relying on form rather than inscription to convey their message.

Although I did not collect gravestone information for all of the families in my data set of names, I did perform a headstone seriation of the Old Burial Ground in

58 Hijiya, “Gravestones and Attitudes,” 351-354. He cited as additional evidence the publication of poetic elegies and the creation of artistic “mourning pictures.” That is not to say that he rejected the role of religion in the lives of nineteenth century New Englanders. However, the focus had shifted to the expression of Christian virtue in life.
Sturbridge, Massachusetts in 2005, imitating Deetz’s methodology. Since my study of names included some Sturbridge families, this earlier work proved instructive in understanding the contemporary treatment of death and remembrance. The headstones of Sturbridge mostly corroborated Deetz’s estimation for Massachusetts, deviating only in the transition from Death’s Head to Cherub a decade sooner than expected. From scanning the inscriptions to identify the gravestones of children, a pattern quickly emerged. Through the early 1780s, Death’s Heads remained the rule, and Cherubs were the dominant form from the late 1780s through the first years of the nineteenth century. Prior to 1810, parents began placing stones depicting the Urn and Willow over their children’s graves, and undecorated monuments replaced this imagery in the 1830s. When considered in light of the entire assemblage of headstones, the children’s markers illustrated a high degree of conservatism. Gravestones of the elderly likely represented the stylistic preference of their descendants, whereas these gravestones portrayed the iconography of the parents.

Both naming patterns and gravestones serve as relics of the societies that begat them, intersecting with the wider cultural mentality. The complementary permutations in the granting of necronyms and the decoration and inscription of headstones

60 On March 4 and October 22, 2005, I visited the Old Burial Ground to transcribe inscriptions and describe and photograph headstone types. In total, I recorded information from approximately one third of the stones in the cemetery.

61 Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 95-96, 103. Deetz openly avowed that the exact timing of the trends varied somewhat throughout New England, so the Sturbridge data did not contradict his timeline. He calculated the rate of spread of new motifs from Boston into the countryside at one mile per year. The relatively early appearance of Cherub stones in Sturbridge could result from its location at the intersection of two major trade routes (initially the Bay Path and Woodstock Path, and later the Boston Post Road and the Worcester-Staffordshire Turnpike). See Brian Burns, *Sturbridge: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1988), 9-10, 13, 21. The decline in the number of total headstones towards the final decades of my examination reflected the move to the newer North Cemetery due to overcrowding in the Old Burial Ground.

62 The sample I recorded contains a relatively small number of children’s gravestones, forming a linear progression rather than the anticipated battleship curve. Hijiya, “Gravestones and Attitudes,” 342-343 pointed out that a great many people, especially in the colonial era, had no gravestones. When one considers the relatively high rates of infant and child mortality, and the expense of procuring a tombstone, this makes sense. Only wealthy parents could afford to erect a marker over the graves of their children.

63 Deetz also observed this trend, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 112.
indicated underlying changes in the conceptualization of death and of the role of children within the family. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Massachusetts towns witnessed a transition away from the organic Puritan community established in the early years of settlement. Emphasis on uniformity and conformity diminished in favor of individuality. Whereas the first settlers had stressed consensus, later generations turned to compromise.\(^{64}\) In the formative years of the Early Republic, social practices adapted to fit the new political reality.\(^{65}\) Moreover, the Great Awakening, and later the growing popularity of evangelical religion, directly confronted the hegemony of orthodox Puritan theology.\(^{66}\) This compelled a reevaluation of Puritan beliefs in response to the fragmentation of traditional ideology, a trend manifested in gravestone iconography.

From a modern perspective, the Puritan outlook on death was strikingly bleak. At root, Puritans struggled between fear of damnation and hope for salvation, constantly seeking an answer they could never quite grasp. Predestination rendered them powerless to affect their own election, and constant self-evaluation produced a heightened sense of their inherent sinfulness. As death approached, the imminent resolution to this struggle proved terrifying, a result of continued emphasis on total human depravity, though some did ultimately achieve a sense of peace.\(^{67}\) Children were not shielded from this harsh world view, but taught from an early age to

\(^{64}\) Kenneth A. Lockridge, \textit{A New England Town, The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736} (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970), 3-7, 16-21, 82-83, 88-90, 100-103, 124, 135-136, described these changes in political terms.


recognize their own wickedness and strive for salvation.\textsuperscript{68} Sewall took great pains with his children’s spiritual education. Advising his eleven year old son, Sam, of the need “to prepare for Death,” he “pray’d with him, and read Scriptures comforting against death,...” after the boy expressed great fear that he would die.\textsuperscript{69} When his daughter Betty cried that “she was afraid she should goe to Hell, her Sins were not pardon’d.,” he called in the minister, Mr. Willard, to pray with her.\textsuperscript{70} While no one could know with absolute certainty the state of his or her own soul, reflection and prayer could provide a measure of reassurance.

As David Stannard explained, “the Puritan child was riddled with sin and corruption, a depraved being polluted with the residue of Adam’s sin.”\textsuperscript{71} While this might seem to suggest contempt for children, parents loved their offspring just as they were able to love each other, reconciling depravity with their more endearing qualities.\textsuperscript{72} Cotton Mather, who declared that children “...no sooner step than they stray, ... no sooner lisp than they ly,” referred to his own children as “my little Birds.”\textsuperscript{73}

Parents held ultimate responsibility for instructing their children and shaping their characters, preparing the next generation both practically and spiritually.\textsuperscript{74} Like all other members of the community, they faced spiritual dangers - some children and infants, like adults, were not marked as elect and thus destined for Hell.\textsuperscript{75} Puritan parents struggled at length over the state of their children’s souls; Shepard

\textsuperscript{68} Stannard, \textit{Puritan Way of Death}, 50-51. Religious education began for many when they were still toddlers, though most did not experience grace until well into their teenage years, if not even later. Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 102-105.
\textsuperscript{69} Thomas, \textit{Sewall Diary}, Vol. 1, 249. Sewall recorded this incident on January 12, 1690, following the death of nine year old Richard Dummer.
\textsuperscript{70} Thomas, \textit{Sewall Diary}, Vol. 1, 345-346. Betty was fifteen years old at the time.
\textsuperscript{71} Stannard, \textit{Puritan Way of Death}, 49.
\textsuperscript{74} Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 97-98.
\textsuperscript{75} Stannard, \textit{Puritan Way of Death}, 67-68, 70.
desperately hoped for “...the conversion of my poor children, especially of my eldest.” He lamented that “sometime the Lord seemed to make all men for naught,” but “...saw God had blessings for all my children, and hence turned them over to God.”\textsuperscript{76} Children had to confront their own depravity, but elect parents seemed uneasy with the idea that their own children might not be saved, usually concluding that their deceased offspring had received the gift of heavenly repose.\textsuperscript{77} Viewed from this perspective, the use of necronyms seems less bizarre; parents were not replacing a previously deceased child per se, but invoking the name of one who had hopefully received divine salvation, just as they might any other ‘Godly’ relative. If, as Main suggested, parents named children after themselves in order to link them to their own covenanted status, the use of necronyms could fulfill the same purpose.\textsuperscript{78} This would account for the higher frequency of necronymic replacement for children with familial names and older children.\textsuperscript{79} In both of these situations, manifest evidence of election would have been apparent, making the deceased a more appealing namesake and role model.

In this context, children symbolized an important part of the collective community and a link in the family lineage, distinct from their relatives, but still part of a chain of individuals stretching across the generations. High infant and child mortality complicated the situation further. In a society where a “dead child [was] a sight no more surprising than a broken pitcher,” the fragility of young life presented constant cause for worry.\textsuperscript{80} Estimates of infant and child mortality in the early eighteenth century for rural Massachusetts indicate that from ten to thirty percent of those born never

\textsuperscript{76} Shepard, \textit{God’s Plot}, 126, 172.
\textsuperscript{77} Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 48. He also made the case that necronymic successors served as substitutes, deflecting parental concern from the salvation of the deceased to the spiritual state of the living.
\textsuperscript{78} Main, “Naming Children,” 11-12. Since the deceased child was presumably already under God’s protection, he or she would make an even stronger claim to an inherited stake in the Kingdom of Christ than an elect (living) parent.
reached adulthood.\textsuperscript{81} When adjusted to account for unrecorded infant deaths, figures suggest that parents lost one out of three children before they reached the age of majority.\textsuperscript{82} Since most families during this time period could expect to produce an average of seven or eight children, childhood death was a remarkably routine occurrence.\textsuperscript{83} This provided ample opportunity for the use of necronyms, and also accentuated the brevity of individual lives within the continuum of the family. By perpetuating the names of the dead, parents kept their memory alive.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the evangelical revivals of the Great Awakening had shattered the strict Calvinist monopoly over Massachusetts religious belief.\textsuperscript{84} Old Lights and New Lights quarreled with each other, while also trading barbs with the Arminian Liberals and growing numbers of Baptists and Methodists. Latent disagreements erupted in open conflict after 1740. This doctrinal infighting allowed people to choose a congregation that best matched their personal beliefs, no longer beholden to the authority of a single minister.\textsuperscript{85} While the New Lights, including Jonathan Edwards and Timothy Dwight, firmly upheld the doctrine of human depravity, Enlightenment thinkers increasingly questioned God’s arbitrary dispensation of grace.\textsuperscript{86} The doctrine of infant damnation had frequently troubled Puritan theologians, especially as infants gave no signs of the state of their souls. In part, the Halfway Covenant addressed the concerns of church members for their children’s souls, but the idea of infants in Hell, suffering even the mildest torments, unsettled most parents.\textsuperscript{87}

In the wake of this schism, pamphlet attacks on the traditional definition of

\textsuperscript{81} Vinovskis, “Angels’ Heads,” 286.
\textsuperscript{83} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 71, especially note 11. Osterud and Fulton, “Family Limitation,” 483-484.
\textsuperscript{87} Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 23-32.
original sin drew on rational Enlightenment thought. Liberal ministers like Charles Chauncy rejected the imputation of Adam’s guilt to all humanity since sin was a personal matter, declaring that children did not inherit their own parents’ depravity.\textsuperscript{88} No longer intrinsically corrupt and damnable, children were deemed innocent at birth and characterized by malleable moral neutrality, neither corrupt nor incorruptible.\textsuperscript{89} Such arguments dealt traditional Calvinism a harsh blow by forcing a public debate of its less savory points. Further, the spread of rationalist beliefs compelled the reconceptualization of God as a reasonable, merciful deity.\textsuperscript{90} Parents readily adopted the liberal position regarding infant damnation, forcing Orthodox Calvinists to modify their doctrine or risk losing the support of their congregations.\textsuperscript{91}

Against this backdrop, the shift in gravestone design from the Death’s Head to the Cherub portended a relaxation of death’s dire urgency, especially for children. Fear of damnation no longer accompanied death; gone was the unresolved tension of Puritan predestination.\textsuperscript{92} Eulogies also reflected this new confidence in salvation for the virtuous. Where earlier elegies focused on the deceased’s role in the community, stressing the communal loss without exaggerating deeds or virtues, those from the latter half of the eighteenth century affirmed the dead’s spiritual release to Heaven and the personal loss thereby created.\textsuperscript{93} When Samuel Sewall’s daughter Sarah died on December 23, 1695, he called in multiple ministers to pray for her, and lamented that he had not been “so effectually carefull of her Defence and preservation.”\textsuperscript{94}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[90] Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 50-51.
\item[92] Stannard, \textit{Puritan Way of Death}, 152-154. Stout, \textit{New England Soul}, 155-157 also illuminates this new emphasis on salvation through God’s love. Stout clarified that the concepts of sin and damnation did not disappear entirely, but were no longer the focus of preaching.
\item[93] Stannard, \textit{Puritan Way of Death}, 154-156.
\item[94] Thomas, \textit{Sewall Diary}, Vol. 1, 363-364. Sewall also expressed concern about his remaining living children, asking God for “pity and pardon and help for the future.”
\end{footnotes}
twenty years later, Cotton Mather wrote with confidence on the death of his young daughter Jerusha, “I gave her up unto the Lord.” Likewise, at the funeral of his daughter Elizabeth in 1739, Ebenezer Parkman asserted that he wished “to interr my Dead in the Faith of the new Covenant and of the glorious Privilege of the Ressurection to Eternal Life.”

The late eighteenth century witnessed another incipient change that affected the position of children within the family: a decline in marital fertility. In general, families bore one or two fewer children than they had fifty years before. Part of this decline stemmed from increased age at marriage, but the magnitude of reduction in family size exceeded that accounted for by delayed family formation. Additionally, parents began spacing the births of their children further apart. Although the motives driving this phenomenon remain somewhat unclear, it required a conscious decision by both parents. Fewer children meant fewer opportunities to assign names, and thus greater import for parental choices. To some extent the growing prevalence of middle names offset this loss of onomastic potential, but a net difference remained. Mortality rates changed little, so the numerical incidence of necronyms dipped partially as a result of shrinking chances for their use.

The identification of deceased children as distinct Heaven-bound spirits, as depicted through gravestone iconography, also diminished the need to recycle their

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95 Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724*, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 7th ser., vol. 8 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912), 261. Although Jerusha was not yet three years old at the time of her death in 1713, Mather recounted that with her last breath she declared “That she would go to Jesus Christ.”
99 Smaller families meant fewer children were born after the death of a same-sex sibling, and also that parents experienced the death of fewer children. The rate of infant and child mortality remained roughly the same, however. See Swedlund, *Shadows in the Valley*, 32-39. Vinovskis, “Angel’s Heads,” 282-286 demonstrated that child mortality was much lower in Massachusetts than in nineteenth-century Europe, but that there was little difference between small- and medium-sized towns.
names immediately. While earlier parents had couched their hopes for the new child’s salvation in terms of a necronymic predecessor, now they had reason to believe that he or she would achieve grace with or without this connection. Additionally, just as the democratic ideals of the new republic sanctioned the intellectual independence of adults, they contributed to the individuation of infants and children. The idea of replacing a child seemed less appropriate to parents as they came to recognize the connection between the name and the unique individual. As parents raised smaller families, they placed more value on each child. Using the names of these dead children as memorials only seemed fitting after sufficient time had elapsed to complete the grieving process.

The opening decades of the nineteenth century witnessed further weakening of the hold of strict Calvinist Christianity over the citizens of Massachusetts. Religious pluralism had replaced the hegemony of a unified Puritan church. Popular opinion increasingly described infants as inherently pure and good, carrying the rejection of infant sinfulness one step further. Significantly, however, older children were still subject to the possibility of damnation, due to exposure to worldly evils. The state of their souls depended, like their parents, on a conversion experience. In the 1820s, a final set of public disputes between the Unitarians, led by Henry Ware and Andrews Norton, and the orthodox Calvinists under Lyman Beecher and Chauncey Goodrich dealt the doctrine of infant damnation its final blow. As the Second Great Awakening

100 Slater, “Views of Children,” 89-91 cited epitaphs and poems that illustrated the assumed innocence of infants. While adults depended on God’s mercy to save them from sin, infants had not yet had an opportunity to sin.


102 Smith, “Population, Family, and Society,” 346-347 first presented this idea of the individuation of children in conjunction with the fertility transition in Massachusetts.

103 Stout, New England Soul, 313-314. This challenge had begun in the aftermath of the American Revolution, and grew more organized as the dissenting groups coalesced to overturn the state-supported religious establishment.

104 Slater, Children in the New England Mind, 70-73. Temptation to sin was too strong for anyone to resist; infants alone were absolved because they had not yet reached an age where they could exercise free will.

105 Slater, Children in the New England Mind, 74-84.
swept across New England, the Orthodox accepted innovation to prevent defection and ensure ideological survival. Popular evangelicalism challenged the teaching of educated ministers, emphasizing the accessibility of Biblical knowledge to all and a personal relationship with the divine.\textsuperscript{106} Now people relied on the power of their own consciences to guide them, rejecting formal religious rhetoric in favor of inspired spirituality. By the 1830s, the public openly accepted the Romantic portrayal of infants as blameless innocents, guaranteed of God’s protection. Until they had been exposed to the corrupting influences of the world, children were purely good.\textsuperscript{107}

Not coincidentally, the opening decades of the nineteenth century also brought a spike in the number of Urn and Willow gravestones. With their classical imagery and focus on memorialization, these stones epitomized the values of the age. Mourning the dead was now much more pronounced and public than in the past, and divorced from the question of the condition of the immortal soul.\textsuperscript{108} The burial ground itself shifted from a reminder of mortality to a repository of personal commemoration, and new cemeteries adopted a park-like design meant to soothe mourners.\textsuperscript{109} Grieving increasingly followed a formal process, with socially accepted stages marked by the bereaved’s dress and behavior. These customs made it easy for the community to identify mourners, and also helped to restrain the display of grief by setting visible limits on its duration.\textsuperscript{110}

Notably, this period also marked the sharpest reduction in completed family size. The average Massachusetts family now produced only four or five children.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{106} Hatch, \textit{Democratization of American Christianity}, 18-21, 34-41.
\textsuperscript{107} Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 86-89. The issue of infant damnation quietly faded from the realm of debate, only occasionally revived for the sake of ridiculing Calvinism, despite the fact that mid-nineteenth century Calvinists refused to defend the doctrine.
\textsuperscript{110} Drew Gilpin Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 147-149. Conventionally, mothers mourned the loss of a child for a year, dressing in heavy black garments. Fathers, brothers, and sisters were not expected to display their bereavement openly for so long, but individuals could alter tradition as their feelings dictated.
\textsuperscript{111} Main, “Rocking the Cradle,” 42-43. Osterud and Fulton, “Family Limitation,” 483.
Moreover, the typical age at marriage increased for both men and women, and the frequency of premarital pregnancy fell dramatically.\textsuperscript{112} Parents could still expect that at least one of their children would die before reaching adulthood; infectious disease struck the young in disproportionate numbers.\textsuperscript{113} Smaller families allowed parents to focus more of their attention on each child, but also increased the psychological toll of loss and the intensity of grief they felt when one died.\textsuperscript{114} Under these conditions, parents no longer needed or wanted a necronymic successor to act as a vessel for their memories of a previously deceased child. They might hope to cultivate the same desirable qualities in the new baby, but without the explicit connection. When nineteenth century parents did decide to reuse the name of a deceased child (often that of another relative as well), they frequently modified it by adding a middle name so that the new child had a unique identifier of his or her own.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the cultural and religious landscape of Massachusetts had settled into a new form. Unitarianism had taken root, alongside growing numbers of Baptists, and continued to encroach on what had once been the exclusive domain of Orthodox Calvinists.\textsuperscript{115} Literary accounts increasingly

\textsuperscript{112} Osterud and Fulton, “Family Limitation and Age at Marriage,” 484-487.
\textsuperscript{113} Swedlund, \textit{Shadows in the Valley}, 65-68. Vinovskis, “Angels’ Heads,” 286. Those who survived childhood had a life expectancy comparable to their twentieth-century descendants, as high infant and child mortality skewed the data.
\textsuperscript{114} Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 72-73. While New England parents had always expressed sorrow upon the death of a child, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Slater argued, “obsessive parental love” elevated the position of infants above all others. The emphasis shifted from concern about the state of the child’s soul to the profound sense of bereavement.
\textsuperscript{115} Hatch, \textit{Democratization of American Christianity}, 170-179. Barbara A. White, \textit{The Beecher Sisters} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 8, 11, discussed the strength of Unitarianism in Boston. The “Orthodox” church in Medfield separated from the First Parish, which had turned Unitarian, in 1828; the Unitarian meetinghouse was renovated and expanded in 1839, and a new Baptist church had been constructed in 1838 (the first Baptist society organized there prior to the American Revolution. See Tilden, \textit{History of Medfield}, 227-228, 230, 235-236. In Sturbridge, a group of Baptists separated from the established church in 1747, but witnessed the largest spike in membership in the 1830s and 1840s; see Joel Kenney, \textit{History of the Baptist Churches Composing the Sturbridge Association from their Origin to 1843} (New York: J. R. Bigelow, 1844), 4, 10-12. Susan Huntington, wife of the pastor of Boston’s Old South Church, in a letter of March 31, 1819, claimed the distinction between sects (ie. Unitarians, Pelagians, Antinomians) superseded the differences between denominations (ie. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists). See Benjamin B. Wisner, ed. \textit{Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Susan Huntington, of Boston, Mass.} 4th ed. (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), 54-55.
sentimentalized death as a gateway to heavenly idyll, culminating in the vision of the Good Death which stressed the importance of one’s final moments to his or her disposition in the afterlife. Those who died well could expect heavenly repose, setting the minds of their loved ones at ease.\(^{116}\) Writing in her journal after the death of her niece, Lillie Lyman, Ella (Lowell) Lyman recounted her daughter’s understanding of “...the distinction between our grief because we miss them here, and their happiness with God in heaven.” Her husband concurred that should one of their own children die, “...however terrible the grief to us, we could not but feel it happier for them and their true gain.”\(^ {117}\) The contemporaneous monumental gravestones and garden cemeteries reinforced the connection between the dead and the living. By erecting massive grave markers in spaces designed for leisure, survivors ensured the permanence of the deceased’s place in this world.\(^ {118}\)

In this environment, the impetus for assigning necronyms dissipated. Naming for the dead continued, but one generation removed, as parents bestowed the names of their own siblings who had died young on their children. These children would not have felt the immediacy of the death of their namesakes in the same way that recipients of necronyms did. Rather than a constant reminder of loss, their names preserved the memory of their parents’ childhood. Fanny (Appleton) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow named their first son Charles Appleton in 1844; Fanny’s brother of the same name had died, unmarried and childless, a few years prior.\(^ {119}\)

\(^{116}\) Stannard, *Puritan Way of Death*, 171-177. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 6-11. The idea of the Good Death applied to children, but not to infants. It crossed sectarian lines, stressing the centrality of one’s final moments to one’s spiritual estate.

\(^{117}\) Ella Lyman Cabot, ed., *Arthur Theodore Lyman and Ella Lyman: Letters and Journals with an Account of Those they Loved and were Descended from*, vol. 1, (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1932), 188-190.

\(^{118}\) Hijija, “Gravestones,” 355-356. Swedlund, *Shadows in the Valley*, 177-180. Many of these monuments were inscribed with the names of all family members in the burial plot; poorer families, who might not have been able to afford gravestones for some (or any) of their children could now leave a permanent memorial to them alongside their own.

Sometimes the use of such names reflected the involvement of the child’s grandparents in the selection, as when Roxana (Foote) Beecher’s mother named two of her daughter’s sons “William Henry, from one of her long-lost boys, ... [and] Henry Ward, from both.”

Extenuating circumstances, however, combined with the possibility of legal name changes, occasionally produced the interesting case of ‘pseudo-necronym.’ Susan (Mansfield) Huntington’s youngest son was born posthumously in 1819, and she named him Joshua, after his father. Unfortunately, little Joshua died less than two years later. Mrs. Huntington then had the name of her eldest son, Joseph Eckley, changed to Joshua on February 18, 1822. These names served to honor, rather than replace, the namesake, ensuring that the memory of the dead relative would survive another generation, after all who had known him or her personally had themselves passed away. Like the Urn and Willow engravings in the burying ground, these names prompted their bearers to be mindful of the past, but without the threat of their own mortality.

Changes in the practice of bestowing necronymys, when considered in conjunction with shifting patterns of gravestone decoration, add another dimension to the study of beliefs concerning children and death in eighteenth and nineteenth century Massachusetts. Moving beyond the narrative presented in pamphlets and sermons, they reveal the practical effects of the official changes in doctrine and the emergent ideology of post-Puritan New England. Taken together, necronymys and burial iconography present a unified progression of attitudes towards the dead. These

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both also closely follow ministerial proclamations on the subject of infant damnation, illustrating the pervasive reach of these ideas. In this case, it would seem, popular and clerical opinion closely aligned.
Gendered Naming, Gendered Power

From the Puritan naming trend established early in the seventeenth century - with its focus on Old Testament Biblical names, parental naming, and necronyms - the selection of Massachusetts names grew in variety and complexity. The Old Testament names that characterized the Puritan establishment never fell out of favor completely, so increasing numbers of names drawn from other sources in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only broadened the range of possibilities.¹ Although boys and girls had always occupied separate positions within the family, the naming trends for boys and girls began to diverge more sharply in the middle decades of the eighteenth century and continued to do so in the nineteenth century. Likewise, distinct patterns of matrilineal and patrilineal naming emerged around the same time. These changes underscored shifting beliefs governing the position of individuals and balance of power within the family, as well as the family’s role in the wider community.

Specifically, the new duties women took on in the late eighteenth century as Republican Mothers included participating actively in the selection of names for their children. This new freedom, combined with greater access to education, allowed them to introduce new names, especially for their daughters. In the nineteenth century, the ideals popularized by the ‘Cult of Domesticity’ elevated the position of mothers within the home, but curtailed their activity in the public sphere. As women took over most of the responsibility for naming and raising their children, female names grew more fanciful and inventive in contrast to the more traditional ones boys received. While boys would grow up to occupy the serious realms of business and politics, girls would remain sheltered in the domain of the home.

The typical Massachusetts family in the seventeenth and early eighteenth

centuries was strictly patriarchal. Building on the covenant theology that governed their religious lives, the Puritans viewed marriage as a contractual arrangement. Like the covenant between members of the community, and, in a larger sense, between the New England polity and God, both parties tacitly agreed to certain obligations. The formality of the relationship between husbands and wives, and the subordination expected of wives is made explicit in the advice of William Gouge, a prominent London Puritan, that wives not only avoid using pet names for their husbands, as “Sweet, Sweeting, Heart, Sweet-heart, Love, Joy, Deare, &c,” but refrain from “husbands’ Christian names” as well; instead he suggested “Husband” and “Master” as appropriate terms. Fathers and mothers shared responsibility for instructing and instilling piety in the children, since both could number among the elect. God’s arbitrary dispensation of grace, they believed, was accessible to women and men alike. Yet wives remained subject to the authority of their husbands in the “little commonwealth” of the home. Power rested firmly in the hands of men as the family

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mirrored the stratified class structure of society at large. Men did not, however, wield unlimited power, and duty required them to treat their inferiors (including wives) with care and kindness.

As such, the Puritan father played the dominant role in family affairs. He selected names for his children, and then presented them for baptism, often in the absence of his wife. Samuel Sewall reported of his first son, “the Midwife brought the Infant to the third Church...then I named him John, and Mr. Thacher baptized him...”

Similarly, Cotton Mather wrote on the baptism of a daughter: “I gave her the name of Hannah.” Fathers typically more often chose to perpetuate the names of their own relatives, but remained mindful of their wives' relations as well. Sewall, for example, reported that he named his “Daughter Judith for the sake of her Grandmother and great Grandmother,” mother and maternal grandmother of his wife Hannah Hull.

Balancing maternal and paternal namesakes, Cotton Mather named his twins Martha

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9 Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681--1708, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 7th ser.*, vol. 7 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1911), 218. Mather recorded the naming of subsequent children in 1699, 1700, and 1706; see pages 307-308, 375, 574; and in *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 7th ser.*, vol. 8 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912), children born in 1709 and 1713, pages 9, 251.

10 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 225-226. Daniel Scott Smith, “Child-Naming Practices, Kinship Ties, and Change in Family Attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1641 to 1880,” *Journal of Social History*, 18 (Summer 1985): 549, 555. Also, Daniel Scott Smith, “Population, Family, and Society in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635-1880” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1976), 316-317. This bias towards paternal relatives is less pronounced among families in my data set than in those of Hingham or Concord, most likely because I included parental siblings as namesakes in addition to parents and grandparents, but Fischer and Smith did not. It should be noted that assigned paternal names never exceed maternal names by more than ten percent in any given decade in any of these data sets.

11 Thomas, *Sewall Diary*, Vol. 1, 264-265, 460. In Sewall’s family, the balance of names was divided fairly evenly between maternal and paternal relatives (six each, and one non-familial), though only half of the children survived to adulthood; see Samuel Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1700, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th ser.*, vol. 5 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1878), xviii, xxiii, 383-384.
and Eleazar, for “My Wife’s vertuous Mother,” and “[my] excellent Uncle.”

Naming children for maternal relatives served to strengthen the ties between the two families, reinforcing the unity created by the marriage bond.

Since seventeenth-century men usually respected their brothers’ exclusive right to grant their names to a son, the presence of more familial names among daughters than sons during the early years does not seem unusual. Parental epithets appeared in roughly equal numbers, and naming for grandparents other than the paternal grandfather displayed a similar gender balance. Strikingly, however, the incidence of naming for mother’s brothers was just as low as that for father’s brothers, despite the absence of any direct taboo. Likewise, mothers’ sisters were nearly twice as likely to contribute their names as fathers’ sisters. Already, it would seem, the family had begun to split along gender lines, with daughters tied to their mothers’ lateral network of kin, and sons aligned with the ancestral line (maternal and paternal alike). The logic guiding the lateral application of female names, but not male ones, is not entirely clear. The persistence of surnames in the male line may offer some explanation; girls would lose these upon marriage, so given names would provide their only remaining onomastic connection to the family. However, this does not account for the lack of shared names among sisters’ sons.

Theological motivation remained central to name selection. The Puritan belief in predestination stressed the uncertainty of election, but also pointed to ‘Godly’

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12 *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724*, 251.
13 Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 551, described the infrequency of name sharing between the sons of brothers which also limited the number of boys named for their paternal grandfathers to cases where the man had no surviving namesake son.
14 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 225-226. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 549-550. Fischer and Smith both observed a somewhat higher percentage of families naming a child for a paternal grandfather, though Fischer admitted the small size of his sample may have skewed the data.
behavior as a sign of salvation. If infants were as likely to be damned as the rest of
the population, bestowing the names of those believed to number among the ‘visible
saints’ could have helped to frame the child as one of the elect.

When Increase Mather’s son lay ill and possibly dying, he prayed hopefully for his recovery, noting
that he had “called his Name Samuel out of obedience to ye will of God, who requireth
me to endeavor to keep up ye Name & memory of my deceased brother. I thought ye
Lord wld in him shew respect in ye Name of his blessed uncle.” Sewall’s daughter
Sarah was so named for the name’s “standing in the Scripture,” and “also Mother
Sewall had a sister Sarah; and none of my sisters of that name.” Clearly, the twofold
purpose strengthened the incentive for using the name.

Assigning the name of a righteous Biblical character also offered hope that the
child would lead a devout life, dedicated to religion from the start. When John Hull’s
wife bore twin daughters in 1652, he named them Elizabeth and Mary, explaining
“Elizabeth signifies the fulness of God; Mary exalted.” Recognizing the role of God in
a successful birth, William Adams called his son Eliphalet, “so named from ye Lord’s
special preservation and deliverance of him and his mother.” Such a show of mercy
could indicate special favor for the child; observing that the life of his son Nathaniel
had been spared several times, Increase Mather concluded that “God hath some

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16 The five points of Orthodox Puritanism included “the serious and constant practice of good works” by
17 Peter Gregg Slater, *Children in the New England Mind in Death and in Life* (Hamden, Connecticut:
18 Samuel A. Green, ed. *Diary by Increase Mather, March 1675-December 1676, together with Extracts
from Another Diary by Him, 1674-1687* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: John Wilson and Son, University
Press, 1900), 7.
20 Edward Everett Hale, ed. “The Diaries of John Hull, Mint-Master and Treasurer of the Colony of
Massachusetts Bay, with a Memoir of the Author,” *Transactions and Collections of the American
Antiquarian Society*, 3 (1857): 143.
Rev. Eliphalet Adams, of New London, Conn., Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 4th
become a minister, like his father.
service for him to doe... Hee shall be an instrument of gods glory in his generatn. Grace names often carried out the same function, tying the child to the service of a particular virtue. These were more frequently assigned to girls than to boys, and divided into separate sets according to gender. The sexual differentiation of virtues provides insight into how parents judged the behavior of male and female children. Patience, Thankful, Prudence, Mercy, Experience, and Silence reminded girls of their duties as subservient daughters, wives, and mothers. They were expected to strive for salvation, mindful of God’s ultimate power, but also to unquestioningly serve their fathers and husbands. Grace names for boys, by contrast, included Duty, Consider, Increase, and Waitstill. These emphasized obedience to the will of God and dedication to their responsibilities as productive members of the community. Parents expected their sons to fulfill their obligations, but also to act independently as the heads of their own households. Nevertheless, sons and daughters alike could enter into the ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ and needed to be prepared for the possibility.

In a sort of spiritual recursion of the established order, Puritan adults often referred to themselves as children before God. Covenant theology stressed their special ‘chosen’ status as the heirs to God’s promise to Abraham. Family structure mirrored religious hierarchy, but even the patriarch was subject to the will of a higher authority. Doctrines of utter depravity and irresistible grace rendered all powerless; like children, they had to behave submissively and surrender their own wills to achieve salvation. Ministers were especially mindful of the need to subject themselves to the

22 Green, Increase Mather Diary, 7.
24 Some of these names may reflect more mundane origins, as ‘Thankful’ for the survival of both mother and child through a difficult pregnancy or birth. Also, several of the girls named Silence in my data set were stillborn, literally silent at their birth.
25 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 69. Emerson, Puritanism in America, 45, 49, 53-55.
26 Greven, Protestant Temperament, 232-233. Stout, New England Soul, 87. For more on the concept of breaking the will, see Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 97-99.
divine, and the difficulty of doing so in an absolute manner.\textsuperscript{27} Some spoke of entering into a spiritual “union” or “marriage” with the almighty, underscoring the parallels between earthly and heavenly relationships.\textsuperscript{28} Under these circumstances, the relative parity and uniformity between male and female name choices illustrates the precedence of the eternal over the temporal.

The ideology driving Puritan name selection remained in force for more than one hundred years, but by the second half of the eighteenth century, a significant onomastic shift was underway.\textsuperscript{29} Familial naming fell into decline, and only paternal grandfathers experienced a significant increase in their chances of serving as namesakes.\textsuperscript{30} Girls still bore familial names more often than boys, but by a much smaller margin. Additionally, naming lost some of its patrilineal focus, as more children were given the names of their mothers’ relatives. Establishing a fuller onomastic connection with the child’s maternal ancestors bolstered his or her position in the ever-growing network of New England kin.\textsuperscript{31}

Alongside the reorientation of naming practices to favor maternal relatives, the emotive religion popularized by the Great Awakening combined with the rational ideals of the Enlightenment to bring about a new set of beliefs governing the role of children in the family. Ministers increasingly emphasized God’s mercy and Jesus’ love, and Locke’s idea of the infant mind as a tabula rasa gained followers. New Light


\textsuperscript{28} Greven, \textit{Protestant Temperament}, 125-127.

\textsuperscript{29} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 224-231. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 556-559. Schwartz, \textit{Invention and Convention}, 105-107. It should be noted that Smith observed the transformation slightly later among Hingham families than Fischer and I did in our respective data sets.

\textsuperscript{30} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 226 (note 21). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 549 (Table III). Schwartz, \textit{Invention and Convention}, 71-74. Other forms of grandparental naming had declined in the early decades of the eighteenth century and began to recover during these years, but still registered a net loss from their seventeenth-century levels.

Calvinists were the first to promote these concepts, compelling some Old Lights to take a softer stance on infant damnation or risk losing members. Unlike earlier generations, which had viewed children as inherently sinful, most parents now believed their offspring were innocent at birth (but prone to sin). In the wake of these sweeping changes, which stressed each person’s moral agency, parental priority shifted from lifting their children out of sin to preventing them from falling into it. This change in the role parents played in their children’s upbringing paved the way for the development of the concept of Republican Motherhood during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Unlike Puritan divines, who upheld a momentous experience of God’s working through the soul as the primary indicator of received grace, later theologians stressed conversion as an ongoing, gradual process based on self improvement and striving. One should still feel a personal connection with the Almighty, but rational thought dictated the pace of improvement from degeneracy to virtue. For children, this meant avoiding the temptation to sin while forming a moral compass. Parents had to mold their children, curbing their misdirected will and providing guidance as they traveled the path of self-improvement. By appealing to reason and teaching by example, parents necessarily formed stronger intellectual and emotional bonds with their children and began to view them as independent individuals. This challenged the hierarchical structure of the household, creating a more egalitarian family. Fathers retained authority, but saw some of their power erode as women and children exercised their abilities to think and argue rationally. From

this ferment emerged the plea for women’s education, lest a mother’s sons further jeopardize parental authority by outwitting her. Entrusted with inculcating virtue and instilling an understanding of logic, the Republican Mother couched her request for experience outside of the home in terms of support for her family, avoiding an overt threat to established gender roles.38

Coupled with their expanding role in educating their children, women gained greater influence over the naming of their offspring during these years.39 When Abigail Adams gave birth to a stillborn daughter in 1777, she lamented that she had hoped to name the child “after my own dear Mother, and was much gratified by your mentioning it and requesting it.”40 In a case that presaged this trend, Samuel Sewall, Junior, noted of his new son, “My wife was desirous of having it named Dudley but her relations were very averse to it.” Madam Dudley, in particular, objected that her sons were “young enough to have a great many children.”41 The family politics in the latter situation clearly delineated the sexual balance of power, with the widowed matriarch taking precedence over the the young mother.42 Fathers still made the final decision regarding names for their children, but mothers had gained a stronger voice in the selection process. One final case illustrates the potential disruption caused by this

39 In practice a mother’s input in the naming of children varied from one family to the next. At the same time that Cotton Mather was making such decisions unilaterally, John Paine and his wife Bennet (Freeman) Paine were sharing the task. John recorded in his diary on March 8, 1705/6, “I had a Son Born which we Named Josiah...” He used “we” again when referring to the naming of additional children in 1707 and 1714. See John Paine, “Deacon John Paine’s Journal,” ed. George Ernest Bowman, parts 4 and 5, The Mayflower Descendant 9 (April and July 1907): 50, 137.
41 Sewall, Diary 1674-1700, xxiii. Sewall subsequently named this son, born March 8, 1719/20, Henry, “for my grandfather Sewall’s sake.”
42 Sewall, Diary 1674-1700, xxiii. Sewall noted that his wife Rebecca’s brother, Colonel William Dudley, sent a letter in response to this confrontation “which disturbed her very much,” even making her ill. Perhaps Dudley felt this attempt by a daughter to transmit her maiden surname to her children threatened his own prerogative in naming sons.
inclination to compromise. George Robert Twelves Hewes, son of a chandler and tanner, was called George after his father and Robert Twelves after his mother’s maternal grandfather. Middle names were a new phenomenon in Massachusetts at the time of Hewes’ birth in 1742, and the use of more than two given names remained exceedingly rare well into the nineteenth century. One biographer of Hewes attributed his unusual appellation to his mother’s insistence on giving him the name of “a great-uncle, ...for whom she entertained the highest respect,” and also recounted a comical scene at the baptismal font when the pastor could not remember all of George Robert Twelves Hewes’ names. Such a lengthy name toed the line between ludicrousness and pretentiousness, but he bore it at his mother’s insistence. Anticipating the ideology of Republican Motherhood, women like Abigail (Smith) Adams, Rebecca (Dudley) Sewall, and Abigail (Seaver) Twelves asserted their preferences within the context of male domination by appealing to their husbands’ goodwill. The new spirituality fostered by the revivalism of the Great Awakening also helped to bring New Testament names back into vogue. In the second half of the

43 Alfred Fabian Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 15-17. Young attributed the latter parts of Hewes' name to his father's (then-childless) brother and his mother's mother’s maiden name, but a thorough investigation called the likelihood of this reasoning into question. Robert Twelves achieved moderate fame as the builder of the original wooden Old South Meeting House (See Gale Ion Harris, “Peter Brackett of Braintree and Boston with Notes on his Daughter Sarah (Brackett) (Shaw) (Benjamin) Jimmerson,” NEHGR 155 (July 2001): 279-294. Page 280, note 9 gives the location in Braintree Births, Marriages, Deaths of the death record that implicated Twelves in the church’s construction), and left no namesake son. Twelves’ only surviving sons predeceased him, leaving him without a namesake in the next generation either. Hewes’ parents likely hoped to trade on the prestige of this distant ancestor.


45 Kerber, “Republican Mother,” 115-118. These women phrased their requests for the application of a specific name in terms amenable to their husbands’ wishes, affirming the bonds between the family of origin and that of marriage.

eighteenth century, their popularity spiked at the expense of Old Testament names. Far more common among girls than boys, these names echoed the relatively higher degree of female piety during these years, as large numbers of women were swept up by the fervor of revivalist preaching. Lydia, Susanna, Phoebe, and Rhoda replaced Deborah, Abigail, Rachel, and Esther, suggesting a shift in the type of womanly virtues New Englanders favored. These names carried connotations of demure womanly modesty rather than courage or strength, which were no longer considered appropriate female qualities. Simultaneously, non-familial grace names, which had always been more common among female children than males, fell into disuse. Abstract virtues seemed less fitting as names for those developing an independent sense of self. In their place, many parents bestowed classical names on their daughters from the 1760s onwards. Brought to the forefront of the public consciousness by the rhetoric of the Revolution, these names evoked the democratic and republican ideals of ancient Greece and Rome in a figurative sense. Portrayals of abstract concepts like liberty, democracy, and even America as female figures supported the association of classical values with womanly virtue. Cynthia, Alma, Lucinda, Augusta, and Emilia were joined by other Latinate constructions as girls’ names with a phonetic short ‘a’ ending rose in popularity. The melodious sound of these names helped to reinforce their position.

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47 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 121-122. Among the families in my data set, nearly ninety percent of boys with Biblical names bore Old Testament names in the first half of the eighteenth century; the figure fell at less than fifty percent for Biblically-named girls. In the latter half of that century, the proportion of boys so-named fell to eighty percent, that of girls to forty-five percent.

48 Catherine A. Brekus, Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 44-53. In an unprecedented move, some women joined the ranks of lay exhorters, claiming that the Holy Spirit moved them to speak.

49 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 221-222 characterized the Puritans’ female name selections as “notable for intellect, courage, spirit, and strength of character.” Gloria L. Main, “Naming Children in Early New England,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 27, No. 1 (Summer 1996): 20-23 argued that parents increasingly sought rare or unusual names for their daughters, focusing on the sound of the name rather than its signification.

Boys, by contrast, were more frequently given the names of eminent men, including theologians, politicians, and military heroes. These included local figures (whose names would not today be recognized as famous), eminent political and military figures of the Revolution, and even foreigners. In a sense, these names also reflected the traits and virtues parents wished to instill in their children, as they marked these namesakes for emulation. Earthly figures simply replaced heavenly ones. John and Mary (Clark) Fisher, for instance, named two of their sons Luther and Calvin, after the Protestant theologians, and a third Quincy, probably for the patriot Josiah Quincy. Upon naming his first son George Washington Adams, John Quincy Adams declared, “I implore the favour of almighty God, that he may live, and never prove unworthy of it.” Whether religious or secular, parents seldom chose names with disreputable connotations. Few girls, however, bore the names of notable women. Prior to the nineteenth century, only one girl in my data set, Czarina Fisher, was evidently named for a famous woman, most likely Catherine the Great. By this time, society had firmly established the home as the proper “woman’s sphere;” giving a daughter a name that seemingly celebrated public female activity would likely have had uncomfortable implications.

51 William S. Tilden, History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886, with Genealogies of the Families that Held Real Estate or made any Considerable Stay in the Town during the First Two Centuries (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1887), 389-390 (side numbers 49-51). Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1903), 50-52. These children did not share their names with any relatives.


53 At least in an identifiable way; Main, “Naming Children,” 20, suggested that the popularity of Elizabeth and Ann(e) were due at least in part to the queens of England who bore those names. Puritans identified these women as defenders of the Protestant faith against Catholicism, making them attractive namesakes. It is impossible to know how many parents intended their daughters’ names to evoke this connection. Tilden, History of Medfield, 390 (side number 58). Vital Records of Medfield, 50. The aforementioned Luther Fisher was her father, so perhaps personal experience with the name of a famous individual influenced the decision.

54 Norton, Liberty’s Daughters, 110, 243. I found a few girls named for local women during this time period, but was not able to determine the namesake’s significance - perhaps a midwife or a close friend of the child’s mother. It is also possible that such women were simply community members of particularly admirable character, whose virtue appealed to parents seeking a name for their daughter.
By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a new onomastic order had emerged in Massachusetts. Parental and grandparental naming had become less frequent, and parents increasingly turned to secular sources instead of the Bible for their selections. Additionally, the practice of naming children for parental siblings resurfaced; both mother’s and father’s sisters, as well as father’s brothers increasingly shared their names with the next generation. Middle names were now nearly ubiquitous among children of both sexes.

Religious change accompanied this shift in the naming pattern. The doctrine of infant damnation had been soundly rejected, a casualty of the Second Great Awakening and its promise of salvation for all who sought it. Lingering doubts remained about the automatic acceptance of children into heaven, but most agreed that they would be spared the horrors of hell. Building on the moral impunity of infants, Romantic philosophers depicted them as gifts sent from heaven to delight their parents. They also sentimentalized childhood, picturing it as a pure, innocent state. Far from the depraved sinners of the seventeenth century, or even the easily corrupted blank slates of the Enlightenment, children now were treated as ideal beings, untainted and untaintable. In deference to the perceived moral superiority of their children, parents governed them with love and affection instead of fear. The pious family was now assured that its members would reunite as heavenly spirits, lessening

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56 Fischer, "Forenames and the Family," 224-229. Maternal grandmothers were exempt from this general decline in familial naming. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 556-557, 559. The regional pervasiveness of this shift is illustrated by J. David Hacker, “Child Naming, Religion, and the Decline of Marital Fertility in Nineteenth-Century America,” History of the Family (Elsevier Science) 4, No. 3 (June 1999): 346. According to his analysis, white males born to American-born parents were more likely to receive Biblical names in the South than in New England after the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hacker attributed this to growing secularization.


58 Hatch, Democratization of American Christianity, 37, 56. Slater, Children in the New England Mind, 82-84, 87-89.

59 Slater, Children in the New England Mind, 149-153, 163.

60 Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 159-161.
the urgency of replicating the family in this world. As people became preoccupied with the experiences of loved ones in the afterlife, spiritualism, based on the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, grew immensely popular. The writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Transcendentalists brought these ideas to New England in the 1830s, focusing on the connections between the divine and the physical world. According to the Swedenborgians, those who died as infants would grow to adulthood in the afterlife, fulfilling the potential they were deprived of on earth. For those who believed in this philosophy, the use of necronyms would have created the same redundancy as giving identical names to multiple living children.

Alongside the religious influences on childrearing, the ideology of domestic feminism and the ‘Cult of True Womanhood’ flourished in the 1820s and 1830s. The home now became the center of family life, portrayed as a refuge from the harshness of the public sphere. Mothers took over the task of socializing and educating their children, assuming a position of unprecedented power within this private world. Declining marital fertility in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries also signaled a change in the male-female balance of power within the family. Women decried the risks and strain of frequent pregnancies, and their increased influence within the home allowed them to convince their husbands to help them limit

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61 Slater, *Children in the New England Mind*, 88. Whereas the Puritans had expressed grave concerns that they would be spared on the Day of Judgment while their children would not, nineteenth century parents harbored no such fears, trusting in the goodness of their offspring. See also Ann Douglas, “Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1860,” *American Quarterly*, 26, No. 5 (December 1974): 496-515. Douglas illustrated how nineteenth century ministers and lay people depicted heaven as a domestic space where members of the family could expect to continue the way of life they had known on Earth.


63 Barbara A. White, *The Beecher Sisters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 242-243, discussed Isabella Beecher Hooker’s purported communication with her son Thomas, who died as an infant and then grew up to become an artist in the spirit world, as well as her parents.

family size. With fewer children, mothers (and fathers) could now concentrate more attention on each child. Children and their mothers occupied similar positions as bastions of piety, but the latter served as a conduit for the spirit acting in the former. Both enjoyed an unprecedented degree of autonomy and respect. Under the aegis of domestic feminism, mother and children broke free of the strict confines of the patriarchy, at least within the bounds of the home.

The naming of children now became a matter of maternal choice, with the father surrendering his primary role in the selection of names. In a reversal of the earlier custom of the father consulting with male relatives or colleagues, the mother frequently asked advice of other women when choosing names. As a result of this maternal focus, mothers and children developed close bonds that usually persisted for the duration of their lives. This new emphasis on the importance of motherly love likely accounted for the higher percentage of children named for their grandmothers during these years, as both men and women sought to honor their relationships with their own mothers. The relative frequency of naming for maternal and paternal grandmothers could serve as an indicator of which parent was chiefly responsible for the choice of names. Shrinking family size meant that parents had fewer chances to pass on the names of relatives, providing an opportunity for them to display their favor

68 Thomas, *Sewall Diary*, Vol. 1, 324. When Sewall was deciding between two names for his new daughter in 1696, he consulted Mr. Torrey, who voiced his support for ‘Sarah;’ Sewall concurred. After her second son was born, Fanny (Appleton) Longfellow wrote to her sister-in-law, Anne Longfellow Pierce, asking “What should we call him? Our minds are somewhat divided between Henry and Ernest. Can you propose a better than either?” See Fanny Appleton Longfellow, *Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals*, edited by Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Longman, Green, and Company, 1956), 121-122. Likewise, Elizabeth (Payson) Prentiss’ husband commented shortly after the death of her mother, “It is such a comfort to us that she was able to name our little boy!” Edward Payson Prentiss was born on October 22, 1848; Ann (Shipman) Payson died on November 17. See George Lewis Prentiss, ed. *Life and Letters of Elizabeth Prentiss* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1882), 111.
for one set of parents over the other. The advent of middle names moderated this reduction in naming opportunities to a degree, as some parents chose to give the names of multiple relatives to a single child. For example, Nancy [H]Anna[h] Hamant bore her paternal grandmother’s first name, and that of her maternal grandmother (and recently deceased maiden aunt) as her middle name. Likewise, Mary Rosina Tingley shared her first name with her maternal grandmother and her middle name with her paternal grandmother. These girls illustrated the balance their parents struck when choosing their namesakes, though it is impossible to know which name they used to address the child, and thus which namesake was more readily apparent.

This heightened focus on the nuclear family also served to situate children within a network of immediate kin, not as links in a continuous lineage stretching into the distant past. The Puritans valued genealogy as proof of their Covenanted status, but nineteenth-century Congregationalists did not need to maintain such onomastic connections to be assured of their salvation. First religion, and then society at large, turned from the communal to the personal, and the naming pattern reflected this democratic departure. Despite the protracted decline, about fifty percent of families still contained a son named for his father or a daughter named for her mother, reaffirming the centrality of the nuclear family to the new domestic ideology.

As people redefined the home as the ‘woman’s sphere,’ they also separated it and its functions from the realm of male activity. Boys had to be prepared to resist the corrupting forces of the working world, while girls should be raised to fill the same

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70 Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 359-360 (side numbers 214, 253, 254)403 (side numbers 37, 43), 404 (side number 52). Vital Records of Medfield, 34,-35, 56, 130, 201. She was born to Caleb Strong and Drusilla (Clark) Hamant on August 28, 1837.

71 William Ward Wight, *The Wights: A Record of Thomas Wight of Dedham and Medfield and of his Descendants, 1635-1890* (Milwaukee: Swain and Tate, 1890), 281 (side number 2054). She was the daughter of the Reverend Edwin Silas and Jane Elizabeth (Wight) Tingley, born in Milford, Massachusetts, June 22, 1859.

72 Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 69.

73 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 64, 78. Fischer observed somewhat lower figures among Concord families, see “Forenames and the Family,” 225. Conversely, Smith noted a much higher percentage of parental naming in Hingham during this time period, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 549.
roles as their mothers in the home, protecting the virtue of their families. Following the emergence of this division, girls were more frequently granted nicknames in official registers. The connection between these nicknames and their full forms had deep roots in English culture, and had historically served as a means of differentiating same-named individuals. Yet the formality of the Puritan social hierarchy restricted the use of diminutive forms (for both sexes) to children. Marked by familiarity, only members of the immediate family would address or refer to an individual by a nickname after he or she became an adult. When, in 1683, Peter Thacher baptized his daughter, he “mistook and called her Betty intending to say Elizabeth.” In practice, Thacher probably called his daughter Betty on a daily basis, but wanted the community to know her as Elizabeth. By contrast, Henry Wadsworth and Fanny (Appleton) Longfellow named their daughter Fanny in 1847, despite the fact that Mrs. Longfellow, for whom she was named, had been given the name Frances Elizabeth at birth. One contemporary author termed this a manifestation of “sentimental silliness,” outraged that “sensible names as Matilda, Charlotte, Margaret, or Sarah” were

74 Main, “Naming Children,” 24, attributed this to a loss of women’s status.
75 Charles Wareing Bardsley, Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1897; Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1970), 5-6, 8, 90-91.
78 The town’s vital records listed Thacher’s daughter, born March 6, 1683, as Elizabeth, so it seems that he was able to correct his error. See Milton Records: Births, Marriages, and Deaths 1662-1843, Alphabetically and Chronologically Arranged (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, printers, 1900), 62.
79 Wagenknecht, Mrs. Longfellow, 1, 117, 122, 134. Although she referred to her sons as “Charley” and “Erny,” they actually bore the names Charles Appleton and Ernest Wadsworth. See Baldwin, Thomas W., ed., Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, Volume 1: Births (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Company, 1914), 445.
shortened to “‘Tillie,’ ‘Lottie,’ ‘Maggie,’ and ‘Sadie.’” Howes countered that the use of nicknames was so pervasive that a girl “might never hear her true name except when she is married or when a will is read.” Parents should not, he argued, have to sacrifice affinity for pleasant sounding names to the force of custom. Women with such names found themselves styled as perpetual children, which only heightened the distance between their world and the sphere of formal, public interaction. Although this apparently did not have a negative effect on their status within the family, it diminished their ability to be taken seriously outside of it. As people began to portray the home as a refuge from the harsh world of (male) industry, they also defined it as the only ‘proper’ place for womanly action. The rise of the domestic sphere was actually detrimental to women’s position in society, despite the gains in female autonomy within the home. The permanence of female diminutives circumscribed women’s power by visibly tying them to the informal realm of the household.

As the focus of the household shifted from its part in the community to the wellbeing of the nuclear family, parents developed an appreciation for individual tastes in names as in other aspects of life. The leveling of familial naming patterns by the mid-nineteenth century followed a path of decentralization, and each family unit had greater freedom of choice. Now a name’s sound mattered as much as (if not more than) its significance, even for familial appellations. Fanny (Appleton) Longfellow’s explanation of the selection of a name for her aforementioned namesake daughter demonstrates the many factors parents now considered when deciding what name (or names) to bestow on their children:

We are not yet quite satisfied to call her Fanny, though Henry generally settles upon that...I should call her Maria, after my mother, but we do not either of us like the name much, and I do not associate it particularly with her, and have besides a little cousin so called after her. I proposed as a compromise Mira, which was her signature always when writing to my father before marriage...but Henry suggests that Jane Norton’s dog is so named...Henry’s mother’s name is Zilpah, which is rather too peculiar and Biblical [emphasis mine].

Not everyone approved of this shift in focus, and more traditionally-minded individuals decried what they viewed as the exercise of “fancy, passion, or prejudice” in the “serious business” of naming. One critic painted parents as tyrants who paid no heed to the child’s own peculiarities or the name’s meaning. Names, he argued played an influential role in “shaping the future character of their possessor,” yet parents largely ignored this fact. Such onomastic conservatives, however, formed a minority of public opinion, as quantitative evidence demonstrates the extent to which New England families adopted the new naming trends.

The first quarter of the nineteenth century also witnessed a profusion of non-familial name types, with the favored choices for boys and girls following separate trajectories. Among male children, English traditional names and the epithets of notable individuals once again took the lead. Likewise, New Testament Biblical and

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83 Wagenknecht, *Mrs. Longfellow*, 134-135. The young Fanny Longfellow was born on April 7, 1847.
84 Howes, “Names and Name-Giving,” 686.
85 Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 227-228 (notes 24 and 25). Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 545 (Table I). Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 129 (Figure 13), 136 (Figure 14), 146-147. Some of those who adhered to the old ways likely belonged to the dwindling ranks of Orthodox Calvinists; see Slater, *Children in the New England Mind*, 128-129.
86 English traditional names were the single largest category of non-familial boys’ names among the families in my data set after 1810. See Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 135-137, 141. Concord and Hingham also experienced a surge in the frequency of these names during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. See Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 228. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 559.
classical names remained perennial favorites for daughters. Although Biblical names had become less common than in the past, they still comprised nearly half of non-familial girls’ names in my data set. By contrast, about a third of non-familial boys’ names were drawn from the Bible in the nineteenth century. While most female Biblical names were drawn from the New Testament, Old Testament characters continued to dominate male Biblical selections. Under the new gendered division of work and family life, boys remained tied to the reputation of their fathers. Even those with non-familial names needed to evoke a connection to their Puritan heritage to ensure their future success.

Some girls during this period bore names from a new category - literary sources. By the 1820s, the press was well established in the United States, and the Republican Mothers’ successful crusade for women’s education had greatly improved literacy rates among the people of Massachusetts. Names like Clarissa, Miranda, and Cordelia offer direct evidence of what parents were reading. Since many authors gave their characters names that were already commonly used (and thus recognizable), the percentage of children that I recorded with literary names almost certainly underrepresents the influence of secular books on the onomastic landscape. Some, like Ellen Stanley, appear at first glance to honor a real person, or else to belong to another class. Male literary characters in particular remain difficult to trace for the same reasons that few parents chose names with obvious antecedents in literature for their sons; overall, boys’ names exhibited greater conservatism than girls’

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87 Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 130, 145-146.
89 Miranda and Cordelia are Shakespearean creations, from The Tempest and The Twelfth Night, respectively. Clarissa was popularized by the tragic novel of the same name, published in 1748 by Samuel Richardson. See Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, A Dictionary of First Names (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 65 “Clarissa,” 71 “Cordelia,” 239 “Miranda.”
90 Ellen Stanley Wight was born to David and Eunice Fuller (Drake) Wight on September 27, 1843. See Wight, The Wights, 265 (side number 2703). For the literary connection, see Louisa C. Tuthill, Ellen Stanley and Other Stories, 9th ed. (Philadelphia, Perkinpine and Higgins, 1853). It seems likely that the tale of Ellen Stanley circulated prior to this date, either in an earlier edition or as a serial.
names. Sons would grow up to enter the serious world of business, where they needed to project an air of respectability. Their names reflected time-honored dependability, critical as they competed for success. Daughters, however, would leave the confines of their parents’ homes only to enter those of their husbands. Their future success depended less on their names than on their manners and their looks. Under these conditions, parents took less of a risk in granting innovative names to female children than to males.

Parents also more frequently assigned Teutonic names to girls than boys during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. They probably encountered these names via literary channels as well. With the ascension of the house of Hanover to the English throne, names such as Charlotte, Sophia, Louisa, and Caroline returned to the public consciousness. They appeared in newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic, and appeared among New England colonists as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Teutonic names witnessed a tremendous jump in popularity due to the Romantic impulses of authors like Sir Walter Scott, whose works evoked the Medieval past and featured characters with dithematic names like Edmund and Ethelind, as well as Rowena and Douglas. Matilda Wight, Edwin Smith, Milicent Fisk, Walter Adams, and Adaline Chenery evoked the legendary Anglo-Saxon past their mothers read about. The heroes and heroines who populated these stories exhibited virtues calculated to appeal to morals and sentiments, so such names followed in the tradition of earlier Biblical characters,
chosen for their significance as well as their sound. Fathers, too, favored romantic names for their daughters, since these reinforced feminine sentimentality. Fanny (Appleton) Longfellow reported that her husband suggested “more romantic ones, such as Bertha, Edith, Alice, etc....” for their new baby before ultimately acquiescing to Fanny’s desire to name the girl after herself. 96

By assigning names to boys and girls according to divergent practices, parents emphasized the inherent dissimilarities in the conceptualization of male and female roles. Tracking changes in these patterns over time illuminates the development of distinct male and female spheres. Part of the distinction between male and female names necessarily stemmed from the patrilineal nature of society, since marriage obscured the nominal ties between daughters and their ancestral lines. This made a girl’s transition from the family of origin to that of marriage more stark than it was for her brothers, a fact that must have been especially unsettling during the early years when parents worked to perpetuate the continuity of the family through repeating names.

Sons and daughters held equal importance for the family but in different ways. Males occupied the dominant position in society, and their names illustrated the adherence to tradition that society demanded of them. Girls’ names, by contrast, displayed a sense of creativity after the first century of settlement. Society expected them to uphold certain virtues, but their focus on the home allowed for relatively more flexible naming conventions than those for males. Tellingly, female names acquired a new, inventive flavor once mothers gained a greater voice in the naming process, showcasing the results of their newfound agency. Men may have requested that sons’ names adhere to the requirements that would dictate their adult conduct, but generally allowed their wives to innovate when naming daughters, since their lives would remain rooted in the domain of the home.

96 Wagenknecht, Mrs. Longfellow, 134, 175, 199. The Longfellows named two later daughters Edith and Alice.
Conclusion

Names serve as valuable indicators of cultural preference and individual choice across time and space. Usually permanent, and assigned shortly after birth, they marked the values of the givers rather than the bearers. Even under a single set of guiding principles like that of seventeenth century Massachusetts, considerable onomastic variation existed. Yet widespread change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries revealed a deeper shift in the pervasive belief system. Given the relative scarcity of written records detailing the subtle effects of ideological change on people’s daily lives, naming patterns provide a window into the expression of ideals concerning children and the family.

Changes in naming patterns took the form of punctuated equilibrium rather than gradual evolution. Spurts of inventive naming paralleled developments in political and theological thought. Yet, parents never completely overturned the onomastic status quo in the span of a few years. Some traditional customs continued alongside the new ones. In that sense, onomastic change remained a gradual phenomenon. As parents looked to respected relatives or favorite characters, individual choices tipped the balance of naming from one non-familial type or form of kin naming to another. Considered as a whole, they reflect the collective mentality of the community.

After the initial Puritan innovation of the early seventeenth century, a short period of relative stasis ensued. In the second half of the eighteenth century, many of the common onomastic practices were again overturned. The nineteenth century witnessed a sharpening of these tendencies, rather than a reversal, as New England discarded many of the governing principles of its forefathers. Greater literacy, wider availability of books, and better communication facilitated an accessible regional, and later national, culture. While this did not dissolve the distinctive Massachusetts naming pattern, it coupled with other factors to loosen the commitment to Old
Testament Biblical selections.

Religious beliefs dictated many aspects of name choice for the Puritans, as well as other major decisions in people’s lives. Stressing their dedication to God, they positioned their children in relation to themselves as a part of the great cosmic plan. Each generation formed a link in the chain of the family, perpetuating the names as well as the lineage of the Elect. Biblical and familial namesakes both acted as reminders of a higher purpose. Similarly, Grace names invoked the qualities parents expected their children to exhibit. Boys and girls alike were beholden to these standards, despite the power differential between men and women in the family and the community. Although they could not predict who would ultimately experience salvation, parents invested great effort in the successful conversion of their children, pinning all of their hopes for the future on these young shoulders. When a child died, parents frequently responded by giving his or her name to the next child of the same sex. Such continuity helped to reinforce New England’s special mission by making children constantly mindful of their godly antecedents, both on Earth and in heaven. They emphasized the eternal over the temporal, the life of the soul above that of the body. The repetition of names did not represent an attempt to replace the dead, but to remind the living of their own eventual fate.

The arrival of the rational ideas of the Enlightenment joined with the intense personal spirituality of the Great Awakening to alleviate the tension inherent in strict Calvinist doctrine. Humanity was still riddled with sin, but God transformed into a logical, loving father, offering the assurance of salvation to those willing to throw themselves upon His mercy. Changes in typical gravestone motifs mirrored this shift, with the transition from the stark death’s head to the more optimistic cherub design accompanying the decline of the doctrine of infant damnation. As the role of the self in achieving grace grew, the need to tie children to the visible saints diminished. Freed
from these constraints, parents turned, first to the New Testament, and then to secular sources for names. Distance from the Anglican and Catholic traditions of Europe had loosened the connection between the names of New Testament characters and nonbiblical saints with the church traditions repudiated by New England’s Puritan founders. Religion still played a significant role in people’s lives, however, and they continued to inculcate Christian values in their children. Although not inherently sinful, they were prone to sin, and required great effort to remain on the path to salvation.

Furthermore, this new conception of children as neutral vessels at birth helped to reorient parental attention to the needs of each individual child. Before, the onus of the conversion experience had rested with God’s mercy alone. Parents needed to impress upon their offspring the grave dangers of Hell and damnation, to pray fervently with and for them, while recognizing that only divine grace could save them. Now they assumed greater responsibility for guiding their children in the ways of Christian virtue. In this context, the turn away from parental and grandparental naming suggests a transition from teaching by example to striving to draw out individual piety. As parents devoted more time and energy to developing the spiritual capacities of each member of the next generation, they focused more on their unique personalities rather than their collective status as links between those who came before and would come after. The use of necronyms declined as parents came to view their children as distinct, irreplaceable individuals.

Republican ideology also affected familial relationships. Aversion to monarchy and the demise of the traditional system of aristocracy, with the concurrent repudiation of deference and patronage, weakened the patriarchal structure of the home. New emphasis on equality and rejection of the strictly tiered social hierarchy trickled into family relationships as well, giving women and adult children more power. Mothers achieved greater influence in the naming process, formerly the father’s prerogative.
This became especially evident in the selection of names for daughters, who bore the newly revived English traditional and New Testament appellations more frequently than their brothers did. As female church membership continued to outstrip that of males, spirituality became intrinsically bound to the ideals of womanly virtue. The personal religious commitment embodied by nonbiblical saints and New Testament characters fit well with this vision of female religiosity. Additionally, the loosening of paternal authority likely contributed to the decline in the number of children named for parents and grandparents. People no longer felt obligated to replicate the onomastic imprint of their forebears, or even to perpetuate their own names. Instead they relied more heavily on unrelated men (and, to a lesser extent, women) as namesakes.

In the nineteenth century, many of these onomastic changes intensified. The growing popularity of evangelical Protestantism made salvation accessible to all, and portrayed God as a loving, sympathetic being. Naming lost much of its overtly religious significance, though it retained a connection to virtue, as people sought their own connection with the divine. Children, in particular, were seen as naturally innocent, and would remain so, provided they were sheltered from worldly vice. The doctrine of infant damnation had been solidly rejected, and the question dropped from the public consciousness. As a result, parents treated their children with greater sentimentality, forming strong emotional bonds that would continue for the duration of their lives. At the same time, declining fertility meant each couple bore fewer children and could devote more time to each of them.

The practice of assigning necronyms faded away completely in this environment, as parental memories of the deceased superseded the desire to preserve the name. Instead, the next generation more frequently passed on their siblings’ names to their own children, long after a sufficient mourning period had elapsed. Nineteenth-century parents applied the same logic to bestowing the names
of other deceased relatives as well, especially those who lacked direct namesake
descendants. Gravestone iconography similarly reflected this goal of memorialization,
as the classical Urn and Willow design replaced the Cherub in the opening years of
the nineteenth century. Rather than concentrating on the physical reality of death or
the immortality of the soul, these monuments stressed the sorrow of loss and the role
of living in recalling the lives of the dead. In a radical departure from earlier practice,
the significance of death as an end to temporal existence occupied the minds of
survivors more than the beginning of the soul’s immortal afterlife.

The task of turning children into upstanding citizens and good Christians
typically fell to their mothers during this period. The Cult of Domesticity elevated the
position of women and gave them considerable power within the home as it divided
the work of men and women into separate spheres. Turned inward by this domestic
focus, the vision of the family transformed from a branching network of extended kin
deply rooted in the past to a tightly-knit unit of immediate relatives within the home.
At the same time, family size shrank even further as couples actively limited the
number of children they bore. This narrowing likely contributed to the general decline
of familial naming, removing other relatives from the day-to-day life of the family, and
further intensifying the focus on each child. As the incidence of familial naming
diminished, the choice to give children the names of living relatives came to serve a
position of honor rather than duty. The relative scarcity of namesake children
increased their meaning, allowing parents to demonstrate their dedication to a favorite
relation.

Furthermore, the types of names given to boys and girls diverged as their future
roles in society grew apart. Although daughters and sons were always beholden to
gender-specific expectations, the identification of the home as woman’s ‘proper’ place
further circumscribed her actions. Diminutives, which were used colloquially for
children of both sexes, began to replace their full forms in the birth registrations of nineteenth century daughters. These girls would grow up, but could never leave behind these markers of childhood. Such epithets served as another way to reinforce the inferiority of women and their exclusion from formal public interaction. Additionally, innovation in the types of names parents used affected female children first, and embraced greater diversity. The names of sons, though less often familial, remained strikingly conservative. Since boys carried the family surname as a visible link to their family of origin throughout their lives, parents often highlighted this connection to the lineage with their given name(s) too. As adults, they would need respectable names to secure their success in the world of business. Whereas sounding 'pretty' was an important consideration for a girl’s name, a boy’s name needed to project dependability and to command respect.

Higher literacy rates and the proliferation of cheaply printed books brought a wide selection of names not found in the Bible into the lexicon of Massachusetts families. Literature, from the Classics of ancient Greece and Rome to Shakespeare, and later Romantic prose and poetry, introduced an array of characters who contributed their names to the pool of possibilities. Newspapers recounted the words and deeds of political figures and military heroes on both sides of the Atlantic, fueling the adoption of the names of the famous. Men and women alike read these works, and the moral qualities of their protagonists inspired the application of their names. In a sense these names maintained continuity with the earlier custom of Biblical naming; the characters still served as role models for the children who received their names. The qualities and traits these characters exemplified differed from their antecedents, but the logic guiding the attachment of children to a figure who embodied the society’s values remained largely the same.

The appearance of middle names in the eighteenth century and their rise to
near ubiquity in the nineteenth century added a layer of complexity to the onomastic landscape of Massachusetts. By combining multiple given names, parents could emphasize a single naming tradition or create something more eclectic. Likewise, they could conjoin a familial name with a non-familial one to give the child his or her own distinctive title, or they could heighten the connection with a specific namesake by granting the surname as a middle name in addition to the shared first name. All of these possibilities allowed parents to express their own individual preferences. In general, the focus shifted from the collective and communal to the individual and personal. Whereas Puritan mores had privileged conformity and uniformity, the emergent mentalité celebrated uniqueness (within certain limits). Middle names also helped to offset some of the loss of onomastic potential that resulted from the fertility transition, especially during its incipient years.

Overall, the data reveal a reorientation from familial and Biblical names to non-familial and secular ones. However, only in the last decades of my study did a majority of families cease naming a son for his father and a daughter for her mother. Children named after relatives never fell into the minority, despite tremendous growth in the use of non-familial epithets and extra-familial namesakes. Even as parents embraced new selections when naming their children, they seemed reluctant to cast off all vestiges of previous traditions. Rather than rejecting all forms of familial names, people recognized different relatives as namesakes, under different circumstances. Similarly, the reliance on secular sources for names did not imply a turn away from religious principles, but a broadening of interpretation. The fragmentation of New England Protestantism into a multitude of denominations cleared the way for the toleration of varied expressions of devotion. By stressing the importance of mores instead of doctrine and cooperation instead of consensus, members of the community continued to uphold broadly similar ideals.
The evidence suggests that even within the confines of Massachusetts, a range of naming patterns coexisted. None of the major studies agree on the exact timing or rapidity of onomastic change, and it seems likely that regional variation challenged the assumption of a single New England tradition. Extending this study of given names both chronologically and geographically would expand the wide applicability of its results. Small sample size in many decades made it difficult to chart the precise trajectory of the change. In particular, collecting data on more families in the middle decades of the nineteenth century would enhance the understanding of the eclipse of parental and grandparental naming. Applying the same classification schemes to familial names as to non-familial ones would also provide insight into the multiplicity of factors motivating parental choice. Moreover, the namesake attributions of diarists and letter writers indicated a larger network of at-risk kin than I accounted for. Looking deeper into the ancestral lines of couples under consideration could increase the proportion of children with familial names. Similarly, drawing on a larger body of written documents would shed additional light on why and how parents decided on particular names. Although locating such sources would require a lengthy search, the statistical significance of the results would justify the effort. Names hold the key to a richer understanding of family structure, gender differences, and the role of children, how all of these changed through time under the influence of religious, political, and cultural ideology.
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