ENDORSEMENTS

In this bicentennial year of celebration, the new edition of Dr. Melville’s biography of Elizabeth Ann Seton is indeed another cause for celebration. By her skillful editing, Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., has provided the necessary revisions while respecting the scholarship and storytelling skills of Dr. Melville. This new edition will introduce Elizabeth Ann Seton to yet another generation of readers. Her timeless story of faith and struggle, love and loss, action and contemplation will ignite the imagination of all who meet her for the first time. Those familiar with her story will discover new insights and inspiration in this edition. All will rejoice in the life of this American woman and those women who retell her story with precision and passion.

Mary Ann Daly, S.C.
Executive Director
Sisters of Charity Federation

It is an extraordinary event when a biography stands well the tests of time. Annabelle Melville’s biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton is one such volume. Its portrayal of the life and times of this quintessential American saint still provides the reader with important insights into the early history of Catholicism in the United States, the role of women of ministry in that era, as well as the introduction into this country of the Vincentian tradition. The thoughtful revisions and updates provided by this edition will enable this generation to continue to enjoy this powerful story told so well by the late Annabelle Melville. This volume is a very welcome addition to the bicentennial celebration of the 1809 landmark foundation by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, and the arrival of the saint and her companions in Emmitsburg, Maryland, beginning the Seton Legacy of Charity.

Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Ph.D.
Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois
**ALSO BY ANNABELLE MELVILLE**


Elizabeth Bayley Seton

1774-1821

by

Annabelle M. Melville

Edited by

Betty Ann McNeil, D.C.

I am a citizen of the world!

Elizabeth Bayley Seton, 1817

The Sheridan Press

Hanover, Pennsylvania

2009
Elizabeth Bayley Seton 1774-1821
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Emmitsburg, Maryland USA

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Cover design by Stephanie Mummert. Landscape of Saint Joseph’s Valley, featuring the Stone House and St. Joseph’s House (the White House) in 1810, is attributed to Edward Augustus Seton. The cameo of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is from the official portrait commissioned for her cause for canonization. Oil on canvas. Artist unknown, 1947.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Annabelle McConnell Melville (1910-1991)

A native of Minotola, New Jersey, the daughter of the late Norman R. and Janet (Cunningham) McConnell, Dr. Melville received her undergraduate and master’s degree from Albany State College, Albany, New York, and her doctorate from The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. She was named Commonwealth Professor and awarded the honorary doctor of laws degree from Stonehill College, North Easton, Massachusetts.

Melville held the Catholic Daughters of America Chair in American Church History at The Catholic University of America in 1978 and 1979; at that time she was the only person to hold that Chair for two consecutive years. She also received the Distinguished Alumni Award from The Catholic University of America and the State University of New York at Albany. Dr. Melville retired from Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, Massachusetts, in 1975.

Melville was the first woman president of the American Catholic Historical Association. She received the John Gilmary Shea Prize for excellence in American Catholic history from the American Catholic Historical Society, and also the General L. William Kemper Prize from the Louisiana Historical Society, the latter for her biography of Archbishop Dubourg.

The National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton conferred the Seton Founder’s Medal on Annabelle Melville in 1983. The Daughters of Charity and the Associate Board of the Seton Shrine cited Dr. Melville for her “outstanding works in keeping alive the memory and the spirit of Elizabeth Ann Seton, her community, and the founders of the Catholic Church in America.” Msgr. John Tracey Ellis, dean of American Catholic historians, was mentor for Dr. Melville’s doctoral dissertation on Elizabeth Bayley Seton. In addition to the definitive Seton biography, Dr. Melville is also the biographer of John Carroll of Baltimore, Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy (1955); Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, 1768-1836 (1958); and Louis William Dubourg, 2 vols., (1986).
DEDICATION

In commemoration of the bicentennial of the establishment of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, this edition of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton 1774-1821* is dedicated with deep gratitude:

- To Annabelle McConnell Melville, twentieth-century Seton scholar and author of this work which is recognized as the definitive Seton biography.

- To all of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton’s spiritual daughters, associates, affiliates, devotees, collaborators, and colleagues of the Sisters of Charity Federation and the extended Vincentian family who seek to love God and serve those who are poor through compassionate care, quality education, and advocacy for justice by endeavoring to encircle the globe in a network of charity.

- To all those who nurtured the growth of the “little mustard seed,” planted 31 July 1809 at the Stone House in Saint Joseph’s Valley near Emmitsburg, Maryland, and who have contributed to the growth, development, and expansion of the Sisters and Daughters of Charity to serve the people of God.

Together may we continue the legacy of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton!
When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. Her children rise up and praise her; her husband, too, extols her.

Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a reward of her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

Proverbs 31
# ILLUSTRATIONS

2. Bayley-Seton Wedding Miniatures.  
5. The Mother Seton House, Baltimore, Maryland.  

Illustrations are used with permission. The Bayley-Seton wedding miniatures and *Mother and Child* by Joseph Dawley are courtesy of the Archives Sisters of Charity of New York, Mount St. Vincent, Bronx, New York. All other illustrations are courtesy of the Daughters of Charity Archives, Emmitsburg, Maryland.
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Epilogue Betty Ann McNeil, D.C.

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FOREWORD

Sixty years ago in 1949, Annabelle Melville completed a biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton under Rev. John Tracy Ellis for her Ph.D. at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Two years later in 1951, Charles Scribner’s Sons published her manuscript as *Elizabeth Bayley Seton 1774-1821*.

Appointed to the faculty of St. Joseph College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in 1947, Annabelle Melville had access to an extensive collection of Elizabeth Seton’s letters and other writings gathered at the suggestion of Father Simon Gabriel Bruté after Mother Seton’s death. Later that collection was augmented by the gift of 133 letters and notes written to Julia Scott from 1798 to 1820 and by the Seton-Jevons Collection from the Mother Seton Guild. With these documents and those in the archives of other Seton communities, Dr. Melville created a documented life of Elizabeth Bayley Seton that has stood the test of time as the definitive biography. Reissued on several occasions, it became the starting point for any significant work on Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. That 1951 publication and its subsequent reissues created new interest in the life of this religious foundress.


In 1980, the American Broadcasting Company produced and offered *A Time for Miracles*, a movie about Saint Elizabeth Ann’s life with Kate Mulgrew, John Forsythe, Lorne Greene, and Rossano Brazzi. In the first volume of *Numerous Choirs* (1981), I linked the years of Elizabeth


As a result of that symposium, the Sisters of Charity Federation proposed a complete edition of Saint Elizabeth Ann’s writings. The project involved all known archival holdings and became the principle publication of the new century’s first decade: *Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Collected Writings*, edited by Regina Bechtle, S.C. and Judith Metz, S.C., Volume I, “Correspondence and Journals 1793-1808” in 2000, Volume II “Correspondence and Journals 1808-1820” in 2002, and Volume IIIa & IIIb “Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents” in 2004. Two other books were published in 2002: *Elizabeth Ann Seton, a Saint for a New Nation* by Julie Walters and *15 Days of Prayer with Saint Elizabeth*...

Annabelle Melville has had a vital role in Seton publications and activities from 1951 to “The Seton Legacy of Charity” bicentennial celebration commemorating the foundation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, Emmitsburg, Maryland. This reissue of her definitive biography, updated where possible with references to specific volumes of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, is a fitting tribute to St. Elizabeth Ann and her biographer.

Ellin M. Kelly, Ph.D.
Evanston, Illinois
2009
FOREWORD (1951)

With a view to meeting the demands of scholarship as well as of justice to a name that is held in reverence, the author of this biography has spared herself no inconvenience in collecting and arranging the material pertaining to the life and career of Elizabeth Ann Seton. Happily, the result of her painstaking and exhaustive research is a storehouse of helpful and reliable information which no future historian of Mother Seton can afford to by-pass in a quest for knowledge of the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the United States.

While engaged in writing this biography, the author, Mrs. Melville, who is a convert to the Faith, resided at Saint Joseph College, Emmitsburg, where, amid scenes that recall the most fruitful years of Elizabeth Seton’s life, she pursued her laborious and inspiring task. From her place of residence she could see in the distance Mount Saint Mary’s College where Mother Seton and her companions, following their arrival in Emmitsburg, found lodgment in a log cabin with a dirt floor. The cabin has long since rotted into dust, but the little stone house in Saint Joseph’s Valley to which she came when it was ready for occupancy still stands as a witness to the hardships which she and her associates endured for the cause they had come to serve. The mountains which Elizabeth Seton loved remain as of old. At their base is the cemetery where well-worn stones record the names of her young companions who went down to their graves in the springtime of life. Close by the cemetery are gnarled and knotted oaks that may have been planted by Elizabeth Seton’s hand and paths that knew the tread of her feet. With these and other mementoes of the past the author is quite familiar but, despite their appeal to sentiment, she has refused to depart from her purpose of writing a factual biography. In truth, her volume is intended for the critical as well as for the casual reader. Hence, her approach to her subject is not that of one who would write a eulogy but of an earnest and discriminating scholar who would share with her readers the fruits of her study and research. The evidence of her purpose and not less of her industry is quite apparent in the facts which she has brought to light from hitherto unpublished manuscripts and in the numerous annotations, the delight of the historian, and at the same time a witness to the author’s resolve to produce a biography notable for its accuracy and reliability.

Some readers may feel that the early chapters which relate the facts pertaining to the trying ordeal that preceded the reception of Mother Seton into the Church do not convey the poignancy of her suffering or stress the spiritual intensity of her life. They will find, however, in these chapters
a vivid description of the social and religious background against which they must see Elizabeth Seton if they would appreciate her true spiritual stature. What is more, in the picture that emerges from the concluding chapters of the biography they will see a person of Christ-like charity and courage who might well be regarded as a model for Catholic womanhood.

In the religious life of New York City before and after the American Revolution, the Protestant Episcopal Church, because of the wealth and distinction of its members, enjoyed especial prominence. On the other hand, the Catholic Church, which was represented by one lone parish consisting for the most part of recently arrived immigrants, had little of wealth and less of prestige. Elizabeth Ann Seton was a devout member of the Episcopal Church and was never more happy than when in attendance at its services. Her co-religionists were leaders not only in society, but in the professional and business life of the city. Small wonder, then, that they stood aghast when they saw her detach herself from the ranks of those who were on their way to Trinity or Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church and fall in line with the motley crowd that was on its way to Mass in Saint Peter’s Church, Barclay Street. It was a daring thing for Elizabeth Seton to do, but what made it especially daring was not so much the physical detachment from a particular group of persons as the spirit of detachment with which she regarded the loss sustained by the change in her religious affiliation. Socially and financially it was a great loss and by the same token an eloquent witness to the greatness of a soul that could speak of it only in the words of Saint Paul: “I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” [Philippians 3:8]

Because she was resolved to make her will one with the Will of God, Elizabeth Seton was unusually sensitive to the challenge of the Cross. There was no hedging on her part in accepting the terms laid down by Christ for one who would be His disciple: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” [Matthew 16:24] In choosing a course of action it was not her way to ask, “Is it easy?” She asked only, “Is it right?” Once convinced of its rightness, she made her decision, not counting the cost. Except for the Holy Bible, there was no book that spoke to her soul with greater eloquence than the image of Christ on the Cross. It was not a thing of metal or wood she saw when looking at her crucifix but the Face of the Crucified and her response to the challenge which she read in that Face was a life of heroic sacrifice. An apt pupil in the school of the Cross, Elizabeth Seton had learned to say with the saints: “In Thy will is my peace.” [Cf. Luke 22:42]
Nearly one hundred and thirty years [1821-1951] have passed since Mother Seton breathed forth her soul to God in the White House at Emmitsburg. Today, pilgrims from her native land and visitors from overseas are beating a pathway to her tomb. Those who ridiculed her sacrifice are dead; their names are as though they had been written in water. But she lives on not only in the pages of history but in the hearts and lives of nearly nine thousand spiritual daughters who, in schools, in orphanages, and hospitals, bear witness to the power and beauty of the ideal that dominated her life: “to serve the Church in its purpose of reflecting the image of Christ to all mankind.”

In concluding an article on Mother Seton in his volume, Sanctity in America, the Most Reverend Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, has written these welcome words: “Certainly the beatification of a distinguished woman born and reared in America will bring to the United States particular joy, prestige, and protection.” In response to the sentiments expressed by His Excellency, the many thousand admirers of Elizabeth Ann Seton will cry out from the fullness of their hearts a fervent “Amen.”

May this timely and scholarly volume serve to hasten Mother Seton’s hour of triumph. It is the fruit of much study and labor, and merits the recognition which undoubtedly this publication will receive from the historian and reading public alike as an outstanding biography of a great servant of God.

John Michael McNamara
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C.
1951
PREFACE (1976)

On a warm, sunny Sunday morning in mid-September 1975, some sixteen thousand Americans crowding St. Peter’s Square in Rome heard Pope Paul VI pronounce the words:

For the honor of the Most Holy Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and the increase of the Christian life, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and by our authority, after mature deliberation and most frequent prayer for divine assistance, having obtained the counsel of many of our brother bishops, we declare and we define that Blessed Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton is a saint, and we inscribe her name in the calendar of saints, and mandate that she should be devoutly honored among the saints in the universal Church.

It was the culmination of the Cause first conceived in 1882, and it elicted in the weeks that followed commentary, both oral and written, of many sorts. The Apostolic Delegate to the United States, the Most Reverend Jean Jadot, remarked on more than one occasion that he found it very interesting that the first native-born American saint [of the United States] was a woman. In the same vein others found the new saint’s canonization to be most appropriately timed to take place in a year commemorating a worldwide rise in women’s influence. The National Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Bicentennial [of the United States] rejoiced that their support for canonization had come to fruition amid the nation’s two hundredth anniversary celebration. [The United Nations had declared 1975 as The International Year of the Woman and the following ten years as the Decade of the Woman (1976-1985).] The Wall Street Journal was sure the timing was “a political decision;” and one Catholic journalist commented sardonically that the event was simply an attempt on the part of the sovereign pontiff to bolster the sagging morale of the Church in the United States.

Whether intended to impute motives or to find in the ceremonies of September 14th some relevance to the larger contemporary scene, these speculations are less important to the sober biographer than the demonstrable sequence of events, particularly those of the decade and a half between the last printing of this work and the canonization in 1975. In order to bring up

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* St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617), who was canonized in 1671, is the first native-born saint of the Americas. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton is the first native-born saint of the United States of America although in 1938 Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917) became the first United States citizen to be canonized.

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to date the outline of the Process or Cause of Elizabeth Bayley Seton a new preface seems advisable.

Following the declaration of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on December 18, 1959, that Mother Seton’s virtues were heroic and that she should be called “Venerable,” the work of authenticating miracles accelerated. One case alleging the cure in Louisiana of a Daughter of Charity, Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer (1872-1942), whose cancer of the pancreas had vanished in January 1935, had been under investigation since November 23, 1945. A second investigation began in Baltimore, Maryland, on February 14, 1961, when evidence was presented to support the cure nine years earlier of a four-year-old girl, Ann Theresa O’Neill (1948-), suffering from acute leukemia. The results of these two investigations were forwarded to Rome and on December 14, 1961, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a Decree of Validity subsequently confirmed by Pope John XXIII in his Decree De Tuto.

With two valid miracles attested, Beatification was certain to follow, and with this in mind on October 26, 1962, an official exhumation of Mother Seton’s remains was made. From their resting place under a small Gothic chapel in the original graveyard of the Sisters of Charity, St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Emmitsburg, Maryland, they were enshrined in the Sisters Chapel at Saint Joseph College and placed above the main altar April 18, 1963. On Saint Patrick’s Day, 1963, the actual Beatification took place inside St. Peter’s Basilica in the presence of two thousand Americans who had arrived by what the New York Herald Tribune called “the largest air-lift pilgrimage in history.”

Ordinarily two more miracles are required to complete the Process. One was claimed almost immediately. In the fall of 1963, a Protestant workingman, Carl Eric Kalin (1902-1976), was admitted to St. Joseph’s Hospital in Yonkers, New York, dying of a rare disease termed “fulminating meningo-encephalitis complicated by primary rubeola.” Only five such cases had previously been recorded in medical history, and in each case the disease had proved fatal. Kalin was not expected to live through the night. Instead, on October 16 he awakened with temperature and other signs back to normal and by November 2 could be discharged as fully recovered. On December 13, 1973, the medical investigators were unanimous in pronouncing Kalin’s recovery miraculous, and a year later—lacking a day—Pope Paul VI concurred. On December 12, 1974, he announced that a second post-Beatification miracle could be dispensed with in Mother Seton’s
case and that she would be proclaimed a saint amid the special ceremonies of the Holy Year of 1975. The Process was thus completed.

In the light of the more extensive interest in her career generated by her elevation it is more than ever proper to have available a straightforward, carefully documented, historical life of this famous American.

Annabelle McConnell Melville
Bridgewater, Massachusetts
1976
PREFACE (1960)

In a sermon delivered on the occasion of a pilgrimage from the Archdiocese of Washington to the tomb of Elizabeth Seton on June 14, 1959, the Right Reverend John Tracy Ellis remarked, “The Church in the American Republic has indeed made giant strides in both spiritual and material development, but there still remains something unfulfilled in the Catholic life of this land. No native-born American has as yet been declared blessed or been canonized as a saint.” His listeners were in no wise downcast, however, by this statement; nor need they have been. Only six months earlier, on December 18, 1958, the new pontiff, John XXIII, in his very first consistory had delighted the four new American cardinals present by including on that historic occasion the pleading of Mother Seton’s Cause by Advocate Consistorale Francesco Saverio Parisi. And a year later, to the very month and day, in the Consistorial Hall of the Vatican, was publicly read the decree by which the Sacred Congregation of Rites declared, the virtues of Elizabeth Seton heroic and that Mother Seton could henceforth be called, “Venerable.” Thus, in the sesquicentennial year of her foundation of the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg, Maryland, Elizabeth Seton’s Cause had successfully passed the first of three major stages in the process of canonization.

It is perhaps only natural that a biographer of Elizabeth Seton should muse over the events which intervened between the death of the American foundress and the happy portent of 1959; to the uninitiated, or those who recall that in the earlier Church canonization could result almost immediately by acclamation, the lapse in time may be equally perplexing. Some summary in retrospect is almost inevitable with the re-issue of a major historical study of Elizabeth Seton’s career.

There is little doubt that those contemporaries who knew Mother Seton best believed her to be of extraordinary sanctity. Archbishop John Carroll used the word “saint” when writing of her to a mutual friend; Bishop John Cheverus exclaimed, “What an impression must she not make on the young students with the miracles of grace and the sanctity to which she witnesses!” Her confessor, Simon Bruté, later Bishop of Vincennes, wrote in the summer following her death, “I will say that, as a result of my long and intimate acquaintance with Mother Seton, I believe her to have been one of those truly chosen souls who, if placed in circumstances similar to those of Saint Teresa [of Avila] or Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, would be equally remarkable in the scale of sanctity.” It was Bruté who admonished the Sisters of Charity that they should treasure everything Mother Seton left
behind. “Preserve all carefully and gather up the fragments lest any be lost,” he insisted, “for some day how precious they will be.”

Nevertheless, almost a century elapsed before the Cause was formally begun. Only two tangible efforts were made in the interim to preserve the heroic memory of the American foundress: the erection in 1845 of a marble monument over her remains, and the publication in 1853 of the full-length biography by Charles Ignatius White. True, James Cardinal Gibbons did, on August 3, 1882, propose to the Emmitsburg Community the introduction of the Cause for Canonization; but it was not until another quarter of a century had passed that the proposal materialized.

Then, in 1907, the first session of an ecclesiastical court created for that purpose began an investigation of the merits of the Cause, with the Very Reverend Edward R. Dyer, S.S., acting as Judex Delegatus. Thus was undertaken the first active promotion of the “Fama sanctitatis.” By 1914 the process, “De Scripturis” was accomplished and twelve volumes of Mother Seton’s writings were presented to Rome by the Very Reverend Charles L. Souvay, C.M. But 1914 was the year that World War I erupted; once again the Cause languished.

It was not until 1931 that effective steps were taken to reactivate the process. That year, however, witnessed four influential events. On July 9, 1931, a pilgrimage of American women representing the Federation of Catholic Alumnae and the Committee on Mother Seton left for Rome to petition Pope Pius XI on Mother Seton’s behalf; in 1931 a plaque was installed at St. Peter’s Church in New York commemorating the conversion of Mrs. Seton; in November of that year the American hierarchy at their annual meeting voted unanimously to approve the Cause. Most important of all, 1931 was the year in which Pius XI took action to remove the impediment stemming from the former requirement in the Informative Process of living witnesses. An Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites was created; new life was given to the Cause. By January 15, 1936, the formal examination of Mother Seton’s own writings was completed; two years later, to facilitate research into the other aspects of the historical background, the Reverend Salvator M. Burgio, C.M., was named American Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Mother Seton. The Mother Seton Guild came into being. In spite of the outbreak of another war, World War II, on February 28, 1940, a decree of the Congregation of Rites at last introduced the cause of beatification and canonization at Rome.

Before the war was over the six different communities of Sisters of Charity who trace their roots directly to the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s
at Emmitsburg and constitute “Mother Seton’s Daughters” were holding the first of an annual series of conferences to stimulate the progress of the Cause; and in February, 1947, the superior of the Daughters of Charity whose Provincial House is at Emmitsburg, Maryland, gave the impulse to a modern historical study of Mother Seton, a study which was destined to become the definitive biography of the Emmitsburg foundress.

One could not foresee, of course, in 1947 that the work authorized by Sister Isabel Toohey, D.C., Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province, would return from Rome stamped with the approval of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on January 5, 1950. Nor could it have been expected that when the author visited that Congregation in July 1951, the official in charge of documenting Mother Seton’s Cause should comment, “We wish we might have had your manuscript sooner. It is of great assistance.” Even less could one have anticipated the jubilant, if slightly tinged with Latin hyperbole, words of the Vice-Postulator of the Cause when he wrote from Emmitsburg on June 7, 1957, “When in Rome I was able to procure the Documentation of the Cause. Your heart will exalt in the fact that you are enshrined in this book for all times. Your historical efforts have been highly appraised in Rome and you have contributed much in the process.”

The subsequent action taken in Rome in 1958 and 1959 was certain to gladden the heart of any biographer of Elizabeth Seton. For the first time since the Informative Process was introduced a substantial hope flourishes that the beatification of Mother Seton may soon follow, and that in due time the third and last step, canonization, will be a reality. With this renewed interest in the woman who well may be the first American-born saint in the Church in the United States, the need for a definitive evaluation of her life is perhaps even greater than it was in 1951 when this biography was first made available to the general reader.

Indeed, it is to be hoped that Elizabeth Seton never loses her attraction for the biographer, editor, novelist, playwright, or poet. A great woman is a public legacy and should be enjoyed by all ages and in many guises. Nevertheless, a very real, particular person helped to shape our history between the years 1774 and 1821. And with the modest hope of presenting again the actual Elizabeth Bayley Seton, this new printing goes forth.

Annabelle McConnell Melville
Bridgewater Teachers College
Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1960
PREFACE (1951)

When Tennyson’s Ulysses said, “I am a part of all that I have met,” he unwittingly pronounced the primary principle of much of modern biography. In this genre of historical writing the author no longer writes of his hero as the protagonist of a Greek play, in which plot predominates and background remains inchoate. Rather, the task of contemporary biography is to destroy the vacuum which time has placed around the event, and to revivify the scene through which the hero actually strode. In this rhetorical resurrection the author arbitrarily assumes the functions of qualification and limitation. Those events which delimit the course of his hero’s life must be included; but those which, however significant in other aspects, do not cross the pattern of the narrative may be, and often must be, discarded.

The biographer is, in some cases, further constrained to dispel a cloud of sentiment, illusion, and positive error which legend, deliberate fiction, careless research, and wishful thinking have created and which obscure the exact proportions of the hero as he or she was. It was with these dual purposes in mind that a new biography of Elizabeth Bayley Seton was undertaken. The numerous existing biographies have hitherto been concerned primarily with Mrs. Seton as a woman in religion; this present work seeks to present her as an American woman of the early Republic, a woman whose career was immediately influenced by the exigencies of its infancy. Her material fortunes, and those of her family, rose and fell with the fortunes of the new nation. The development of her character and the expansion of her work illustrate the operation of forces and powers which were the yeast of the fermentation of the United States in the early nineteenth century. Elizabeth Seton was in every sense a woman of America, though she was to become a “citizen of the world.”

The second justification for a new biography lies in the necessity for establishing, as accurately as present sources allow, the exact details of Mrs. Seton’s life. Although there exists a good-sized shelf of printed works pertaining to her life, not since 1853, when Charles Ignatius White (1807-1878) published his first edition, has there been a careful attempt made to write the whole story of Mrs. Seton. The White biography was translated, with some additions, into French by Madame Hélène Roederer Bailly de Barberey (1823-1898) and appeared in 1868 in two volumes under the title, *Elizabeth Seton et les commencements de l’église catholique aux Etats-Unis*. After this French work went through six editions, Joseph Bernard Code (1899-1980) in 1927 translated the de Barberey work back into English, used some letters which had come to light in the meantime
to correct many errors in dates, and printed Simon Bruté’s account of Mrs. Seton’s last days, not included in the French edition. Needless to say, some deviations from the White account and the original documents it cited crept in during these two translations. These two English works of White and Code have become the basis for most subsequent biographical sketches, plays, novels, and poetry.

In 1917, Sister Mary Agnes McCann, Sister of Charity of Cincinnati, (1851-1931), in the first volume of her ambitious *History of Mother Seton’s Daughters* brought to the public eye many letters from the Baltimore Cathedral Archives pertaining to Mrs. Seton’s affairs, and some material preserved at the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati Archives at Mount Saint Joseph’s in Ohio. *The Life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle of New York*, by Sister Maria Dodge, (1832-1893), Sister of Charity of New York, published in 1893, added some letters, especially one of Mrs. Seton written in 1820 and excerpts from those of John Moranvillé to Elizabeth Boyle. No single work, however, since White’s in 1853, has made use of all the materials now available to the biographer. A mere revision of White’s book is not the answer to the demand for a definitive biography. A new biography is not only warranted but indispensable in the face of an increasing interest in this great American woman.

The writer acknowledges with warm appreciation the valuable assistance and unfailing courtesy of the custodians of the archival treasures, particularly the Right Reverend Joseph M. Nelligan, then Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Reverends Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., of the University of Notre Dame; William J. O’Shea, S.S., St. Mary’s Seminary, Roland Park, Baltimore; William C. Repetti, S.J., Georgetown University; Hugh J. Philips, Mount Saint Mary’s College, Emmitsburg; Salvator M. Burgio, C.M., Mother Seton Guild, Emmitsburg. To the Sisters of Charity, especially at Mount Saint Joseph’s, Ohio, Mount Saint Vincent’s, New York, and Saint Joseph’s Central House, Emmitsburg, the writer owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude for the cheerful assistance given in searching out the truth, even when cherished tradition sometimes fell by the way. To the Reverend John Tracy Ellis, professor of American Church history in the Catholic University of America, who directed this study, the writer is immeasurably indebted for his unfailing encouragement, exacting criticisms, and seasoned judgments. The writer can be no less appreciative of the reading and criticisms of John T. Farrell, associate professor of American history, and Sister Marie Carolyn Klinkhamer, O.P., assistant professor of American history in the Catholic University of America. To the
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Annabelle McConnell Melville
Saint Joseph College
Emmitsburg, Maryland
1951
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I would like to first express my appreciation to Sister Mary Clare Hughes, D.C., who envisioned the possibility of this revision years ago and whose interest and prayerful support helped transform this idea into reality.

I am grateful for the generous enthusiasm and meticulous research and technical assistance rendered by the staff of the Daughters of Charity Archives at St. Joseph’s Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland. No request was too demanding nor were time constraints too daunting for them whom I count among my friends and colleagues, Bonnie Weatherly, Selin James, and Mary Anne Weatherly. Sister Eleanor Casey, D.C., was also very helpful by doing preliminary research regarding publication and copyright history. Her findings elucidated the tasks ahead.

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In the words of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, “God only can measure my joy and gratitude.”

Betty Ann McNeil, D.C.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Public interest in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as a wife, mother, and saint has grown since her canonization. Simultaneously the classic publication, Elizabeth Bayley Seton by Annabelle M. Melville, became less available in bookstores. It was last reprinted in 1985. Yet this biography remains the definitive historical study of the first canonized saint native to the United States.

Two hundred years ago a tiny, faith-filled woman from New York came to Maryland and founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s in an old, stone farm house in St. Joseph’s Valley near Emmitsburg, Maryland. In order to honor the Seton legacy of charity which her spiritual daughters, associates and affiliates share, it is fitting that Elizabeth Bayley Seton be updated and published anew.

Annabelle M. Melville remains the Seton scholar par excellence of the 20th century. Her friend and colleague Ellin M. Kelly, who has also contributed her time, talent, and expertise to Seton scholarship kindly accepted the invitation to write the 2009 Foreword. The 2009 edition would be incomplete without also including Dr. Melville’s own prefaces and the 1951 contribution of John M. McNamara, auxiliary bishop of Washington, D.C., and staunch advocate for the Seton cause for canonization. This front material offers a wealth of information about Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and her path to canonization by Pope Paul VI, 14 September 1975.

The 2009 edition reflects appropriate updating and revisions, particularly to annotations but still retains the meticulous research, organization, and insights originally presented by Dr. Melville in 1951. Significant changes appear in brackets in this edition. In a few instances, recent research has elucidated some new facts and nuances of the Seton story as Melville understood it from the resources she used. The 2009 edition has benefited from technological advances, archival developments, increased access to information, recent research, and the publication by the Sisters of Charity Federation of Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings, which contains the corpus of the Seton papers. Such progress has made it possible to enhance the historical context presented in this work. Time constraints did not permit the pursuit of some illusive facts and intriguing questions. We leave that and other lacunae for a future generation to address.

The 2009 edition contains the corrected text of quotations based on a review of the original Seton documents and/or authenticated transcriptions, whereas in many instances Dr. Melville only had typescripts rather than
original documents for her use. Discrepancies of Seton quotations have been resolved in this edition using the definitive texts published in Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings. Although Elizabeth Seton was a highly literate woman for her time, the written word in the early nineteenth century was not yet governed by the literary conventions of our day. For the convenience of modern readers the majority of nineteenth-century quotations have been edited to conform to current standards of spelling, punctuation, and grammar except for capitalization. In order for readers to gain insight into the intensity and range of feelings which Elizabeth Seton expressed in her writings, words which she emphasized through capitalization has been retained.

Another significant change in this edition appears in the numbering of chapters. The original chapter 6 was lengthy and appears as two chapters in the 2009 edition: Chapter 6, No Resting Place and Chapter 7, God’s Blessed Time.

The organization and type of annotations has also changed. Melville’s original annotations have been updated and relocated in some instances for greater clarity and convenience of readers. The number of explanatory footnotes has increased. These appear below at the bottom of the page with the related text. Endnotes, which usually refer to the source document and repository, appear at the conclusion of each chapter. The documentation for the majority of the notes appears in the endnotes unless given in a footnote. Two lengthy annotations on complex issues of Elizabeth Seton’s first communion in the Protestant Episcopal Church and the citizenship of William Magee Seton have been moved to the Appendix in this edition.

When Dr. Melville was doing her original research in the late 1940’s, the Seton papers were scattered and held by different repositories than at present. Some original documents were in the Filicchi family archives in Italy, some with the various branches of Sisters and Daughters of Charity in the United States and Canada. As a result of the preliminary work required to prepare Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings for publication, a comprehensive inventory of all extant Seton documents was developed. The annotations in this biography reflect the current repository for each citation and also are in accord with the identification and location of documents in Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings. The 2009 edition is also the fruit of modern scholarship since Dr. Melville first published this classic biography in 1951. It is my sincere hope that this edition will provide enjoyable reading and reflection on Elizabeth Bayley Seton. It is my
sincere hope that this edition will provide enjoyable reading and reflection on Elizabeth Bayley Seton.

May readers gain an understanding of the life, mission, and legacy of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and enhance their appreciation of her as a real person and role model for today and a woman of faith for all ages. May the bicentennial celebration commemorating the foundation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s in St. Joseph’s Valley be an inspiration for others to join in continuing the Seton Legacy of Charity.

Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., Editor
Archivist
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
Emmitsburg, Maryland
25 March 2009
CHAPTER 1

THE BAYLEYS AND SETONS OF NEW YORK

The August heat hung over the city as the delegates from Massachusetts toured New York City, where they had stopped off on their way to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was the summer of 1774. Only a few weeks earlier New York City had chosen Philip Livingston, Isaac Low, James Duane, John Jay, and John Alsop, Esquires, to represent the province at the Continental Congress. Now their colleagues from Boston, Massachusetts, after a brief respite at Hull’s sign of The Bunch of Grapes, were casting their critical eyes about the thriving island. They visited Trinity Church and the new St. Paul’s, which had cost a good eighteen thousand pounds in York money. It is to be hoped that these proper Bostonians did not discover that close by the consecrated grounds of St. Paul’s some 500 “ladies of pleasure” kept lodgings and offered distractions to the students approaching King’s College. The college was only now considering a report on a royal constitution “constituting the Seminary and University.”

The city offered some impressive sights with its three hundred sail of shipping showing in the harbor and slips and the public buildings spreading out like a fan from the Battery. Between twenty-five and thirty thousand inhabitants thronged the busy streets, and even though one-fifth of the population was African-American, the white majority was augmented regularly by the fresh adventurers from Britain and Ireland who were disgorged almost daily from the wooden bellies of the ships. The city had already drawn the boundaries for seven wards, and the more refined families were pushing out into the country in their search for exclusive dwelling places. The Massachusetts delegates rode three miles from the city to breakfast with John Morin Scott at his excellent country seat. Scott would one day be the father-in-law of Julianna Sitgreaves (1765–1842), but Julia was still a girl and her dearest future friend was born this very month. They would all make history, and Boston, Philadelphia, and New York would all be part of the pattern.

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1 The southern shoreline of Manhattan Island has been called the Battery for generations and has long been a popular public area. Its name is derived from gun batteries that once protected the city.

2 Julia Sitgreaves Scott, daughter of William and Susanna Deshon Sitgreaves, was born in Philadelphia. She married Lewis Allaire Scott, who succeeded his father as Secretary of State of New York. After being widowed in March 1798, Julia returned to live in Philadelphia and was a lifelong confidante and benefactor of Elizabeth Seton.
Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born on 28 August 1774. Aside from her parentage, little is known about her birth.\(^1\) It is not possible to identify where Elizabeth Bayley was born in New York.\(^c\) There are no records of the event, no baptismal records extant, not even a city directory to indicate her parents’ residence. Trinity Church, where she may have been baptized, lost its records in the fire of 1776. The first directory of New York City was published in 1787. Even the records of St. Andrew’s Church on Staten Island, New York, reveal no clue.\(^2\) She was the second daughter of Dr. Richard Bayley (1744–1801) and his first wife, Catherine Charlton Bayley (?–1777). The mother, who died when Elizabeth was only three years old, was a daughter of Mary Bayeux Charlton and the Reverend Richard Charlton,\(^d\) for many years the rector of St. Andrew’s Church on Staten Island.\(^3\) The father, Richard Bayley, was the elder son of William Bayley of Hoddeston, Hertfordshire, in England, who had come to New York in 1726.\(^4\) William Bayley married Susanne Le Compte of New Rochelle, New York,\(^e\) and of this union two sons were born. Richard was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, about 1744;\(^5\) William Le Compte was born on 8 August 1745.\(^6\)

Richard Bayley came to New York City from New Rochelle at the age of twenty to study under the society physician, Dr. John Charlton. Charlton, who had studied in England and had been rather prominent at the court of George III, had married Mary de Peyster, the daughter of Abraham de Peyster and Margaret van Courtlandt de Peyster. Everyone in New York knew by sight the stocky, ruddy-faced little man who “seemed quite ready to parade himself and horse for the benefit of inquisitive folk.”\(^7\) Dr. Charlton lived at 100 Broadway within easy call of the Jays, where he and his lady dined on occasion at small “en famille” repasts. His family connections alone kept Dr. Charlton with a thriving practice.\(^8\) But this kind of professional experience did not satisfy the eager young Bayley, and after marrying his mentor’s sister in 1767, he went to London where for two years he studied under the famous William Hunter.\(^9\) On his return to New York, Dr. Bayley practiced medicine with Dr. Charlton, and together they shared the honor of being the first physicians to ride to visit their patients.\(^10\) By 1774, the Bayleys had two


\(^2\) The Reverend Richard Charlton (1706–1777) was rector of St. Andrew’s (1747–1777). The son of John Charlton of Longford, Ireland, Richard had graduated from Trinity College in Dublin and was sent as a missionary to New Windsor, New York, in 1730. In 1733 he was made catechist of the African-Americans of New York City and served in that capacity until he was appointed rector of St. Andrew’s Church, 24 November 1747. He married Mary Bayeux. Dr. Charlton died of dysentery on 7 October 1777. His eldest daughter married John Dongan; his son was physician, Dr. John Charlton of New York City.

\(^3\) The Reverend Richard Charlton (1706–1777) was rector of St. Andrew’s (1747–1777). The son of John Charlton of Longford, Ireland, Richard had graduated from Trinity College in Dublin and was sent as a missionary to New Windsor, New York, in 1730. In 1733 he was made catechist of the African-Americans of New York City and served in that capacity until he was appointed rector of St. Andrew’s Church, 24 November 1747. He married Mary Bayeux. Dr. Charlton died of dysentery on 7 October 1777. His eldest daughter married John Dongan; his son was physician, Dr. John Charlton of New York City.

\(^4\) Le Compte also appears as LeConte.
daughters, and Dr. Bayley had an avid interest in the causes of croup. In 1775 he left the former to pursue the latter, and again went to London to study with Hunter. When the war for independence broke out in America, Bayley returned on board a British man-of-war, a surgeon in the army of Major General William Howe. Bayley was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, in the first year of the war, and it was there he met the Hessian military surgeon, Dr. Christian Friedrich Michaelis, whose interest in croup rivaled Bayley’s own. It was at Newport that Bayley became increasingly interested in the pathology of disease and anatomy, and wild rumors eventually reached New York that he was performing cruel experiments on the soldiers to satisfy his scientific curiosity.

Richard Bayley’s career as an army surgeon was cut short by an urgent summons to Newtown, Long Island, where his wife lay dying, probably as a result of childbirth, in the spring of 1777. Left a widower in his early thirties, he found himself with the responsibility of three little girls, and his thirst for medical experiment still unquenched. It is not surprising to find him remarrying scarcely more than a year later. Again Richard Bayley allied himself to good families of New York society, this time the Barclays and Roosevelts, by his marriage on 16 June 1778, to Charlotte Amelia Barclay (1759–1805), the daughter of Andrew and Helena Roosevelt Barclay. With his children now given a second mother, Dr. Bayley turned again to his professional interests, and the Royal Gazette for 5 July 1780, carried this advertisement:

Mr. Bayley presents his compliments to the gentlemen who did him the honor of attending the operation in surgery last winter and will be happy to see them at his house on Friday the 7th at 5 o’clock P.M.

Two years later he performed the first successful amputation of an arm at the shoulder joint. His fame was growing.

Richard Bayley, like the elder William Seton (1746-1798), was a consistent loyalist throughout the course of the revolutionary war. New York City was the only port to remain continuously in British hands from

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1 These daughters were Mary Magdalen, Elizabeth Ann, and infant Catherine Charlton Bayley.

2 Most biographers of Elizabeth Bayley Seton have stated that Dr. Bayley was closely connected with Sir Guy Carleton during the American Revolution. They probably based their statements on a claim made by Robert Seton in An Old Family that Dr. Bayley “began life as staff-surgeon to General Sir Guy Carleton in New York.” Robert Seton, An Old Family, (Bretano’s: New York, 1899), 275. The earliest biographer of Bayley, Thacher, states that Bayley resigned from the army in 1777. Sir Guy Carleton did not take command in New York City until May 1782. A search of the Report on American Manuscripts which contains the Carleton or Dorchester papers shows not a single mention of Richard Bayley in any capacity. It may be that Robert Seton drew erroneous conclusions from the name of Dr. Bayley’s youngest son, Guy Carlton Bayley, born in 1786. Yet the boy’s own mother spelled his name “Guy Charlton” in her will.
October 1776 to November 1783 and it thus became the natural Mecca for loyalists craving the protection of the British crown. The evacuation of Philadelphia alone directed some 3,000 pilgrims to New York. Among the regular residents of the city certainly many who were neutral in sentiment became Tory in public practice for reasons of expediency.16 A third portion of the loyalist population comprised the merchants and professional classes, to whom politics will ever remain secondary to private economic or social motivation. Commerce, justice, and humanitarianism tended, rightly, to cut across the national or imperial boundaries of the time. The loyalism of a merchant Seton or a surgeon Bayley requires no ponderous polemic.

From its varied sources the loyalist population grew by leaps and bounds. At the time of the abortive American occupation scarcely a king’s man existed within the city; yet immediately following the British entrance in October 1776, well over a thousand male inhabitants assembled at the city hall in Wall Street to take an oath of allegiance to the crown. By February of the following year this number had swelled to 3,000, and it is estimated that of the 27,000 people in New York City in 1781, practically all were classed as loyal to His Majesty’s rule.17

Richard Bayley’s loyalism was on occasion at odds with his humanitarianism. After General James Pattison became commandant of the city the corruption and cruelty of British rule horrified many of the citizens by the excesses which were tolerated. Pattison himself rarely let a day pass without offending someone. One day when Bayley happened to be passing through the streets he saw a drunken soldier thrown from a cart and run over by a careless African-American driver. Bayley got down from his chaise, administered first aid, and notified the hospital. For his pains Bayley received a call from the Provost Marshal the following day, was thrown in jail, denied access to Pattison, and did not get released until ten o’clock that evening. Such treatment so enraged Bayley that he threatened to quit the city rather than live under such military rule. Pattison, fortunately, was succeeded the following year and Bayley remained to practice his experiments in surgery.18

None of the problems of allegiance concerned the four-year-old daughter of Dr. Bayley, however, as she sat in the doorway of their house one day in October 1778. Inside the house lay the still form of little Catherine Charlton Bayley, dead at the age of two. The serious little girl on the doorstep looked at the clouds scudding grely overhead and tried to work out the puzzle of the death and heaven, as she longed for a mother she scarcely remembered.19 While Dr. Bayley performed his surgical experiments in 1780
his daughter Elizabeth was intrigued by other more abstract considerations, and climbed the garret stairs with Emma, her baby half-sister. Peering out the attic window, showing her the setting sun, Elizabeth told her, “God lived up in heaven and good children would go up there.”

Elizabeth Bayley’s step-mother was busy during these years rearing a family of her own. In the first eight years of her marriage she had six children and was often in “great affliction.” Yet she found time to teach Elizabeth the 23rd psalm, “the Lord is my Shepherd” which all through her life was Elizabeth’s favorite psalm. Sometimes, perhaps to relieve the burdened woman, the daughters of the first Mrs. Bayley were sent to New Rochelle to stay with the Bayley relatives there. At New Rochelle Elizabeth loved to play alone, or wander about the countryside. It is quite possible she was thus occupied when the British evacuated New York City.

Two months after Elizabeth Ann Bayley’s ninth birthday the New York journals and gazettes carried vivid descriptions of the elaborate ceremonies and noisy dinners with which the revolutionary patriots celebrated the evacuation of New York by the British. Besides General Washington, Governor George Clinton, and Major General Knox, a changing culture was ushered in 25 November 1783, which was to exert a tremendous influence on Elizabeth Bayley’s life. The retiring British left behind them more problems to be solved than the irritating greased flagpole at Fort George. The city was a shambles. The devastating fires of 1776 and 1778 had laid waste one-quarter of the city proper. Roads were nearly impassable, while water traffic was decreased by the deteriorated conditions into which docks and wharves had fallen from disuse. As if to add her sneering comment, nature visited southern Manhattan that fall with an earthquake severe enough to throw gentlemen from their seats and send china and glassware crashing to the floor. There was no clairvoyance to predict that from these ashes the Phoenix of the nineteenth-century metropolis would rise.

War takes a partial toll in deferred payment, and the Revolution left its own residue of disintegration in a weakened moral fiber accompanied by overt modifications of organized religion. Nowhere was the decline in public and private morality more in evidence than in the larger cities. One surface indication was the increased popularity of dueling. John Paul Jones’ refusal to meet Pierre Landais after a disgraceful encounter in New York in

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8 Although the births of all these children are not definitely dated, the children were Charlotte Amelia (called Emma), Richard, Guy Carlton, Mary Fitch, William Augustus, and Andrew Barclay. A seventh child, Helen, was born 10 June 1790.

1 Elizabeth Seton says in “Dear Remembrances”: “New Rochelle at 8 years” then “12 years old...home again at my Fathers.” If she were continuously at New Rochelle from eight to twelve years of age, she was not present for the evacuation of the city in 1783.
October 1787 was an exception to the general humor. More typical was the attack made by James Jones on Brockholst Livingston in 1798, in full view of the promenaders of the Battery. That Jones was killed in the resulting duel seems not to have materially affected the popularity of this method of establishing honor, so lately borrowed from the French officers of the Revolution. Dr. Richard Bayley was himself a party to a long and acrid controversy which ensued when Wright Post (1766–1828) and Monsieur P. Micheau quarreled in 1788. Micheau challenged Dr. Post, who declined to meet his opponent, but friends of both parties took the affair to press, and “a number of affidavits relating to it appeared in the public prints of the city.” The matter was only ended by the departure of Micheau for England, which left the young doctor free to turn to thoughts of marriage and Mary Magdalen Bayley (1768–1856).

At a lower level of society vice and crime emanated from the unsavory nooks and crannies of “Canvas Town,” the area encompassed by Broad and Whitehall Streets, the legacy left by the great fires. Respectable citizens were attacked and robbed; and some, like Isaac Willetts, took the law into their own hands and fired upon suspicious characters. Public as well as private morality gave evidence of the inroads made by the Revolution, and Chancellor Livingston wrote to Washington in 1783, lamenting the depravity pervading the mass of people who seemed to consider national faith and honor of little moment. In this same decade the wave of financial speculation in the reputation of the new republic reached its peak; and in March 1788, the agents of William Seton, and that master gambler, William Duer, were found as far south as North Carolina where they were buying up all the certificates they could command. Back in New York City resolutions were being passed to penalize the public tax collectors for their delinquencies, and the governor warned the citizenry to be on guard against counterfeited federal notes.

Organized religion was also undergoing change. Before the Revolution religious affiliation and political power had frequently gone hand in hand. Four major groups had vied for power, with the Anglicans usually monopolizing civil offices. Their only serious rival had been the more numerous Presbyterians. The Dutch Reformed group was still strong, but its energies were being dissipated. The Lutherans were in fourth place, while the remaining denominations exerted no perceptible political influence.

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1 Dr. Wright Post (1768–1856) married Bayley’s oldest daughter 10 June 1790. New York Journal and Weekly Register, 19 June 1790. The couple had the following children: Edward, Lionel (Leo), Catherine Charlton, Richard Bayley, Eugene, Mary Elizabeth, and Emily.
During the Revolution, Anglicanism was rather generally a synonym for loyalism. Before the advent of the British occupation the Anglicans had suffered briefly at the hands of the Whigs, and their churches had been closed in August 1776. For a month no services were held at Trinity, St. Paul’s or St. George’s; but the arrival of the British reversed the situation and St. Paul’s resumed services on 22 September 1776. Both St. Paul’s and St. George’s remained open for the duration of the British occupation, but Trinity, razed in the conflagration which accompanied the patriot retreat, was not rebuilt for another decade. By 1782 the two Anglican chapels were so overcrowded that worshipers had to make use of the city hall. British occupation saw the rise of discrimination against the other sects, and it is not particularly surprising to find the Presbyterians suffering most severely. Churches were seized and converted into barracks, hospitals, and prisons. That much of this appropriation was military necessity may be assumed from the fact that even St. George’s Chapel was considered as a possible Hessian hospital in 1779, and only the spirited protests of Dr. Charles Inglis prevented the event. Certain the churches so used were unfit for divine worship at the war’s end. It was not until the closing decade of the century that any serious architectural retort was made to the Anglican threat of monopoly, and a French traveler could remark that the city seemed to contain as many churches as shops.

The peace ushered in by the Treaty of Paris in 1783 found the Anglicans, or Episcopalians, still leading the political parade. “If the Tories of 1776 could be called Episcopalians, the same title could be used with far better right for the Federalists of 1788.” But changes within the framework of the church must be noted. A series of laws in 1784 provided disestablishment in New York and legalized the incorporation of all religious bodies. Under this latter provision Trinity Church was incorporated on 17 April 1784. Within the body ecclesiastic a Whig junta succeeded in substituting the Reverend Samuel Provoost for the ardent Tory, Benjamin Moore, as rector of Trinity Parish. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States separated itself from the Anglican Church in 1785. Provoost, formerly assistant of Trinity Church, became its pastor and the first bishop of the city in 1787. Under his episcopal eye the cornerstone for the new Trinity Church was laid on 21 August 1788, and the dedication solemnized in 1790. It was Bishop Provoost who presided at St. Paul’s in the service following Washington’s inauguration in 1789, and it was Provoost, too, who witnessed the marriage of Elizabeth Ann Bayley to William Magee Seton (1768–1803) on 25 January 1794. Although the politics of the

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1 The middle name “Magee” is from a merchant of London, his baptismal sponsor, who left him a legacy of 1000 British pounds and 1500 British pounds to his father.
Bayleys and Setons are less certain, there is no doubt that these two families and their connections belonged to the Episcopalian majority of the postwar era.

The evacuation of New York City in 1783, led to other changes which would affect the lives of the Bayleys and Setons. The position of the former loyalists was for a time precarious. Large numbers of them fled, and New York lost such dignitaries as Governor William Tryon, Sir Andrew Elliott, Judge Thomas Jones, Thomas Barclay, William Bayard, and some of the de Lanceys, not to mention such churchmen as Dr. Inglis and Myles Cooper. “Not only did the city suffer a deprivation of men and talent, but the fleeing Tories carried with them a not inconsiderable amount of wealth, despite their heavy financial losses.”\(^{38}\) The loyalists who chose to leave the city had been ordered by the Sons of Liberty to be gone by 1 May 1784; but “loyalism was of so many shades, and ties of blood were so numerous, that the great majority remained to make the best of the new situation.”\(^{39}\)

This new situation, at the outset, was not characterized by lenience, as the legislation of the day bears testimony. Restrictions were placed upon collections of debts due to Tories; suits for damages to patriot property were instituted; doctors were boycotted, and lawyers disbarred. An act of 27 March 1778, had excluded Tories from public office elsewhere in the state; this discrimination reached the city after 1783. In May, the following year, loyalists who had borne arms were disenfranchised forever; but the effects of this last enactment were not long lived, since the law was repealed in 1786.\(^{40}\)

If Richard Bayley suffered from boycotting after 1783, there is no evidence of it; but his wartime sympathies may account for the lack of data concerning his activities from 1782–1787. By 1787, however, he was lecturing on anatomy in the virtually abandoned city hospital to such eager listeners as Wright Post and David Hosack. There is even a record of his having operated on patients there.\(^{41}\) This building was the scene, in 1788, of the worst riot the city had yet witnessed.

In 1771, George III, through royal letters patent, had permitted the formation of the “Society of the Hospital in the City of New York.”\(^{42}\) This group erected a costly building on the west side of Broadway between Duane and Worth Streets, only to have the building razed by fire in 1775. Although it was rebuilt the following year, the war circumvented the plans of the founders, and the building served successively as a barracks for patriots or Hessians, a haven for immigrants, and a meeting place for the state legislature. Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville noticed in 1788 that it
was in bad condition, not fit for the lodging of sick people; but he added, “The building is vast; it is of brick and perfectly well-situated on the bank of the North River.” Dr. Bayley found it an excellent place to house his specimens and perform his experiments.

It was from this building, one April Sunday afternoon in 1788, that a brash young medical student displayed an arm from a cadaver to some young boys hanging about and taunted them with the words, “See, here is your mother’s hand that has cuffed your ears many a time!” It was a grim coincidence that one of the boys had recently lost his mother and when a report of the remark reached his father the affair very quickly assumed alarming proportions. A mob of outraged citizens assembled to attack the hospital and Bayley with his students was barely rescued in time. The doctor was placed in protective custody with other medical men who were rescued during the same riot.

The mob, after nursing their wrath overnight, on Monday attacked the jail. John Jay and Baron von Steuben, the revolutionary hero, tried to quell the rioters; and, in the melee, Steuben was knocked down. The irate veteran cried out to the mayor, “Fire, Duane, fire!” The militia took this as an official command and fired into the crowd, causing several fatalities. This temporary setback only served to deflect the attention of the mob and they turned their attention to the homes of the doctors. Private dwellings were wrecked and valuable collections of medical specimens were destroyed. Elizabeth Bayley, who was home again at her father’s house, passed the night “in a sweat of terror saying all the while OUR FATHER.” At the last, the city called out General Malcolm’s brigade and Colonel Bauman’s regiment of artillery before peace was finally restored.

The “Doctors’ Riot” was not unique, but rather the first of its kind in New York. It was a powerful protest against the practice so ghoulishly described in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Body Snatcher* (1884). Medical students had for some time been secretly removing corpses from the potter’s field and the African-American burying ground; and the suspicion was growing that supposedly more respectable graves were not inviolate. In the affidavit which Dr. Bayley published on Tuesday, 15 April, in the *New York Journal and Patriotic Register*, he denied that there had been any surreptitious acquisition of bodies from churchyards or places of high social character; yet the denial was so phrased as to leave unanswered the argument as regarding the potter’s field. The riot produced two immediate

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1 The Bayleys lived at 15 Smith Street in 1787 and at 49 Smith Street from 1791–94. There was no directory for 1788; but in 1789 Dr. Bayley was listed at 60 King Street, and in 1790 at 51 Wall Street. It is thus quite impossible to determine where the Bayleys lived in April 1788.
results in this connection. On 6 January 1789, a state law was passed giving the corpses of criminals to surgeons for the purpose of advancing medical science; a federal law of 30 April 1790, gave judges discretionary power to add to sentences for convicted murder the post-mortem dissection. That Bayley’s pioneering was not universally deplored is evidenced in the editorial comment of the New York Packet of 15 April 1788, which said dryly:

It is sincerely wished that our fellow citizens would manifest their zeal against vice and wickedness (as it abounds in the city) which kill men’s souls, and be less zealous for the preservation of the duller part.47

The governing board of the hospital was less philosophical and promptly disclaimed any responsibility in the affair. They presented the unfortunate doctors with a bill for £22:7:10, and forthwith ousted them from the premises.48

Dr. Bayley seemed to feel that another trip abroad could be made conveniently while heated passions were allowed to cool, and so he proceeded to put his affairs in order before leaving for England. He made a will leaving his farm in Westchester County to his mother, and the rest of his “estate both real and personal of what nature or kind soever” to his wife.49 The older Bayley girls, Elizabeth and Mary, who had been educated at “Mama Pompelion’s” where they learned to play the piano, speak French, and admire stories about “men with girlish modesty & reserve combined with manly strength & fortitude,”50 now returned once more to New Rochelle.51 Here they visited “Uncle Bayley,” the doctor’s brother William and his wife, Sarah Pell Bayley, while they awaited their father’s return.52 By 1790 the energetic Dr. Bayley was back in New York eagerly attacking the public health problems of the rapidly growing city.5m

Although New York City’s streets were superior to those of many other crowded areas and, according to John Adams, “vastly more regular and elegant than those in Boston,” the attending problems of surface water and sewage presented an odious as well as odorous conundrum.53 The nightly parade of African-Americans, bearing offal tubs to the waterfront, soon proved inadequate to the growing city’s requirements.54 The open wooden chutes which carried surface water from Fly Market to the East River had to be reinforced with stone and bridged with heavy arches. Stately Wall Street demanded stone sewers of its own.55 But the streets around the sheds of the

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47 In 1790 Bayley was one of the promoters of the New York Dispensary established in that year to give medical care to the poor.
soap makers and candlemakers continued to plague the sensitivities of the
more refined population.

More pressing were the threats of epidemics which periodically
invaded the city. Diseases which were most commonly feared in the
eighteenth century were tuberculosis, sore throat "which when putrid is
mortal," malaria (which could be combated by a liberal use of Peruvian
bark, but yielded most readily to the remedy of a trip to the mountains),
influenza, and the awe-inspiring yellow fever. Little headway was made
against consumption, since the doctors of that day attributed its cause to
such habits as the excessive use of hot tea and coffee, lying too long in
bed, eating too much, or sleeping in feather ticks. Women were believed
to be more subject to the ailment because "they take but little exercise,
which is the only powerful remedy against the stagnation of the humors."
Quaker women were thus doomed to consumption because of their "habit
of gravity and immobility which they developed in early life." In spite of
all her activity, Elizabeth Bayley may have succumbed to the disease at last
in 1821.

Malaria was prevalent in the eighteenth-century metropolis, although
in recent years it would seem an oddity to find it so far north. In Bayley’s
time New York City was surrounded by sizable areas of swampland, and the
region between the present Eighteenth and Twentieth Streets on Broadway
was all swamp when it was granted to Sir Peter Warren in 1745. Jacob
Roosevelt’s leather industry centered in Beekman’s Swamp, and it was from
this fetid location that he extracted the fortune, part of which was left to
Amelia Barclay, Bayley’s second wife. The Collect or “Fresh Water Pond”
in the heart of the spreading city became more and more of a nuisance, when
it was not an outright menace. The city purchased it in 1791, but it was not
until after 1800 that it was filled in. In addition, many of the low coastal
areas remained partially submerged and furnished excellent breeding places
for mosquitoes.

By far the most dreaded of all epidemics were those of yellow fever,
and many of New York’s most famous institutions related to public health
trace their origins to the frantic efforts made to combat the fever. In 1791,
for the first time since the Revolution, a virulent form appeared. In 1793 it
recurred, and by the time the second visitation was felt the city had already
begun to make plans to isolate fever patients at Governors Island. This
feeble action on the part of the city officials was not sufficient to prevent

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* Small pox was declining in severity as a result of inoculation. Elizabeth Bayley Seton makes frequent references
to the inoculation of her children in her correspondence.

* Tuberculosis was referred to as consumption in the 19th century.
general hysteria, and the pace of preparation had to be accelerated. A law of 1794 made Governors Island the regular place of quarantine instead of Bedloe’s Islands, which had been used intermittently for that purpose ever since 1738 when a temporary quarantine had been necessary to combat smallpox coming from South Carolina and the Indies. In the same year, 1794, the Bellevue property was purchased for the purpose of establishing a hospital. Scarcely had these plans gotten under way when the scourge of 1795 swept over New York.

Those who could, fled the city. Those who could not, and the public-spirited citizens who would not, remained to fight. Among these last was, quite naturally, Dr. Bayley. Bayley had returned to New York after a brief stay in England, had helped promote the New York Dispensary in 1790 to give medical aid to the poor, and had taken a house at 51 Wall Street. In 1792 he joined the faculty of Columbia College as a lecturer in anatomy, while his son-in-law, Dr. Wright Post, held the chair in surgery. During Post’s absence in Europe during 1792–1793 Bayley gave lectures in both fields, but upon Post’s return the two doctors exchanged positions and Bayley returned to surgery. Although his residence changed frequently during the following years, Dr. Bayley’s interest in public health remained constant. In 1794 he was one of the group which reorganized the Medical Society under the leadership of Dr. John Charlton, the president of that society since 1792. Bayley held office as censor until 1798, and the minutes of the society show that he served time and again on committees charged with investigating the causes of epidemics and their relation to immigration. His committee had petitioned early in 1795 that the mayor and aldermen provide more adequate protection against the visitations of yellow fever.

The summer of 1795 was a dreadful one. The epidemic began in the middle of July, and by November more than 700 people were dead of the disease. Bellevue was used for the first time, but the drinking and quarreling of the nurses was a scandal, and undoubtedly contributed little to the welfare of the patients, two-thirds of whom died. The day of thanksgiving proclaimed by Governor Jay on 26 November must have bewildered the Irish immigrants whose decimated ranks bore mournful testimony to the pestilential force. In February Bayley was appointed to a committee to investigate the full implications of the epidemic, and his findings were published in a report. An Account of the Epidemic Fever Which Prevailed in the City of New York During Part of the Summer and Fall of 1795. The Reverend Richard Channing Moore of Staten Island wrote Dr. Bayley for his further opinions on yellow fever during the summer of 1796, and
Bayley’s reply so impressed him that, with the doctor’s consent, Moore forwarded the letter to the editor of *Minerva*.\(^6^4\)

Meanwhile Governor Jay sought the advice of the Medical Society in regard to establishing a lazaretto and quarantine in New York Harbor.\(^6^5\) On 28 November 1796, Bayley wrote to Jay a “Report on the Subject of Yellow Fever” in which he summarized his findings in the earlier report, cited the opinions of ship’s captains he had consulted, and described the horrible conditions in the region of Whitehall and the new docks which prevented people from opening their windows unless they had strong stomachs.\(^6^5\) By this time Bayley’s opinions carried weight because he was now the health officer of the newly created Board of Health Commissioners. When the board was later reduced from seven to three members there was a simultaneous enlargement of its powers, and among these was the health officer’s right to clean up the city. Since Bayley believed that the causes for epidemics lay within the city itself he welcomed the opportunity to prove his theories.

The vigorous action taken by the health officer to improve the streets, fill in the swamps, and guard the slips and docks from contagion was not welcomed by the entire population. Elizabeth Bayley Seton, writing to Dr. Bayley at Albany in February 1797, warned him that “the soap boilers and tallow chandlers talk of petitioning the legislature for the removal of the Health Officer.”\(^6^6\) This opposition to the clean-up campaign was to continue, and Bayley himself in 1800 wrote humorously to his friend, the lieutenant-governor at Albany:

> Permit me to tell you that numerous tinkers tailors, coopers, shoemakers and soothsayers have forwarded a petition to Albany (I know not to whom directed) to remove the health officer, etc., etc. The applicants are the most violent of the Democratic Junta—*Sic Res Zeritur*. It would be very flattering to your very humble servant if he would be made acquainted as speedily as possible with the date of the petition. Much is necessary to be done to forward the view of the Health establishment, but nothing effective can take place until final arrangements are determined for the operations of the ensuing year.\(^6^7\)

\(^6^4\) Probably Daniel Webster who began New York’s first daily newspaper, *American Minerva* (later known as *The Commercial Advertiser*), and edited it for four years. One of the ironies of history is that this same Reverend Moore officiated at Dr. Bayley’s funeral after the physician died of the disease he had so eagerly studied.

\(^6^5\) A lazaretto refers to an institution or place to quarantine persons with contagious diseases.
Regardless of the opposition from some quarters, Richard Bayley continued to hold public office until his death. When Jay’s proposal of a lazaretto began to take substantial form, Bayley was the man who was considered the logical doctor to be made the quarantine officer. Temporary arrangements were first used at Bellevue, then at Bedloe’s Island. In February 1797, the state appropriated $4,500 toward a new lazaretto, and added another appropriation in 1798. The question of site caused the most considerable controversy, but Dr. Bayley was finally able to write from Albany, “Staten Island—yes, it’s more than probable. What then? Why, private considerations must be made to yield to the more interesting ones, the public welfare.” The state capital had moved to Albany in January 1798. Dr. Bayley usually stayed in Watervliet when he made his annual trips to the legislature, 1798–1801. He received his mail in care of Lieutenant-Governor Steven van Rensselaer. A year later his daughter Elizabeth wrote a friend:

My father has obtained permission from the Legislature to perform all the plans he has contemplated on Staten Island—
He is building a hospital and dwelling house, but I fear not to receive his family.

While Dr. Bayley’s public life was progressing satisfactorily, leaving a record fairly easy to follow, his private life during this period seems to have been more confusing; certainly its course is shrouded in mystery. Some family disagreements appear to have reached a crisis about the time of his last trip to England. The daughters of Catherine Charlton Bayley went to New Rochelle in 1789 because of this trouble. Twenty years later, when Mary Magdalen Bayley (1768–1856) revisited New Rochelle, she wrote her sister Elizabeth:

I can scarcely describe to you the state of mind I was thrown into by recalling scenes and persons that every year of my life seems to have been somehow connected with. Beginning with the unhappy situation of our Mother—our taking refuge in the same place on our Father’s going to England—the very very painful events that succeeded our leaving there until we married. Even that eventful step scarcely enabled us to shake off all that was disagreeably attached to our situation before.

Mary Bayley did not have a very long period of “painful events,” however, for in June of the year her father returned, she married Dr.

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1 Bedloe’s Island had been ceded by the common council to the state and was used after September 1796.
Wright Post and soon after went to live in John Street. Her younger sister, Elizabeth, had a longer period of confusion and unhappiness. She was only fourteen when her father went to England and although she loved the countryside of Westchester County, her lonely heart suffered at his absence. Her journal records a typical spring day of the year 1789 in these words:

The air still a clear blue vault above, the numberless sounds of spring melody and joy—the sweet clovers and wild flowers I had got by the way...Still I can feel every sensation that passed thro’ my soul...I thought at that time my Father did not care for me—well, God was my Father—my all. I prayed—sang hymns—cried—laughed in talking to myself of how far He could place me above all sorrow—then laid still to enjoy the Heavenly Peace that came over my soul.71

Elizabeth Bayley was beginning to be aware of that conflict between the sensual and the spiritual so disquieting to all ages, but especially disturbing to youth. She took “pleasure in everything: coarse, rough, smooth or easy.”72 She read the Bible and Milton, and yearned to become a Quaker “because they wore such pretty plain hats.”73 Sometimes she was filled with “transports of first pure enthusiasm” at the sight of the stars and felt that she was forever exuberant. At other times the cruelty of the young people about her caused her pain, and family disagreements cast her down. But always her heart was “as innocent as a human heart could be,” filled as it was with youthful “enthusiastic love to [sic] God and admiration of his works.”74

But she could not stay in New Rochelle forever, and soon Elizabeth was back in New York City facing an uncertain future. The two years before her marriage were trying. She seems to have had no place where she could stay, and spent part of the time on Staten Island with her mother’s relatives, the Dongans, and much of her time with her sister, Mary Bayley Post. She dreamed of a little home in the country where she could gather little children around her and “teach them their prayers and keep them clean and teach them to be good.” When she read stories of European convents she wished passionately that there were such places in America, “where people could be shut up from the world and pray, and be good always.”75 Sometimes this longing for escape brought her to the verge of despair and she reasoned, in her wretchedness, that God was too good to condemn her to such a life. Her terse wording reads: “This wretched
reasoning—Laudanum—the praise and thanks of excessive joy not to have done the horrid deed\textsuperscript{1}—the thousand promises of Eternal gratitude.\textsuperscript{76}

The melancholy moods did not persist. Elizabeth was too young, and New York too engaging, to allow a permanent gloom. New York society in the last decade of the eighteenth century was made up of three fairly distinct classes. The first was composed of “the constituted authorities, government officers, divines, lawyers, and physicians of eminence, with the principal merchants and people of independent property.” The second was made up of the lesser merchants, retail dealers, and subordinate government clerks; the third consisted of “the inferior orders of people.”\textsuperscript{77} The Bayleys and Posts belonged to the first group, although not at its very top level, and were welcomed at tea, an evening of music, or dancing at the houses of the Sadlers, the Wilkeses, the Charltons, and other prosperous homes. The lively Elizabeth enjoyed music and dancing. Many years afterward, when she was advising her own daughter on the subject of social behavior, Elizabeth Seton said of dancing:

> When I was young I never found any effect from it but the most innocent cheerfulness both in public and private—I remember remorse of conscience about so much, much time lost in it, and my trouble at being so unable to say my prayers—seeing always my partners, instead of my God... also my vexation at the time it took to prepare dresses for balls.\textsuperscript{78}

Although Richard Bayley was unable to provide a serene home for his daughter, he was most concerned about her happiness and her adjustment to life. The doctor, whom Brissot de Warville once characterized as a man of good abilities but perhaps, too inflammable and too caustic,\textsuperscript{79} knew only too well the disadvantages of possessing a reckless nature. He tried to show Elizabeth the virtue in moderation, and advised:

> Calm that glowing of your soul, that warm emanation of your chest, for a more temperate climate, impressions on that case will be less readily admitted but their effects will last longer... Objects present strokes [sic] our mind more forcibly than I hope more at a distance. Thus we intend one thing to day, we are diverted from it tomorrow, the next day new Ideas occur and our former intentions are forgotten—This cursed

\textsuperscript{1} Some biographers interpret this passage to indicate that Elizabeth Bayley contemplated suicide. Melville finds “the horrid deed” an insufficient description to serve as conclusive evidence of such an intention. [It is possible that an adolescent depression prompted thoughts of suicide but the fact is that Elizabeth said “No” to taking a drug overdose of laudanum, an opium derivative used to calm colicky babies, Ed.]
dysentery of the mind has been entailed on both sexes with a remarkable constancy from the time of Adam and Eve.\textsuperscript{80}

Bayley had seen enough of the extremes of his daughter’s emotions and moods to make him fear her sensibilities. Even after her marriage he continued to advocate prudence in preference to exaggerated expressions of feeling. “Guard against the sudden change of weather,” he wrote. “Never dwell on trifles, be mistress of yourself, then I am convinced you will always have the credit of acting well.”\textsuperscript{81} On another occasion he asked her to learn to laugh at imaginary evils lest they cheapen her path of life.\textsuperscript{82}

In addition to her unevenness of disposition, Bayley noticed in his second daughter a tendency toward introversion. At the age of fifteen Elizabeth had begun keeping her thoughts in writing, along with selections copied from authors she was currently reading. Her thought was to please her father, and she kept the journal “with great delight.”\textsuperscript{83} But the doctor saw some danger in this preoccupation with journaling and he called to her attention that “most of us are tinctured with a little of the selfish,” and hers might be this habit of corresponding chiefly with herself. He approved of such a mode of correspondence, he said, only if “a new stock of information and useful knowledge were added from time to time.”\textsuperscript{84} Dr. Bayley soon found his worries in this respect at an end. In 1793 William Magee Seton became the object of Elizabeth Bayley’s interest and the recipient of her correspondence.

Young Seton was the son of William Seton of the Parbroath branch of the famous Anglo-Scottish family. The elder William was born on 24 April 1746, while his mother was on a visit to Scotland. His boyhood was spent in Kirkbridge in Yorkshire, and with relatives in Sanlucar, Spain. Following a common eighteenth-century pattern this descendant of a long, illustrious line was impelled by the double force of economic circumstances at home and lure of the New World overseas to follow his relatives abroad. A brother-in-law, Andrew Seton, was already settled on Long Island, New York, and may have encouraged William to come over. At any rate, by 1763, he had crossed the Atlantic and found his way to New Jersey. In less than four years he had removed to New York City, acquired the “Mohawk Lands” in the interior of New York province, and had met the Curson\textsuperscript{a} daughters, two of whom he was to marry.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{a} The Curson sisters were members of the family of the Curson-Gouverneur firm. During the Revolution this firm was located at St. Eustatius, the Dutch Colony, which was notoriously open to American commerce until its capture by Rodney in 1781. After the Revolution the Curson family centered chiefly at Baltimore. The name also appears as Curzon.
William Seton married Rebecca Curson on 2 March 1767, and after her death espoused her sister, Anna-Maria in 1776. By the first alliance five children were born; the eldest, William Magee, like his father before him, interrupted a family jaunt off the coast of Cape Henry, Virginia. The Seton family Bible records:

Born 20th April 1768, 35 minutes after 4 P.M., on board the ship Edward, Captain Thomas Miller (long. 68. 30, lat. 36.)
Baptized, 8th of May, at New York.

Although the second marriage had to be made outside the Church of England and the Province of New York, it was even more productive of progeny. At least eight children reached maturity and others died in infancy. Those were, indeed, “days when people in New York took wives unto themselves with the praiseworthy intention of increasing the native population of the city.”

The firm of Seton & Curson was already a thriving concern when the New York Gazette of 15 April 1771, had notified the public of its removal from Dock Street “to Hunter’s Quay, opposite Mr. Gouverneur’s.” During the American Revolution, Seton, like Bayley, remained loyal to the British crown, and was rewarded for his sentiments by being made successively assistant warehouse keeper on 27 July 1777, a notary public in 1779, and assistant in 1782 to Andrew Elliott, who held the dual position of chief of police and superintendent of the port of New York. That Seton performed the work relating to the port is obvious from even a cursory glance at the records. The vessel entries are all executed under Seton’s hands; while for conclusive proof there remains the letter of Elliott to Sir Guy Carleton, of 15 November 1783, relating to the disposal of certain port records in the event of British evacuation. Elliott wrote, “I would propose lodging them [records] with Mr. Seton, who remains here, and has always transacted the business of this office and to whom such a reference would naturally be made.”

The experience Seton acquired during his incumbency was to serve him well in later years. Under his shrewd gaze the port of New York sustained many changes. When the British took over in 1776 there were about 500 vessels in New York harbor, four-fifths of which were merchant ships. Almost immediately thereafter trading was actively resumed. In spite of the restrictive decrees of 1777 commerce spread out in “its normally complicated fashion.”

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* The ceremony was performed by a Presbyterian minister at Brunswick, New Jersey on 29 November 1776. The marriage to a deceased wife’s sister was frowned upon.
became the entrepot for the illicit trade engaging so many patriots. Upstate New York was rapidly drained of gold by purchases of British manufactures; New Jersey openly set up shots to facilitate the exchange of produce for British goods; while on Long Island and Connecticut shores, merchants stole through the darkness of night to an appointed rendezvous where enemy enticements waited in whale boats whose ultimate destination was far-off Hartford or Wethersfield.

Luxurious tastes developed rather generally throughout the colonial cities during the Revolution, but nowhere more so than in New York City, where in 1777 Queen Charlotte’s birthday was marked by an elegant exhibition of fireworks at Whitehall Slip, and Lord Howe’s super-ball in honor of his investiture as Knight of the Bath. Here such notables as Prince William Henry, Sir Henry Clinton, and Lord Cornwallis were wined and dined in the governor’s spacious dining room overlooking the Battery; and if the young prince on occasion had to be carried aboard his ship, the Prince George, it cannot be considered a reflection upon his host’s prodigality.

Lesser lights burned proportionately bright and Captain Ralph Dundas, R.N., wrote home to England in March 1782, that his relative William Seton was “liked and esteemed by everyone and not spending less than six guineas a day.” Charles Wilkes, who with his brother John was sponsored by Seton on his arrival from England, wrote back gratefully to Miss Berry “for having introduced him to the most agreeable house in New York.”

The end of the war brought to the merchant class sweeping changes not the least of which involved the confiscation of loyalist properties, with the city of New York probably contributing one-sixth of the total income the state derived from the sale of these lands. Yet notable exceptions were made, and Theophylact Bache, Thomas Buchanan, John Vanderbilt, and William Seton were among those who retained the bulk of their holdings. Robert East suggests that “probably the nepotism of relatives and friends, a prime factor in worldly affairs, protected the fortunate ones.” Alexander Flick argues that a thoroughgoing persecution to the point of decimation of merchant class was not feasible. “The majority of persons in southern New York had been loyalists and they simply could not be eliminated outright; though they were made to endure vindictive taxes.” The fine lines of nationalism or even patriotism were not yet distinctly drawn, and loyalism

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* Although Melville gave the occasion as the birthday of Queen Mary citing Rodman Gilder, a contemporary account of “Her Majesty’s Birth Day” published in the New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, 20 January 1777, does not mention Queen Mary. “Her Majesty” in 1777 was Queen Charlotte, wife of George III. There were benefit birthday balls held in Queen Charlotte’s honor during January every year. Ed.]
could be less condemned on the ground of treason than tolerated for the sake of expediency. A final explanation may lie in the American custom, in postwar periods, of attacking the famous fortunes, the spectacular swindlers, the notorious profiteers, while the little man goes serenely about his minor affairs. The token toll in the 1780’s was taken of the Crugers, the Barclays, the Bayards, and de Lanceys; then the city turned her face to the future. Thus the representatives of the former colonial firms: the Gouverneur-Curson-Seton, and Ludlow-Crommelin-Verplancks continued, and commercial newcomers like Craigie, Duer, and Sands entered the partially cleared arena.96

The removal of the British in 1783 presented New York merchants with the harsh fact of a now hostile English mercantilism. Not only was their port the scene of the heaviest British “dumping” in the first three years of peace; but the Hessian fly⁵ ruined the grain earmarked for export.⁹⁷ The British West Indies were closed to American trade, and the special trading privileges formerly accorded by the French and Spanish were revoked. The gravity of the situation may be gauged by the fact that at least one-third of New York’s prewar tonnage had been involved in this West Indian trade.

Meanwhile the French, in what was, perhaps, an attempt to palliate the political rebuff of the separate treaty, tried to capture part of the American Atlantic trade. “Hector” St. John de Crèvecoeur, in spite of having supported the loyalists cause in the early years of the Revolution, was sent by France in 1783 as first consul to New York. Fortunately, for the Frenchman, a former friend, William Seton, was at the dock to greet him on his arrival. Upon inquiring for his wife and children whom he had left in America, Crèvecoeur learned that his home had been burned, his wife was dead, and his children vanished. Afterwards he wrote, “I should have fallen to the ground but for the support, at this instant, of my friend Mr. Seton, who had come to conduct me from the French vessel to his house.”⁹⁸

Whether from friendship, or a desire to capitalize upon Seton’s wartime shipping experience, Crèvecoeur included William Seton in his scheme to operate a packet service⁹ under French auspices between Lorient and New York. Seton was to be in charge of the New York terminus of the run, and the Royal Gazette of 10 December 1783, ran his advertisement as

⁵ The Hessian fly or barley midge, (Mayetiola destructor), is a significant pest of cereal crops and was transported from Asia into Europe and later into North America, possibly by Hessian troops who used bedding during the American Revolution (1775–83).
⁶ A packet was a boat which carried mail and cargo along with passengers.
⁷ Lorient, or L’Orient, is a commune and a seaport in the Morbihan department in Brittany in northwestern France. The French East India Company, founded in 1664 and chartered by King Louis XIV, established shipyards which gave an impetus to the development of the city.
deputy agent of the French Packet, with an office at 215 Water Street. The first vessel to reach New York under such auspices was the Sylphe, which arrived in March 1784. The career of “this meritorious enterprise” was short-lived, however; and it remained for the Seton-Crèvecoeur friendship to be perpetuated in another form: the dedication of the *Letters of an American Farmer.*

However the failure of the packet project may have disappointed the French, William Seton was at no loss for business interests during the critical period. He seems not to have joined the revived Chamber of Commerce, but he became in 1784 the cashier of the newly organized Bank of New York. This institution was the culmination of several separate movements toward the establishment of a state bank. Although its critics accused it of being Tory, it is fairly safe to assert that no single faction dominated the bank in 1784. Such notables as Alexander Hamilton, Isaac Roosevelt, Joshua Waddington, and John Vanderbilt were on the board of directors chosen on 15 March 1784. Hamilton wrote the bank’s constitution. Seton was sent to Philadelphia to get what banking information he could from the Bank of North America, since few of the newly-elected officers knew much about banking practices. On Wednesday, 9 June 1784, the bank formally began to do business at its first location in the Walton House at 67 St. George’s Square.

Of Seton’s appointment as cashier Henry Domett wrote:

He was especially fitted for the office...by his sterling business qualifications, his diligent, precise, and methodical habits, and by an amiability and courtesy which made him very popular. His appointment as an officer of the bank with General (Alexander) McDougal, the early leader of the Sons of Liberty, shows the esteem in which Mr. Seton was held by the liberal party at the close of the war.

Brisson de Warville, in his *New Travels Performed in 1788,* commented:

The Bank of New York enjoys a good reputation; it is well-administered. Its cashier is Mr. William Seton, to whom M. de Crèvecoeur has addressed his letters; and what will give

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*aa* The Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1768 at Fraunces Tavern. William Seton was an active member from 1768-1781. When the Chamber was rechartered in 1784 only four members and the President were Tories. Soon after this six other loyalists were admitted; but it was not until 1787 that old grudges were sufficiently forgotten to allow the passage of a motion to readmit all old members who were citizens of the state. This may partially explain Seton’s failure to belong after 1784.

*bb* The Walton House in lower Manhattan at 828 Pearl (formerly 68 Queens) Street was built by William Walton in 1757. A Walton daughter married into the Roosevelt family. Isaac Roosevelt was the president of the Bank of New York in 1784.
you a good idea of his integrity is that he was chosen to an important place notwithstanding his known attachment to the English cause.103

Although the bank was kept without a charter until 1791, because of the public fear of monied institutions, it loaned money to the state and federal governments, as well as to private enterprise. It furnished the funds for the remodeling of the city hall according to Major Pierre L’Enfant’s plan, when the city became the nation’s capital, and in 1790 it became the agent for the United States for the sale of 200,000 guilders.104 William Seton remained as cashier for the first ten years of the bank’s history, and was undoubtedly instrumental in securing the appointments of Charles Wilkes as teller and William Magee Seton as clerk of discount.105 After Alexander Hamilton was made Secretary of the Treasury, the elder Seton became involved in Hamilton’s financial plans for the federal government.106 When the capital removed to Philadelphia Seton was one of Hamilton’s chief informants on money conditions in New York. Because of his connections with the state institution, Hamilton opposed the establishment of a branch of the Bank of the United States. When, over his protest, such a branch was opened in 1792, Hamilton encouraged co-operation between the two financial agencies, and Mr. Seton and his directors were “far from backward” in calling upon the Secretary of the Treasury for aid or leniency when they found the competition of the Bank of the United States hard to meet, or treasury drafts coming at inconvenient times.107

It was through Hamilton that Seton became interested in S.U.M., or the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures, which was New Jersey’s first corporation. When William Pearce came from England to work with Thomas Marshall on the project of erecting mills on the Arkwright plan,cc Pearce bore letters to the President, to Jefferson, and to Seton. It was Seton who, on Jefferson’s reassurance of repayment, furnished the passage money and sent Pearce on his way to Hamilton. Once more the designing major, Charles Pierre L’Enfant, was called into service, and at Passaic, New Jersey, laid out plans for the most pretentious business scheme of the decade.108

In 1794 William Seton resigned as cashier of the bank at the annual June meeting, and he saw his good friend Charles Wilkes replace him. The reason for this resignation probably had its roots in the appearance for the first time, in that same year, of the firm, Seton, Maitland, & Company of

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cc Richard Arkwright developed the first successful water powered cotton spinning mill at Cromford in Derbyshire, England, in 1771. His system pioneered the dominance of machinery, factory, and mill as a work ethic over skill-based, family-driven, common work. This achievement provided the true blueprint for factory production which was replicated in the United States and elsewhere.
61 Stone Street. The elder Seton was a man with a great sense of family solidarity. Although his family trait became in later generations something of an obsession, with William Seton it expressed itself in concern for the economic welfare of his children. He used to say, “Let all come to my strong box while I am alive, and when I am gone you will take care of each other.” Years after the elder Seton’s death, Elizabeth Bayley Seton recounted his generosity and told her son, another William Seton, of his grandfather, “who was incessantly employing himself to procure ease and convenience for others, never in his bed after day light or in it till night, and so indifferent to every ease or indulgence for himself.” The marriages of his two eldest sons may have influenced Seton’s resignation from the bank, and his subsequent concentration on the mercantile pursuits of the family. James Seton, the second son, married Mary Gillon Hoffman in March 1792, and brought his bride to his father’s house; William Magee followed this pattern in January 1794. The reorganized firm and enlarged family, was found at 61 Stone Street although the Seton property tran through to Mill Street and the counting house of Seton, Maitland & Company was listed at 38 Mill Street after 1795. It was at Mill Street that the firm offered for sale such luxury items as: “marble chimney pieces superby (sic) wrought,” fine wines from France and Italy, damasks from the East, “Florence oil,” and raisins.

The young man in whom Elizabeth Bayley became interested after her return from New Rochelle had been thoroughly prepared to share in his father’s business affairs. William Magee Seton had been educated in England for six years, and he had served briefly in the Bank of New York. In 1788 his father had sent him abroad to visit the various counting houses and ports of importance on the continent. From Barcelona and Madrid he went to Genoa, Leghorn, and Rome. At Leghorn he “received much attention” because of his friendship with Philip Filicchi. He went frequently to the opera and met many “handsome” ladies, but none who appealed to American taste. He wrote home that marriages abroad were always made for fortune and never for love. At Cremona, young Seton purchased a violin and brought home to New York what was probably the first genuine Stradivarius in the city. Love for music was one of the things he found in common with Elizabeth Bayley when he met her.

Some time in 1791 young Seton met Elizabeth Bayley. It was not a case of love at first sight; instead, Seton told his brother:
It is currently reported and generally believed that I am to be married to Miss Bayley\textsuperscript{dd} but I shall think twice before I commit myself in any direction. Though I must confess I admire her mental accomplishments very much, and were I inclined to matrimony [it is] not at all impossible but what I might fall in love with her; and I have no doubt she will make an excellent wife and happy the man who gets her.\textsuperscript{117}

But as time went on Seton’s passionate appraisal of women became something warmer, and Elizabeth Bayley was courted in the approved eighteenth-century style. Her billets-doux to young Seton were concerned with meetings at the homes of mutual friends. About her evening visit to Mrs. Wilkes, Elizabeth wrote that William Magee “may have the honor of seeing me.”\textsuperscript{118} Likewise the evening that Mrs. Sadler did not attend a concert Elizabeth informed him that she “wishes very much to see us there this Evening” but warned him “do not be too late.”\textsuperscript{119} Once when “an unavoidable something” obliged Mrs. Sadler to cancel a tea party, plans were hastily rearranged and Miss Bayley wrote archly, “If you are anxious to see your Eliza, you will find her at Mrs. Atkinsons, at the piano.”\textsuperscript{120} Again, when a stye might have deterred a more reluctant beauty, she wrote with all the imperiousness of certainty:

> Your Eliza’s eye is very ugly but not very painful, but it will prevent the possibility of my going out—therefore you must devote a great deal of your time to me—Come as early as possible. We shall dine at one today as Post is going out of town.\textsuperscript{121}

It was not long before William Seton tried to seek out Dr. Bayley to ask the important question. He was not at first successful in catching the busy doctor, and Elizabeth wrote:

> My Father dined with us and has gone I don’t know where—I do not think you will meet him until evening. Your apology is already made by one who is most earnestly interested in his

\textsuperscript{dd} [It is not known why the 1976 edition of this work substituted Mary Hoffman instead of Elizabeth Bayley whose name clearly appears in the source Melville cited in the first edition (1951) of this work. The change is inexplicable. Although the original letter from which Robert Seton quoted is no longer available for consultation, in this edition the paragraph names Elizabeth Bayley as did Robert Seton. Ed.]
good opinion of you—Your E. will be on Wall Street by five o’clock and you shall then know more on the subject.122

But love will be served, and the New York Weekly Museum of 1 February 1794, announced that on Sunday evening last were married “by the Rev. Bishop Provoost, Mr. William M. Seton to Miss Eliza Anne Bailey[sic]—both of this city.”ee The Seton family Bible was a trifle more detailed and recorded:

William Magee Seton, on 25th Jan. 1794, by Rev. Bishop [Samuel] Provoost, in John Street, to E. A. Bayley aged 19 years and five months, daughter of Richard Bayley, M.D. of New York.123

ee It would appear that the ceremony was performed at the Post home, since Dr. Bayley in 1794 was listed at 46 Broadway. At no time did the Bayleys live on John Street. The name Bayley was frequently spelled “Bailey” during this period.
CHAPTER 1. THE BAYLEYS AND SETONS OF NEW YORK

Notes

1 [See Appendix A. Bayley-Seton Genealogy. Ed.]
2 A thorough search was made by the late Charles L. Souvay, C.M. Catholic Historical Review, V (July–October, 1919), 231.
5 Robert Seton, An Old Family (New York: Bretano’s, 1899), 277. Seton states “The church records and registers were burnt during the Revolution, hence the uncertainty of the date.”
6 “Record of the Bayley Family in America,” Archives of the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana. Hereinafter cited as UNDA.
7 This typed manuscript was prepared by Robert Seton, the grandson of Elizabeth Bayley Seton.
8 James Grant Wilson, Memorial History of the City of New York (New York, 1893), III, 101.
9 Catherine Charlton Bayley did not accompany her husband to England. James Thacher, American Medical Biography (Boston, 1828), I, 157.
10 Walsh, I, 54.
12 Ibid.
13 Names of Persons for whom Marriage Licenses were Issued by the Secretary of the Province of New York Previous to 1784 (Albany, 1860), 21. This record shows no license taken by Bayley for his previous marriage in 1767, although William Seton’s license to marry Rebecca Curson that same year appears in good order on p. 346.
14 Walsh, I, 53, reprints this advertisement. See Arthur Burns, “New Light on Mother Seton,” Historical Records and Studies of the United States Catholic Historical Society, XXII (1932), 98. If there was
any connection between Dorchester and Bayley, it was probably unofficial.

15 Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists* (Boston, 1847), devotes one half page to Bayley and gives Seton two lines.


17 Ibid., 43.

18 New York Historical Society, William Smith Papers, VI, Diary, 4 October 1779.


20 Ibid.


22 Ibid.

23 The incident of John Jacob Van Arsdale’s climb up the flag pole to substitute the Stars and Stripes for the British colors is told in the New York Times, 26 November 1934, and Rodman Gilder, *The Battery* (Boston, 1936), 102-3. For a list of sources for the evacuation of the city, see Irving Pomerantz, *New York, an American City, 1783–1803* (New York, 1938), 16, n. 4.


26 Gilder, 121-2. Willet was robbed of over £500. He fired upon some suspects, but his aim was poor and the ruffians seized him, beat him, and made off.


28 New York Historical Society, Duer Correspondence, William Steele to William Duer, 6 March 1788.


32 Ibid., 162.
34 Spaulding, 33.
35 Pomerantz, 374. Benjamin Moore succeeded Provoost in 1801 and served actively until incapacitated by paralysis in 1811.
36 Wilson, III, 19, 54.
37 New York *Weekly Museum*, 1 February 1794. The wedding took place on Sunday evening.
38 Pomerantz, 77.
40 Pomerantz, 81.
42 Edwards, 101. The name “The Society of the New York Hospital,” was adopted in 1810, but the institution has always been popularly called the New York Hospital.
46 Joel T. Headly, *Great Riots of New York* (New York, 1873), 56-65; Walsh, II, 378-84; Pomerantz, 401-2. Some of the best press accounts on the riot are to be found in the New York letters to Philadelphia and Boston. See also, *CW*, 3a:511, n.7 for a discussion of the Doctors’ Riot of 1788 and ibid., 1:425, n.7, regarding the Highbinders’ Riot of 1806.
47 Cited in Walsh, II, 382.
48 Packard, I, 236.
49 Surrogate’s Court, New York City, Liber 43, 490. This will may be found in the *Historical Records and Studies*, XXII, (1932), 97.
50 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 12 June 1815, Daughters of Charity Archives, Saint Joseph’s Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:21. Hereafter cited as ASJPH.
51 2.7 Journal to Rebecca Seton, entry of 1 December 1803, *CW*, 1:264. The context indicates New Rochelle. Elizabeth mentions being in New Rochelle in 1788. She and her sister remained there with Bayley relatives until 1790. 10.4 “Dear Remembrances,” *CW*, 3a:511.
Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 1 August [1808], ASJPH 1-3-3-11:3.

The best study of New York City during this period is that of Sidney I. Pomerantz, *New York, An American City, 1783-1803*, 338-355; 395-416 are devoted to health problems.

Smith, 9.

Edwards, 169-170.

Brissot de Warville, 346-7.

Ibid., 347.

The will of Jacobus Roosevelt, probated 5 June 1776, is reprinted in Pasko, I, 365.

Wilson, III, 141.

Pomerantz, 340-342; Edwards, 100.

Walsh, I, 59-60.

“Dr. Anderson’s Diary” gives an account of Bellevue in the plague of 1795. Pasko, II, 217-226; 284-301.

This report was published in 1796 by T. J. Swords, printers to the Faculty of Physic of Columbia University.


New York Historical Society, John Jay Papers, II, 9, Bayley to Jay, New York, 28 November 1796. Bayley did not believe yellow fever was brought in from outside but was fostered by conditions within the city.


Dr. Richard Bayley to Van Rensselaer, Esqr., New York, 19 March 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:101.

Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, [1798], ASJPH 1-3-3-9:100.

1.41, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 15 March 1799, *CW*, 1:65. The lazaretto was located at Tompkinsville on the island. In 1800 two smaller buildings were added to receive yellow fever patients.

Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 1 August [1808], ASJPH 1-3-3-11:3.

2.7, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, entry of 1 December 1803, *CW*, 1:264.


Ibid., *CW*, 3a:512.

2.7, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, entry of 1 December 1803, *CW*, 1:264.


10.4, “Dear Remembrances,” *CW*, 3a:513. There is no doubt that Elizabeth Bayley suffered deeply at this time. 6.71, Writing to Henry Seton on 19 February 1811, in reply to his question whether it was a crime
to lament that his life was saved from shipwreck, Elizabeth Bayley Seton recalled “the moment twenty years ago in which I asked myself the same question, dictated by that anguish of soul which can find no relief,” CW, 2:175. Emotions recollected after twenty years were probably extremely vivid when originally felt.

79 Brissot de Warville, 352.
80 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, n.p., Tuesday morning in June, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:105.
81 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, n.p., n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-9:97.
82 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, n.p., n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-9:107.
83 1.171, Elizabeth Seton to Anna Maria Seton, [1803], CW, 1:219.
84 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 29 May 1793, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:92.
85 Robert Seton, *An Old Family*, 255. Another Seton genealogy, George Seton’s *A History of the Family of Seton during Eight Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1896), has a very faulty account of the American branch of the family and is of little use in this connection. E. B. O’Callaghan, *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State* (Albany, 1866), LXXVIII, 5 March 1760, shows that a William Seton, merchant of New York, owner of a sloop Orleans petitioned for a commission for one, Joseph Dagget, to command the vessel. This would suggest that Seton came to America earlier than 1763.
88 Ibid.
89 Elliott replaced Robertson as governor in 1783. See Barck in the *History of the State of New York*, IV, 45.
James Robertson replaced Tryon as civilian governor in 1780. Andrew Elliott succeeded Robertson in 1783. Gilder, 94-100.

Robert Seton, An Old Family, 261. The Archives of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, possess transcripts made by Robert Seton of excerpts of letters from William Seton’s mother in England, to William Seton in New York, from 2 September 1779 to May 1797. These excerpts prove that both John and Charles Wilkes were given assistance by Seton. A letter of 4 December 1780 contains the reference to the gratitude of Charles Wilkes. An original letter of Elizabeth Seton of Chiswick to William Seton of New York, dated October 1780 is preserved in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of New York, Mount St. Vincent. Hereafter cited as AMSV.

East, 222.

Flick, Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution (New York, 1901), 165-166.

East, 223, 230.


Ludwig Lewisohn, in the introduction to Crèvecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer (New York, 1925), x-xiv, clarifies the subject of Crèvecoeur’s dedications. The first edition of the Letters, printed in London in 1782, was dedicated to Abbé Raynal. A second English edition was printed in Philadelphia in 1793 by Matthew Carey. In the interim, Crèvecoeur had “translated” the letters into French in 1784 and dedicated this edition to William Seton, Esquire. This French edition was republished again in 1787.


Ibid., 17.

Brissot de Warville, 171.

Domett, 39; Pomerantz, 234-5.

Directory of the City of New York, 1786.

During the crisis of 1791-1792 the Bank of New York made purchases on Hamilton’s orders of small lots of 6% issues to provide the temporary relief the market desperately needed. See Joseph S. Davis, Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations (Cambridge, 1917), 297-311.
107 Ibid., 421.
108 Ibid., 401.
109 New York City Directory and Register, 1791.
110 7.69, Elizabeth Seton to William Seton, CW, 2:459. Copy. The original is at AMSV.
112 “Seton and Company, Merchants” was located at Number 12, Hanover Square prior to the enlargement of the firm. See New York City Directories, 1787-1793.
113 Commercial Advertiser, 1 October 1797.
115 William Magee Seton to William Seton, Leghorn, 28 December 1788, Daughters of Charity Archives Marillac Provincialate, St. Louis, Missouri, #446-451. Hereafter cited as AMP.
121 1.4, Elizabeth Ann Bayley to William Magee Seton, CW, 1:3. “Post” was Dr. Wright Post. Eliza Bayley was living with her sister, Mary Bayley Post, at 18 John Street.
CHAPTER 2

MANHATTAN MATRON

William Magee Seton brought his young bride to his father’s house on Stone Street that January 1794. He was very proud of the ease with which she charmed his father, brothers, and sisters. The elder Seton quickly came to admire and respect his first son’s wife. To her he confided many of the details of his own career. He showed her family letters which he treasured, with the words:

You are the first of my children to whom I have submitted a perusal of them, and I request you will return them to me unsullied by the eye of impertinent curiosity. Let no one look at them. The parental affection I ever felt for my dear William, your husband, you will find strongly marked in every letter. This will give you pleasure, but when I add that this affection has increased ever since, I think every page where I mention him will be doubly dear to you. That you may long, very long enjoy every blessing together is the sincere prayer of your affectionate and fond father.¹

When the young couple moved to a home of their own the bond was in no way weakened. The spring of 1796 which took them to Philadelphia, on a trip combining business and pleasure, left the older Seton impatient for their return; and he wrote Elizabeth the news of the city, but demanded to know the exact hour of their expected return. “No heart,” he said, “will rejoice to see you both more.”² Elizabeth, for her part, was equally fond of her father-in-law. Often in later years she used his example to inspire her sons, and she once wrote to a younger William:³

¹ William M. Seton (25 November 1796–14 January 1868) is believed to have been named after his father, William Magee. Extant documents bear the younger Seton’s signature as “William M. Seton.” William took Vincent for his confirmation name and later sailed with the United States Navy. Married to Emily Prime (1832), the couple had nine children. William died in his seventy-second year and is buried in the original cemetery at Mount Saint Mary’s University near Emmitsburg.
It is necessary to have seen him in the several situations of Husband, Father, Friend, Protector, to form any just idea of the perfections of his character; which bright example impress indelibly on your mind. You bear his name—and I pray to Heaven with all the fervor of a Mother’s hopes that you will preserve it unblemished and yield it to the author of your being as spotless as he did.³

The first years of marriage were for Elizabeth Seton blessed in many ways. Her husband had married for love, and not for fortune, and he cherished his lively little wife with all the devotion at his command. When he had to leave her, to go on the firm’s business to Newark, Trenton, and Philadelphia, he wrote daily letters home, urging her to spend whatever she liked, but pleading, “Be as much at my Father’s as you can.”⁴ He was delighted to find a picture of her tucked away in his shaving case, and he proudly displayed it to his friends. His “darling theme” on all occasions was his beautiful little wife at home in New York.⁵ One year he took Elizabeth and their infant daughter, Anna Maria, with him as far as Philadelphia, where his wife preferred to remain with friends while William went on to Delaware. From the capital city of Delaware now located at Dover, he wrote her of his sister’s disappointment that Elizabeth and the baby had not come all the way.⁶

Elizabeth’s love matched his own, and she took to the pen with even greater ease during their brief separations by addressing many an ardent missive to “my dearest treasure.” She confessed, however, to William, “your picture is so melancholy that I don’t love to look at it in your absence.” Some nights she could not fall asleep until three o’clock, and would take her Bible and read until sleep came.⁷ Her love from the very beginning was tinctured with sadness, for her husband’s health was uncertain. William Magee Seton must have contracted tuberculosis as a very young man. His letters from Europe in 1788 and 1789 contain frequent references to “pain in the breast,” and Elizabeth was aware from the start that her husband was subject to these pains. The worry had a sobering effect on her enthusiastic disposition, and

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³ Anna Maria Seton (3 May 1795–12 March 1812) was named after her paternal aunt and step-grandmother. Her mother usually referred to her as Anna but after their return from Italy in 1804, she was often called by the affectionate name of Annina (Little Anna). On her deathbed Sister Annina made vows as a Sister of Charity and died at age sixteen. She is buried in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, original graveyard of the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg.

⁴ The sister was Anna Maria Seton Vining, wife of Senator John Vining, who lived at “The Oakes,” near Dover, Delaware.
she matured very rapidly in those early months of marriage. She wrote to Eliza Sadler in Paris:

I have learned to commune with my own Heart, and I try to govern it by reflection, and yet that Heart grows every day more tender and softened, which in great measure I attribute to the state of my William’s health. That health on which my every Hope of Happiness depends, and which continues me either [in] the most perfect *Human* felicity, or sinks me in the lowest depths of sorrow.\(^8\)

Marriage was for Elizabeth Seton a continual growth as well as a constant lesson in self-denial. As her husband’s responsibilities grew heavier, she tried to put aside her own wishes. She told Julia Scott, her friend from girlhood, that all considerations must “yield to Affection for my Will, and when I consider his vexations and cares I bless my God who allows me to share and lessen them.”\(^9\) When yellow fever threatened the city in 1798 Elizabeth refused to leave because “Poor Seton is chained,” as she explained it to Julia, “and where he is, there am I also.”\(^10\) The neighborhood was deserted, only three doors away death had come to one victim in the streets. Her father, Dr. Bayley, was spending every hour in the hospital and lazaretto. But while her loved ones were “so much exposed” Elizabeth Seton infinitely preferred remaining near them.\(^11\)

Next to the deep love which existed between the two young Setons, the greatest joy Elizabeth found in the early months of marriage was derived from having a home of her own. After the bitter years of insecurity immediately preceding her wedding, the young bride found the prospect of the house on Wall Street too good to be true. Years later, looking back at that fall in 1794, Elizabeth Seton recorded in her “Dear Remembrances:”\(^f\)

My own home at 20—the world—that and heaven too, quite impossible! Every moment clouded with that fear, “My God, if I enjoy this I lose you”—yet no true thought of Whom

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\(^d\) Eliza Sadler was the wife of Henry Sadler, merchant, and was one of Elizabeth Seton’s closest friends throughout her life. Mrs. Sadler was in Paris in 1796 but after her return, the Sadler residence was at Courtlandt Street. The name is sometimes spelled “Saidler.”

\(^e\) Julia Sitgreaves had been Julia Sitgreaves before her marriage. Her brother, Samuel Sitgreaves, was a member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania in the fourth and fifth sessions of Congress. As Mrs. Lewis A. Scott, Julia had lived several years in New York City. Lewis Allaire Scott, son of John Morin Scott, was Secretary of State of New York in 1791. Elizabeth Bayley had known her. At the time this letter was written Mrs. Scott was a widow and lived in Philadelphia with her sister, Mrs. James Cox.

\(^f\) This retrospective memoir is found in a little volume which was a note book started for Anna Maria Seton, but after her daughter’s death Mrs. Seton used the pages to record the highlights of her own life. These last pages are commonly called “Dear Remembrances.”
I would lose, rather fear of hell and [being] shut out from heaven.12

The Wall Street of the 1790’s was a far cry from the Wall Street of today. Just prior to the Revolution the street had begun to give way to splendid private residences; the Verplanck mansion replaced the old Bayard sugar refinery, to cite one instance. The revival of Wall Street was considered one of the wonders of the postwar period. The trees which had been cut down for fuel during the cruel winter of 1788 were being replaced. The walls of the new Trinity Church rose after 1790 to grace the upper end of the street. The beauty of the remodeled city hall made the center of Wall Street the focal point of all civic and official life; while Tontine Coffee House, near Coffee Slip, made a faint prediction of the street’s future.

Although she lived there only four years, 27 Wall Street was the scene of many happy events in the life of Elizabeth Seton.8 It was here that her first daughter, Anna Maria, was born on 3 May 1795; and news of the event quickly reached Philadelphia where Julia and her sister, Charlotte, enjoyed every word of William Seton’s proud announcement, “even the parent’s impartial account” of the little girl’s attractions.13 The little world contained within its walls quite subdued the former “reigning passion” Elizabeth had had “to see the world and Europeans in particular.” The sight of William playing “Rosy Dimpled Boy,” “Pauvre Madelon,” “Return Enraptured Hours,” and “Carmignol,” all as fast as the violin could sound them in succession, coupled with the knowledge that a certain pair of eyes, “much nearer black than any other color,” were shut fast in sleep, in a room near by, brought deep contentment to her heart. Elizabeth concluded a letter to Eliza Sadler with the homely words, “My husband begins to gap, the clock strikes ten, and my fingers are cold.”14

Three children were born in the house on Wall Street. After Anna Maria came William Seton, who was born on 25 November 1796. This first son held a place in Elizabeth’s heart that could never be usurped. His every illness filled her with terror and after one such crisis in his first year, she wrote to “Sad,” her friend Eliza Sadler:

My Father thought he could not recover. Could I speak to you in the language of my feelings? Should I attempt to express what passed in my Heart in any moment of that time while his recovery was uncertain, you would

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8 The New York City Directory, 1795, gives the address as “17 Wall,” but this was the same house as that listed as 27 Wall Street in the directories of 1796, 1797, and 1798. After the Setons returned to Stone Street in 1798 the Wall Street house was occupied for a few years by the Wright Posts. There is no evidence to show whether the Setons ever owned this house or not.
lament that Heaven had allowed me the privilege of being a Mother. For what is there in the uncertainty of human happiness to repay the agonizing convulsion of those twenty-four hours in which I witnessed his sufferings?15

About the same time little Anna was beginning to show signs of the Bayley disposition and Elizabeth said ruefully that Anna Maria “possesses from her Mother a most ungovernable temper.” William Magee, her husband, left all discipline to the child’s mother; Dr. Bayley recommended conquest through gentleness, while Dr. Post and Mary suggested whipping. This last seemed to Elizabeth “an unnatural resource” and the last she would resort to.16 Fortunately Mrs. Seton could share her worries with her sister Mary. The summer of 1797 found them escaping from the city’s heat to a house on the East River, opposite the Battery and facing Governors Island. The pleasure the wives took in receiving their husbands together in the evening, and the companionship and protection they shared during the day while the men were away, counterbalanced any inconvenience that “a union of families always occasions.”17 The crises of the summer passed and the proud mother sat down to practice writing a letter to her husband’s grandmother in England, asserting that “never were there two sweeter children” than little William and Anna Maria, “our heart’s delight and already our companion.”18

The third child born at Wall Street was Richard Bayley Seton, whose arrival on 20 July 1798 nearly cost his mother her life. The young Setons had undergone a severe blow earlier that summer in the death of their beloved father, the elder William Seton. Mr. Seton had suffered a bad fall on the ice while escorting a guest to his carriage the previous winter. By June it was quite obvious that the older man was seriously ill, and all thoughts of leaving the city must be abandoned. The news of Seton’s illness even reached Germany, and Eliza Sadler wrote from Hamburg of her concern, adding, “His life is so interesting to all who know or have heard of him that his health is a subject of anxious inquiry whenever Americans meet.”19

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15 Richard Bayley Seton (20 July 1798–26 June 1823) was named after his paternal grandfather. While sailing with the Navy off the coast of Liberia, Richard contracted a contagious fever from the United States consul whom he had nursed back to health there. The fever was fatal and Richard died at age twenty-five. He is buried at sea. Jehudi Ashmun was the United States representative to Liberia in 1822. Ashmun had been an agent of the American Colonization Society which promoted the settlement of blacks at Monrovia, Liberia.
Thomas Greenleaf’s *New Daily Advertiser,* although erring in regard to Seton’s age, generally represented public opinion when it noted that “he was ranked among the most respectable citizens of the community, and has left thirteen children to lament this sad bereftment of a tender parent. The loss of this valuable citizen is universally regretted.” The death of this parent was a great shock to the whole family, but especially so to the eldest son, William Magee Seton, and to his wife. Of the seven youngest children only Rebecca, who was eighteen, was old enough to accept responsibility. For Elizabeth, who so dearly loved quiet and her small family, to become all at once the mother of six more children, and the head of an even larger family, was a frightening prospect. But her own dismay was overshadowed by her husband’s, who found he had not only lost his closest friend, but was now faced with the responsibility of adjusting and managing the business affairs of the firm, Seton, Maitland & Company. His wife was his chief support, and for four weeks the pen was scarcely out of her hand, William Magee kept her so busy with the arrangements of family papers and business letters. As her pregnancy progressed the approach of her confinement found Elizabeth Seton “woefully fatigued, and so unwell.”

It was physically impossible for Elizabeth to move to the family home on Stone Street before August. Temporary arrangements were made for the bereaved Seton children in Connecticut, and at Cragdon. Eliza Maitland, William Magee’s sister, was spending the summer at the latter place, and took charge in the emergency. The combined burdens of work and worry resulted in the near death of Elizabeth Seton in July. Her condition was so grave that both mother and child were for some hours in a very doubtful state; and in order to save the mother the child was nearly lost. Elizabeth saw from under heavy eyelids her father, Dr. Bayley, on his knees blowing breath into the baby’s inert lungs. The little boy was very appropriately named after his grandfather, who literally gave him the breath of life that day. The baby’s father received news of his birth at Philadelphia where he had gone on business. William Magee Seton had fully expected to be home before the event and wrote fearfully that he suspected Elizabeth was not “as well as usual.” He asked her to have his sister Rebecca write at once to

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1 William Seton, senior, was fifty-two when he died on 9 June 1798. He was buried in Trinity churchyard, “attended by a procession, which, from its numbers and respectability spoke an eulogium as strong and sympathetic as words can easily convey.” Commercial Advertiser. [His burial record at Trinity Church is no longer extant. *Ed.*] [The Argus, or Greenleaf’s *New Daily Advertiser,* was established in 1766. John Holt was succeeded as publisher by Thomas Greenleaf in 1790 until 1810 when the paper was discontinued. *Ed.*]

2 Cragdon was a country home which the elder William Seton had leased and furnished. The name is reminiscent of Seton roots in Scotland and is derived from the Celtic word *carraig,* a rock, and the Anglo-Saxon *Dun or Don,* a hill.
Brunswick so that he might have news on his way home. Elizabeth was, indeed, greatly weakened for the remainder of the summer, and her eyes in particular troubled her. But her spirits refused to be kept down, and she wrote happily to Julia Scott on 20 August:

Since I last wrote to you my Julia—my Pains and Aches are all over and I have one of the loveliest Boys to repay me that my fond imagination could have formed. [He is] not a little additionally dear to me for bearing the name of Richard Bayley which softened by Seton at the end are sounds which very much delight me and are the promise of much future Hope and Comfort.

After a brief trip to Bloomingdale—in the last week of August, Elizabeth expected to settle down to face the problems of her enlarged family.

The Seton girls, William’s younger sisters, were all with Elizabeth Seton during September. Elizabeth found them very little trouble and told Julia, “It is impossible to meet with more amiable dispositions.” Wall Street was practically deserted at this time, for the yellow fever epidemic of 1798 was spreading. Moving to Stone Street before November was out of the question, since it was in the very center of the infected area. Dr. Bayley was spending all his time caring for victims, and for a week at a time his daughter did not catch a glimpse of the busy man. Both Mary and Wright Post suffered mild attacks of fever and went to Long Island to recover. But until William succumbed Elizabeth remained courageously in the city. Her husband’s illness, noticed on a week end at Cragdon, caused all her old fears to revive, and Elizabeth determined not to go back to Wall Street until cold weather removed all danger.

Life at Cragdon was far from restful. There were “eighteen in the family, in a house containing only five small rooms.” Wherever she turned, Elizabeth heard some small voice calling “Sister” or “Mother.” She seldom had a minute to herself, what with being constant nurse to little Dick; and when he was not in her arms, the “two paddlers” were always close on her heels begging to go to the garden, the woods, or “the bread and butter closet.” William was very weak, even though convalescing; while the older

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1 New Brunswick, New Jersey.
2 Cragdon was located in Bloomingdale, which was then about where 78th Street, New York City, is located today. Elizabeth Seton went there in August 1798, summoned by the illness of her two older children, who had been sent there during her confinement prior to the birth of her third child. The infant Richard did not flourish under the changed conditions at Cragdon and the Setons returned to the city about 29 August.
3 These girls were Rebecca, Mary, Charlotte, Henrietta (Harriet), and Cecilia. The boys, Samuel and Edward, attended the Cheshire Academy in Cheshire, Connecticut, where Dr. John Bowden was principal (1796-1802) of this episcopal school for boys.
girls began to catch colds as October progressed. By November she was only too glad to return to New York, in spite of the trials which awaited her there.

The sight of her own home again, the cheerfulness of the blazing fire, her treasured piano answering her touch with its sweet tone, were more than she could bear with equanimity, and Elizabeth sank to her knees, crying briefly and bitterly for the past joys the room had shared. “Who,” she wondered, “can help looking back on Innocent and past pleasure without sorrow, I can more forcibly say without anguish?” But it was not her way to look backward long, and she turned to the more immediate problem of preparing the house on Stone Street for fall occupancy. The house was practically empty. William Magee Seton, on the advice of his friends, and with the consent of the family, had sold most of his father’s furnishings. The greater part had been in use since the elder Seton’s first marriage, and further, family disputes might have arisen if one son had kept the furniture. Elizabeth and William had an abundance of their own at Wall Street which would be moved to the family house, after papering, painting, and whitewashing had removed all danger of fever. The energetic little Mrs. Seton attacked pantries, closets, store-rooms, and cellar like a commanding general. Soon the place was ready to receive the family from Cragdon, and life at Stone Street settled down into its winter pattern. Charlotte and Mary Seton went off to boarding school at Brunswick, New Jersey; while Rebecca Seton and Elizabeth took charge of the younger children, Harriet, Cecilia, Anna Marie, and the little boys. It was Elizabeth Seton’s first experiment at teaching and she enjoyed it. These three young pupils who came early under her influence were indelibly marked with her stamp. They followed her physically and spiritually, throughout their lives. All three lie buried near her grave in Maryland. But that story will be told in another chapter.

Rebecca Seton, William Seton’s sister, proved a great blessing to her sister-in-law during the hectic days of readjustment in family life. Before Elizabeth knew her well, she had believed Bec to be a rather uninformed girl, possessing some good qualities, but these much neglected. Now she discovered Bec to be a charming young woman of exceptional virtues. From this period on the two women, who were six years apart in age, became the closest of friends. Elizabeth Seton was irresistibly drawn to virtue and

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*a The articles, such as silver, which were not sold were valued by competent judges and divided among the children. William Seton, senior, left no will.

*b Miss Sophia Hay, an Englishwoman, opened this school in 1798, probably in a house on Burnet Street in present day New Brunswick. The school continued until at least 1815 and was well known in its day as a “fashionable institution of learning,” and drew students from prominent families in the Northeast. See Mary Demarest, “Some Early New Brunswick Schools for Girls,” *New Jersey Historical Society Proceedings*, 53 (1935), 163-185.
later said of Rebecca that while she lived she taught people how to live, and at her death showed them how to die. Elizabeth in her turn exerted an enormous influence over the life of her sister-in-law. The two women were kindred spirits who shared deep spiritual bonds.

Rebecca, like William, suffered from the Seton complaint, tuberculosis, and although the disease was not understood, the frequent attacks of fever and weakness were a real source of anxiety to the family. When Bec was forced to take to her bed in the spring of 1799 Elizabeth was sorely tried. Calamities seem never to come singly in large households, and Bec’s illness was accompanied by that of baby Richard’s, the arrival home of Sam and Edward for the spring vacation, to be followed by the girls from New Jersey. By the middle of May every one of the thirteen children had had the “intermittent fever” except little Will. But the end of May brought relief. The boys and their sisters returned to their respective schools, and this time Harriet Seton accompanied Mary and Charlotte. It was hoped that a trip southward would benefit Bec, and so in the company of young Cecilia and escorted by Jack Seton, their brother, the invalid left New York on 3 June 1799 for Delaware.

Elizabeth and Rebecca missed each other during the months they were separated, and after the young mother went again to Cragdon for a change she wrote longingly to her “soul’s sister”:

I never sweep the hall, or dress the flower pots, or walk around the pear tree walk, but you are as much my companion as if you were actually near me, and last evening finding myself accidentally by the garden fence at the head of the lane where we once stood at sunset last Fall anticipating what we would do this summer if Willy hired Cragdon, I was so struck with the recollection and the uncertainty of when I should see you again, that I had a hearty crying spell, which is not a very common thing for me.

It was, perhaps, one of the penalties of her ardent nature that caused Elizabeth Seton, surrounded by so many, to reach out in longing for the others who were gone. She once wrote to Julia Scott, “Surely the next blessing in our future existence to that of being near the Source of Perfection will be the enjoyment of each other’s Society without dread of interruption from evil.” Rebecca, for her part, was as eager to be with Elizabeth, and she wrote in July, “The idea of my spending the winter away from you makes me miserable.”
Nevertheless, the winter months found Bec still away and the mails between New York and Dover were kept busy. Elizabeth reported all the happenings, the progress of the children, her husband’s attacks of “fever,” and vacation problems of the older children. She described Bec’s rosy “Ricksy” who shut his little eyes when the wind blew in his face and “laughs as he used to when you blew at him.”37 She related the details of the sewing session in which bolts of dimity, flannel, and calico were transformed into wardrobes for Mary and her sisters. She reported the rebellion of the young ladies when Elizabeth insisted on head coverings for evening, and the compromise for “muslin of finer quality” in the place of the objectionable jackonet kerchiefs. She added wryly:

I mention this particularly to you as you may also have another account of it from those who thought it “foolish to muffle girls like old women.” Well, I think we are all muffled now and shall not be puzzled to follow the fashion.38

When Bec got these amusing accounts, and heard from her sisters in Brunswick who wrote “in ecstasy of the happy hours at home,” she longed the more to return. But winter weather was too severe for traveling and she contented herself with such queries as “What are your plans for New Year’s Day? Do you all dine together as usual?”39 Not until the following May did the two friends meet again.

Although her family’s demands upon her time were unusually heavy, Elizabeth Seton had many other interests as well. The Seton household was never without servants and conveyances, so that the young matron could indulge in civic and social affairs while the Seton fortunes flourished. Although in later life she wrote that she turned “with abhorrence only at a remembrance of the effect the frequentation of the theatre had on my passions, and the extravagant ideas I imbied in it.” Elizabeth Seton as a young married woman “shared the pleasures of her associates in attending the performances of the day.”40 The old John Street Theatre had been the only theatre until the Park Theatre opened in 1798. After this time theatre going became increasingly popular.41 Elizabeth sometimes went with her sister, Mary Post, and once a violent April thunderstorm came up as the sisters emerged from the theatre. They found themselves in the center of a traffic snarl, with coachmen quarreling and driving their hacks against each other’s wheels. Elizabeth, when recounting the incident to Julia Scott said whimsically that she now had full proof of the doctrine of the angels, for

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37 Catherine Seton’s Little Red Book, was written by Elizabeth Seton for her daughter, Catherine Charlton, also called Catherine Josephine (after March of 1810) or simply Josephine, contains advice written by a mother to her adolescent sometime after 1816.
her own guardian had landed her safe in Wall Street “without one single Hysterick.” In later years, it was the danger within the theatre which frightened her more, and Elizabeth wrote:

The *Passions* represented on a theatre [stage] are represented in quite a different form from their reality. We know that they are the secret springs of the human heart and the source of all our evils, yet on the stage it would appear that the spirit of dominion, pride, resentment, vengeance, etc., proceed from greatness of soul and the elevation of a noble mind, while a veil is thrown over the corruption of the heart, and the horrid consequences they draw us in—

Elizabeth Seton had other diversions than thoughtless pleasures, however. In 1797 a group of public-spirited women met at the home of Mrs. Isabella Marshall Graham to form a society to aid destitute widows with children. Mrs. Graham, a Scotswoman, had been in New York City since 1789 and was already the directress of a school for girls. Elizabeth Seton and many of her friends: Sarah Hoffman, Catherine Mann Dupleix, Eliza Livingston, Rebecca Seton, Sarah Clarke Startin, and Eliza Craig Sadler, took an active part in this benevolent enterprise which included many Quakers. Elizabeth became treasurer of the society and spent much time and energy to assist the widows. The “continual contrast” she saw between their lot and hers made her feel very grateful, and she tried to resign her own blessings to God in order not to offend Him. Even when her own fortunes began to wane, Elizabeth Seton wrote Rebecca:

I have cut out my two *suits* today and partly made one, [then] heard all the lessons, too, and had a two hours visit from my Poor Widow, [Mrs.] Veley—[who has] no work—no wood—child sick, etc...Should I complain with a bright fire within—bright, bright *Moon* over my shoulder and the Darlings all well, hallooing, and dancing?

Meanwhile the society grew. In 1812 it received a charter, and in March 1803 the officers and managers petitioned the New York State legislature for permission to conduct a lottery to raise $15,000 for low-rent housing for the widows and a school for their children. Elizabeth Seton

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*Elizabeth called her closest friends by nick-names: “Dué” was the former Catherine Mann, now Mrs. George Dupleix, and “Sad” was formerly Eliza Craig, now Mrs. Henry Sadler. They stood by Elizabeth after her conversion and their friendship continued throughout her life.

*Mrs. Seton’s name does not appear as an officer of the society after 1804. She became a widow herself in 1803, and was sorely in need of assistance for her own children. [There is no extant record that she received assistance. *Ed.*]
busied herself collecting money and visiting the unfortunate. She reported happily to Bec:

Who shall dare to distrust *His* mercy? This morning’s Sun found me without a *Penny*. It is now setting and *We* are worth 20 Dollars in possession and the Ladies have to refund me *10* tomorrow, then we shall have *30*—delightful. *The cruse* does not fail [Cf. 1 Kings 17:14-16].

The charitable work she engaged in during this period had a far-reaching influence upon Elizabeth’s life; and although her connection with the New York widows’ society was brief, she never lost her interest in the progress of such work in her native city.

At the same time that Elizabeth engaged in an active life of good works and family duties, she was also interested in the intellectual currents which ebbed and flowed through New York at the close of the eighteenth century. The great era of American Deism, which extended from 1789 to around 1805, was at its peak. Organized religion after the Revolution faced not only changes within its administrative framework, but had to cope with the challenge to its tenets which Deism was insidiously asserting. The French philosophers had, of course, been known in America prior to the war. Voltaire was read rather widely after 1763, but Rousseau’s “prudent skepticism” was even more in harmony with the milder Deism of America. In 1794, New Yorkers had founded a society devoted to the spread of French revolutionary principles, and in the winter of 1796–1797 a deistical society was organized. The attacks on Christianity were led by Thomas Paine, and were not confined to any one class of society. The *Age of Reason* could be found in nearly every village. From 1797 to 1800, “the skeptical current swept forward so rapidly that Christianity itself seemed about to be engulfed in a sea of deistic oblivion.” It is not surprising that the receding wave caught the attention of Elizabeth Bayley Seton, whose close friend Eliza Sadler had returned from France in January 1799, filled with enthusiasm for French culture and Rousseau’s *Emile*. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté in later years wrote in distress, “Never let go that poor Mother [Seton was] perverted to Rousseau and Emilius by her unhappy friend Mrs. Sadler.”

During the summer of 1799 William Magee Seton traveled to Baltimore and his wife retired to Cragdon, at Bloomingdale, for the hottest weather. Elizabeth took with her a copy of Rousseau, and invited Sad to visit her with the words:

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1 A cruse is a small container for liquid, such as water or oil.
2 Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté de Remur, (1779-1839), a Sulpician priest from France and later first bishop of Vincennes, Indiana, was Mrs. Seton’s confessor and spiritual director in the last two years of her life.
My William continues his determination of going to Baltimore, I cannot be left alone, and if dear J. Jacques I find it—Rousseau!!! and you are my company I shall have a reproach to make myself [which] I never felt before, that of being satisfied in his absence.\textsuperscript{56}

Elizabeth explained her uneasy interest to Eliza Sadler by saying:

Your J. J. [Jean Jacques] has awakened many ideas which had long since been at rest. Indeed he is the writer I shall always refer to in a season of sorrow, for he makes me forget myself while reading, but leaves the most consoling impression on every thought—I hope we shall enjoy his society together.\textsuperscript{57}

There was real danger in this reading which elicited the rapturous praise:

Every half hour I can catch goes to \textit{Emilius}—three volumes I have read with delight and were I to express half my thoughts about it—particularly his Religious Ideas—I should lose that circumspection I have so long limited myself to and be E.A.B. instead of E.A.S. Dear J. J. I am yours.\textsuperscript{58}

Years after the first flush of elation produced by this intellectual expedition had cooled, Elizabeth Seton was informed of the last hours of a friend who died in despair, denouncing the influence of these same writings. Recalling her own danger in 1799, Elizabeth Seton said sorrowfully:

I, too, have felt their fatal Influence and once they composed my \textit{Sunday} devotion—dazzled by the glare of seductive eloquences how many nights of repose and days of deceitful pleasure have I passed in the charm of their deceptions—Mrs. W. is gone—hopeless and convinced there is no mercy for her—I remain, the daily subject of that boundless Mercy—the mists of night and darkness dispersed, and if even at the eleventh hour, Yet permitted to share in the vineyard and gather the fruits of Eternal Life—glory, glory, glory, forever, forever, and forever—\textsuperscript{59}

But Elizabeth Seton’s delusion in 1799 was only part of the general trend in which more sober Christians saw a just cause for the visitations of yellow fever which, oddly enough, grew proportionately with infidelity. It remained for the nineteenth century to usher in a revival of religious fervor; and this same ardent advocate of Rousseau became the apologist for purest
orthodoxy. In the serene security of a religious community in Maryland, Elizabeth Seton received the following account of Thomas Paine’s death written by a Jesuit priest:

I wish it were in my power to rejoice your pious and compassionate heart with a consoling account of Tom Payne’s [sic] death but it seems that unfortunate wretch had vomited too horrid blasphemies against the most High and his only Son, as to deserve the most signal of all graces, that of the death of the just. He died as he had lived, an unbeliever, an impious, and according to all appearances, a reprobate; in calling to your mind the tragic end of Voltaire, you may form some idea of that of Payne. We were indeed called upon to visit him, but, helas [alas], he could not bear hearing [us] speak of God and Futurity. Why? He said, are you come to disturb me? Worried in his mind, afflicted in his body, and unwilling to suffer, in fine given up to all the horrors of despair he requested us repeatedly to retire and to let him alone. No persuasion would receive his corpse into its churchyard. There was not one single person, I am told, to attend his funeral.60

The Setons had more practical problems to face in 1799. Elizabeth’s first reaction as the New Year was ushered in, was one of relief “that the terrible ninety-eight” was past.61 Accompanied by the death of the elder William Seton, it had been a year of reversal of the family’s highest hopes. The heavy burden resting upon her husband, as head of the Setons, was to press even more painfully if Elizabeth had but known it. The Seton financial situation was definitely critical in 1799, owing to a variety of causes. The progress of the “undeclared war” with France, the rapidly declining health of William Magee Seton, and his failure as head of the firm to exert the same forceful pressures that the elder Seton had known how to apply, all conspired against the firm. Failures among their connections in Hamburg and London dismayed William, and Elizabeth had to use every exertion she could summon to keep his spirits up and prevent him from retreating “to the back woods where we shall not calculate the dollars per load.”62 In December 1799 Elizabeth wrote to Rebecca that Maitlands in London had stopped payments of the Seton-Maitland obligations in England. James Seton was nearly crazy with worry, but after consultation with their friends, and the directors of the banks, the brothers were advised that stoppage of payments would be a necessity on this side of the Atlantic as well.63 William
Seton was frantic, partly from the shock he had received and “partly from the necessity of immediate payments of accounts, etc. which is necessary for his personal honor and the satisfaction of his friends.” What was to become of his father’s family Heaven only knew, for as principal partner the estate of the Setons would bear the brunt of the claims against the company. Nevertheless, William decided to let matters stand until the partnership expired in June; he refused three different offers of money which confidence in the integrity of the firm elicited. Neither Elizabeth nor her husband quite realized yet the full extent of the disaster.

The New Year, 1800, was ushered in at Stone Street in rather somber fashion. Only George Busch, a friend of William’s augmented the family group. The Setons tried to act toward each other as if each did not make silent comparisons with happier days. With William, this was only a temporary attitude, since his moods varied from those when he believed all would work out, to those when he envisioned only state prison and direst poverty. With Elizabeth the little sham was more nearly sincere; she really believed that where hope and affection existed nothing was quite irreparable. To her it was not the most unpleasant New Year’s Day she had ever passed. Disasters produced in tubercular Seton a patient apathy alternating with despair. His wife, on the contrary, was roused to energetic attack. As she explained to Sad, “Trouble always creates great exertions of my mind, and give it a force to which at other times it is incapable.” She was more inclined to the view Rebecca took of their misfortunes when she wrote from Alexandria, “The blessings of life are only lent us and we ought not to repine when they are taken from us.” Although at times her courage threatened to desert her in the face of William’s “constant reflections on what is to become of us, and that us such a number,” Elizabeth was more often inclined to exclaim, “What avails melancholy forebodings, and an indulgence of feelings which can never alter the Event of things!”

The firm of Seton & Maitland dispatched two men abroad to seek some solution of the confusion of their affairs. Stone went to Leghorn, Ogden sailed for London. Mr. Stone was an eccentric old bachelor who worked for the firm but little is known about him, not even his first name. Abraham Ogden, Jr., was a member of the prolific Ogden clan. Charlotte Seton later married his brother, Gouverneur Ogden. Elizabeth took over the correspondence of the firm and wrote far into the night. She apologized for neglecting her father with the explanation:

I have of late been so much engaged in copying mercantile correspondence and assisting my friend in making statements
to his Partner in London that your letter was absolutely necessary to restore my thoughts in their usual channel.72

Although she was expecting another child in June, Elizabeth welcomed the onerous letter writing as a distraction from her own discomfort, and she told Julia the task helped her to know “the whys and wherefores” of the business, and made her a better companion for her husband in his trials.

With Ogden and Stone away, she was his only confidant.73 James Seton seemed interested in his own affairs exclusively, and had just purchased a handsome three-story house in Greenwich Street. Elizabeth added, pointedly, “Thank heaven we are not all sinking” when she related the news to Bec.74 Besides the evening correspondence there was the daytime sewing. The children had reached that periodic stage where everything seemed to demand replacing at once. A dozen shirts needed ruffling, and there was always the June event to be remembered, and Elizabeth not “half ready.” Dr. Bayley was already trying to find a place on Long Island for the summer confinement of his daughter.75

As March went by the firm’s affairs grew steadily more grave. When the full truth seemed no longer repressible, Elizabeth wrote to the Seton girls in school at Brunswick, and explained more fully to Bec:

How I wish I could write you a long letter without saying one word of affairs for in their present state they are too melancholy to think about, and that not from any impression I have received from my William for never did a mortal bear misfortune and all the aggravated distress of it with so much firmness and patience as he does. I say aggravated for vessel after vessel arrives and correspondents in London and Hamburg notify him that his bills are refused and his property detained there, and not one line of explanation from Maitland—either good or bad—and here we are with funds detained on one side the water, and transferred the other, for he is obliged to make over everything in trust to his friends, nothing coming in, and one [legal] suit already against him gives [us] but too much reason to expect more—76

Elizabeth was relieved to receive from Mary Seton, at Miss Sophia Hay’s school, “such an answer as would do your heart good,” but her greater joy was felt over Bec’s decision to return home to New York in May. Bec

* Elizabeth Seton delivered her fourth child, Catherine Charlton Seton 28 June 1800 while on Staten Island at the home of her father in what became Tompkinsville.
was someone to whom Elizabeth could open her heart freely, someone to whom she could turn to discuss the problems of the family which she hated to add to her husband’s heavy load. It was decided that the Setons at school should return again after their spring vacations, although Mary Seton was anxious to come home, now that the family finances were so strained. Elizabeth understood Mary’s feeling and told Bec:

Mary wishes very much to be with you and it is right she should be...It is necessary for her future comfort in life that her mind should be strengthened...Try to teach her to look at the events of life as they are, guided by a just and Merciful Protector who orders every occurrence in its time and place, and often by his trials, and disappointments, strives to turn the soul to Him who is the Resource and Comforter of the afflicted.77

Bec also kept the house on Stone Street running smoothly while Elizabeth went away for the summer months to await childbirth. The return to Stone Street that fall revived all the old anxieties, and in December Mr. Garret Killett arrived to make an inventory which presaged the bankruptcy action. Christmas that year was a sad time for the Setons. All their possessions, even to the children’s clothing, had been listed and the lists were in the hands of the bankruptcy commissioners. Elizabeth had to watch the door to forestall any premature seizures of their property by the sheriff’s officers. William Magee had been forced to hand over the key to the counting house which fronted on Mill Street. With the key the last vestige of control passed from Seton hands. The end of the year marked the end of a business venture which had made the Seton name widely known. The abdication of the son had followed only two years and a half after the death of the father.78 It was the last Christmas in Stone Street, for in May the Setons were to move to the Battery, next door to Carey Ludlow’s property, which was then a lodging house.79

During these first years of marriage Elizabeth Seton had changed from an emotional, untried girl in her teens to a mature, courageous woman. It is not difficult to understand the increasing incapacity of William Magee Seton as circumstances of health and business beyond his control became

aggravated. It is much more interesting to account for the equanimity with which his wife faced the future and accepted each trial as “one more lesson on the uselessness of perplexing the mind with anxieties about fortune’s favors.”

A clue is contained, perhaps, in the wide diversity of her interests. In its simplest reduction the answer may be that she was too busy to become morbid. She told Julia that “it sometimes lessens personal sorrow to compare our condition with the case of others,” and projecting herself into the lives of those about her seemed to increase Elizabeth’s fortitude. The problems of her children, father, husband, other relatives, and friends all received Elizabeth Seton’s attention. The more she did, the more she seemed able to do.

Elizabeth was a mother whose very nature made her enjoy every aspect of motherhood. She delighted in the infancy of her children and watched their first steps with fond gaze, writing to Sad of Richard Seton:

Imagine Dick running over the grass and garden, [he] tumbles down and turns to see the countenance that is watching him to know if he should cry, then off again as merry as a bird.

The children were never neglected nor left to Mammy Huler, their nanny, entirely. If Elizabeth were away for any length of time, on her return she laughingly complained,

My precious children stick to me like little burrs; they are so fearful of losing me again. The moment I shake one off one side, another clings in the opposite, nor can I write one word without some sweet interruption.

Although Elizabeth admitted that “a mother sees thro’ a veil which renders the object as she wishes it,” she was troubled by the appearance of any unusual traits of behavior in her offspring, and worried about her daughter Anna Maria’s disposition. She began very early to make a companion of the moody little girl and while Anna was not yet four years old the mother wrote this for her on the last day of 1798:

The last, the first, and every day of the year my thoughts and time are yours, my Anna, but I enjoy a peculiar pleasure in devoting an hour generally appropriated to amusements, to you my precious Child, in whom my greatest delight and amusements are centered. May the Giver of all good, grant His Protection to you and assist me in my endeavors to promote your future good and advantage. The blessing and attentions of the tenderest parents and most affectionate
friends are constantly yours, and by your conduct you will confer the gratification of our fondest wishes, or will inflict the most bitter disappointment. In you I view the friend, the companion, and consolation of my future years—delightful reflection.  

It was more of a prayer and a prophecy than either mother or daughter could foresee. Meanwhile, during the summer which followed, Elizabeth Seton welcomed Julia Scott and her daughter, Maria, whose example, Elizabeth confided to Sad, “answers all the good I had anticipated for my Anna who comes down every Morning after breakfast with the clean hands and Frock and gets on her ribbon bracers then sits down with her needle. “ 86 After the Scotts departed Elizabeth reported happily:

Anna is a perfect Angel. I am almost persuaded her fancies are somehow governed by the moon, for she is as different from what she was as the present darkness is from the beautiful light of that period when she perplexed us the most. 87

In addition to her own children, there were always Elizabeth’s Seton relatives to require attention as well. Holidays from school in the eighteenth century did not take place at Christmas and New Year’s Day, so numerous New Year’s cakes, honeycakes, raisins, keg biscuits, and almonds had to be shipped to Connecticut and New Jersey. As if Elizabeth were not busy enough, Dr. Bayley delegated to her the task of sending food to Helen Bayley, one of her younger-half sisters, who was also at Miss Hay’s school. On the occasions when the girls forgot to take their stays with them, a trunk was required to carry the assorted goods. 88 When the spring and fall vacations arrived the Setons were often accompanied home by guests, and Stone Street became full to overflowing.

Nor was Elizabeth too busy to come to the aid of her friends in trouble. During the sad March of 1798, when Julia Scott’s husband died, and the widow had to make plans for her two children, John and Maria, Elizabeth Seton never “left her night or day during the excess of her Sorrows.” 89 She helped Julia pack and close her house in preparation for the move to Philadelphia. Later, when Julia successively lost her brother and father, Elizabeth Seton wrote letters which brought new courage to the older woman. 90 John Wilkes, too, had reason to be grateful to Elizabeth Seton for her kindness to his wife. Mary Seton Wilkes, a distant cousin of William Seton, was taken seriously ill in January 1800, at her home at 27 William Street and Elizabeth sat up two nights at the stricken woman’s bedside until the crisis was past. 91 But Mary Wilkes was never completely well again,
and a year later, in spite of Mrs. Seton’s care, Mary grew worse. On 1 March 1801, Elizabeth wrote her father that Mary’s last sigh was breathed on Friday morning,—and to Rebecca Seton she said:

The groans and anguish of her poor Wilkes is easily conceived. He has shed tears all over me which I hope will relieve him...
Oh, Rebecca, if I dared to wish how gladly would I drink the cup—but My God knows best.92

In addition to the numerous affections and sympathies which crowded her heart, Elizabeth Seton was also attracted by the beauties of nature. She never outgrew the close communion with the earth and sky that had comforted her in those cruel days of adolescence. The summers at Cragdon offered solitary walks, while the others slept, and Elizabeth discovered many beauties that quite escaped the other noisier explorers. One Sunday morning, she told Eliza Sadler:

I retraced the honey-suckle walk and to my great astonishment found that those bushes with buds on them which grew near the honey suckle, and in great quantities in other places, bear the sweetest flower you can imagine with the greatest profusion. Its fragrance [is] beyond any flower I ever saw. I brought home a load of it on my back...O how it would delight me to send you a branch of it, for like other sweets, its season is passing.93

After Staten Island replaced Bloomingdale as the Seton summer residence Elizabeth became more interested in the sea and sights of the harbor. One evening in October she described what she saw while she waited for her father.

The most beautiful mild Evening my eyes ever beheld, the moon perfectly unclouded—a large cloud like a Bank of pure snow arises behind the fort and gradually spreads towards New York, retaining its whiteness from its center, but very dark beneath. Now and then [it was] lit up with lightening while the sky over our establishment and Long Island is clearest blue spangled with bright stars—this continued about a quarter of an hour the most perfect scene imagination could form—a light wind rises, the thunder is heard—the clouds approach and by degrees cover the bright moon, pass to Long Island and the fort is covered with a blue and spangled sky as before, while the rain beats over us.
Father visiting a vessel with a lantern in her shrouds. The clouds overspread the moon as he went on board, the storm vanished and the sky was perfectly bright again before he left her and the whole time of his being aboard was not more than 5 minutes.  

The third influence which kept Elizabeth Seton persevering in the face of adversity was her recurring interest in spiritual reading and serious thought. In later life she recalled those “evenings alone, writing, bible, psalms, in burning desires of heaven.” When the sudden, violent attacks of childhood disease beset her children Elizabeth said, “tho’ time and chance and sorrow comes to all and I must take my share, they all united will only draw me nearer to that friend to whom I look for comfort...” When death removed a friend she would ruminate:

At this time when pain and a thousand nameless anxieties remind me continually of that hour in which the soul wavers between its future and its present Home, mine is transported at even the probability, for the bonds that hold it have scarcely strength to restrain it...and if reason and the best affections of this world did not withhold and draw back with more than common force its flying propensities, I should have renounced every other desire and aim long ago.

Whether her sober reflections were aroused by the sermons of Dr. Benjamin Moore at Trinity Church, or the never quite suppressed worry over her husband’s health, Elizabeth Seton as a young wife of twenty-four told Julia that nothing in this world, “were all its pleasures combined,” would tempt her to be more than a passenger through life. These sentiments did not imply a desire to escape. On the contrary, Elizabeth asserted “this life is worth possessing if it were only because while we have it we are candidates for a better,” and while she lived she would “intend the best and be thankful for the present.”

Elizabeth was very human, for all her fine sentiments. Leaving her beloved home on Wall Street cost her bitter tears. “I turn over the Page with rapidity,” she told Julia, “and looking towards Heaven there fix my aim—there is no change.” Sometimes the crowded conditions at Cragdon almost taxed her beyond the limits of endurance and she said wearily to Sad, “Patience—Resignation—heavenly virtues exercised in little things that keep the Soul in a sense of its dependent State, for I assure you I do not possess them on this occasion without a struggle.” Many times when the
worry over financial matters harassed her, Elizabeth would turn her thoughts to the little daily blessings. In the dark November of 1800 she wrote to Julia Scott that in spite of all the heartaches the bankruptcy proceedings entailed “how much reason I have had [this twelve month past] to Bless my Maker for his goodness to my children, none of whom have been ill.” She seized the occasional moment of quiet, after the children were settled down for the night, to indulge her favorite pastime, sitting and reading of “the High and Lofty One who inhabits Eternity.” It was particularly her habit to spend the last evening of the year, sitting before the fire, “contemplating and tracing the boundless mercy of God.” Her reverie would run:

How pure the enjoyment and sweet the transition of every thought—the soul expands all earthly interests recede—and Heavenly Hopes become anxious wishes— Might not these mortal bonds be gently severed, loosed more easily than untying the fastening of a fine thread, at this moment without any perceptible changes, to find the soul at liberty—Heavenly Mercy—in Thy Presence and would it not tremble—or rather is it not forever under thy inspection can it be concealed from Thee—No, thou now perceivest it, oppressed, weighed and sinking under its mortal burden and also thou seest it can patiently, submissively submit to Thy Will, adoring in sweet confidence of Thy Mercy—preserve me but this Heavenly Peace, continue to me this privilege beyond all mortal computation, of resting in Thee, and adoring Thee my Father—Friend— and never failing Support. For this alone I implore, let all other concerns with their consequences be entirely and wholly submitted to Thee.

Attention to the needs of others, love of nature, spiritual reverie, all served to produce in Elizabeth Seton a calm acceptance of the first great crisis which financial failure produced. She was quite sincere when she wrote Julia:

Seton is quietly writing by my side, in as perfect health as he has ever enjoyed—my chicks quiet in bed, and [my] Father smiling over a list of books he had just made of those he chooses to retain as one of our creditors. For myself, I think the greatest happiness of this life is to be released from the cares and formalities of what is called the world—My World
is *my family*, and all the change to me will be that I can devote myself unmolested to my Treasure.106
CHAPTER 2. MANHATTAN MATRON

Notes

1 William Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 28 February 1796, ASJPH 1-3-3-18:53.

2 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Oakes, near Dover, 15 May 1796, ASJPH 26-0-2, (6). Copy. The original is in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Hereinafter cited as ASCSH.

3 Eulogy of William Seton, Sr., ASJPH 1-3-3-18:1; see 1.22, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, CW, 1:35, n.1.

4 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New Ark [Newark], Wednesday morning, 1794, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in Archives Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph, Ohio. Hereinafter cited as AMSJ.

5 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 27 July 1794, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

6 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 15 May 1796, ASJPH 26-0-2, (6). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

7 1.7, Elizabeth Seton to William Magee Seton, 23 July 1794, CW, 1:7. This and all other letters of Mrs. Seton cited in this chapter were written from New York.

8 1.9, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 11 August 1796, CW, 1:10.


10 1.26, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 8 September 1798, CW, 1:44.

11 Ibid.


13 Julia Scott to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 9 May 1795, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B22.

14 1.8, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 8 February 1796, CW, 1:9.

15 1.12, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 1 August 1797, entry of 15 August, CW, 1:18.

16 Ibid.

17 1.11, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 18 June 1797, CW, 1:15. The house the Setons and Posts shared was owned by a Mrs. Livingston but the sources do not identify her.

18 1.13, Elizabeth Seton to Mrs. John Seton, CW, 1:19. Elizabeth Seton usually wrote her formal letters in a rough draft before copying
them. Many times this rough draft is the only remaining evidence. Only a fragment of this draft survives.

19 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, 13 July [1798], ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B7.
20 Greenleaf’s *New Daily Advertiser*, 11 June 1798. Other obituaries appeared in the *Commercial Advertiser*, 11 June 1798; *The Spectator*, 9 June 1798, the *Weekly Museum*, 6 June 1798.
22 1.25, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 20 August 1798, *CW*, 1:42.
23 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 23 July 1798, ASJPH 1-3-3-18:54.
25 1.25, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 30 August 1798, *CW*, 1:42.
26 Ibid.
27 1.27, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 28 September 1798, *CW*, 1:45.
29 1.32, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 November 1798, *CW*, 1:52.
30 Elizabeth Seton to ______, n.d., ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.
33 1.45, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 2 June 1799, *CW*, 1:71. Jack was John Curson Seton. He remained in Virginia at this time and married Miss Mary Wise of Alexandria.
34 1.61, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 3 August 1799, *CW*, 1:91.
35 1.30, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 28 October 1798, *CW*, 1:49.
36 Rebecca Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 18 July 1799, ASJPH 1-3-3-18:49.
37 1.46, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 8 June 1799, *CW*, 1:73.
39 Rebecca Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 27 December 1799, ASJPH 1-3-3-18:50.
41 James Grant Wilson, *Memorial History of the City of New York* (New York, 1893), III, 146. The Park Theatre was operated by William Dunlap and John Hodgkinson for a time. See William Dunlap, *Diary, 1766-1839* (New York, 1930) for interesting details of Dunlap’s career.
42 Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 23 April 1798, ASJPH 1-3-3-6:2.
nor even principles to keep her from folly."


45 Sidney I. Pomerantz, *New York an American City, 1783-1803* (New York, 1938), 338; John Cox, *Quakerism in the City of New York, 1757-1930* (New York, 1930), 43. Pomerantz states that this society was started by Quakers but Cox simply calls it “a charitable Organization of Quaker Membership.”


49 Petition of 4 March 1803, to the New York legislature, copy of the original in The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, The University Museum Collection of The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 3120.


51 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, 4 May 1816, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B18. Eliza Sadler wrote Mrs. Seton of the beginning in November 1814, of an institution to aid poor old women. Mrs. Sadler also sent to Emmitsburg a copy of Mrs. Graham’s meditations, published that year by her daughter, Mrs. Bethune, under the title: *The Power of Faith: Exemplified in the Life and Writings of the Late Mrs. Isabella Graham of New York*. [The publication is no longer available at ASJPH. See *CW*, 1:27, n.3. Ed.]


53 Ibid., 131.

54 Ibid., 154.


56 1.48, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 23 June 1799, *CW*, 1:76.


58 1.64, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.d., *CW*, 1:95.

59 4.55, “Spiritual Journal to Cecilia Seton,” *CW*, 1:475. This entry is undated and appears between entries for the 16th and 18th of September 1807.

60 Rev. Anthony Kohlmann, S.J. to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 19 July 1813, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:32. Kohlmann was pastor of St. Peter’s church on Barclay Street when he wrote this letter. Mrs. Seton was by then the foundress of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, Emmitsburg, Maryland.
1.36, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 January 1799, *CW*, 1:57.
1.73, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 23 December 1799, *CW*, 1:106.
1.74, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 January 1800, *CW*, 1:108.
Ibid.
Ibid.
1.67, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.d., [October 1799], *CW*, 1:99.
Rebecca Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 29 December 1799, ASJPH 26-0-2, (6). Copy. The original is in ASCSH.
1.77, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 5 February 1800, *CW*, 1:112.
1.78, Elizabeth Seton to Dr. Richard Bayley, 12 February 1800, *CW*, 1:114. Dr. Bayley was in Albany on business for the health department.
1.82, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 18 March 1800, *CW*, 1:119.
1.95, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 14 August 1800, *CW*, 1:136.
1.91, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 26 July 1800, *CW*, 1:130.
1.100, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 7 December 1800, *CW*, 1:141.
1.66, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 2 October 1799, *CW*, 1:99.
1.11, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 29 June 1797, *CW*, 1:16.
1.35, Elizabeth Seton to Anna Maria Seton, 31 December 1798, *CW*, 1:56.
1.60, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.d., *CW*, 1:90. A letter to Rebecca Seton dated 3 August 1799 says Julia Scott “came last Saturday with her daughter about Harriet’s age.”
1.58, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.d., [July 1799], *CW*, 1:88.
1.106, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, [27 February 1801], *CW*, 1:147; 1.107, Elizabeth Seton to Dr. Richard Bayley, 1 March 1801, *CW*, 1:148.
1.57, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, [July or August 1799], *CW*, 1:86.
1.12, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 15 August 1797, CW, 1:19.
1.19, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 16 May 1798, CW, 1:30.
1.18, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 9 May 1798, CW, 1:29.
1.28, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 14 October 1798, CW, 1:47.
1.29, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 21 October 1798, CW, 1:48.
1.32, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 November 1798, CW, 1:52.
1.58, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.d., [July 1799], CW, 1:88.
1.99, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 19 November 1800, CW, 1:140.
1.38, Elizabeth Seton to Dr. Richard Bayley, 2 February 1799, CW, 1:60.
8.4, “Sitting on a Little Bench,” 31 December 1799, CW, 3a:18. Neither spelling nor grammatical construction were standardized in her day. For the convenience of modern readers, editorial corrections have been made.
1.100, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 7 December 1800, CW, 1:141.