



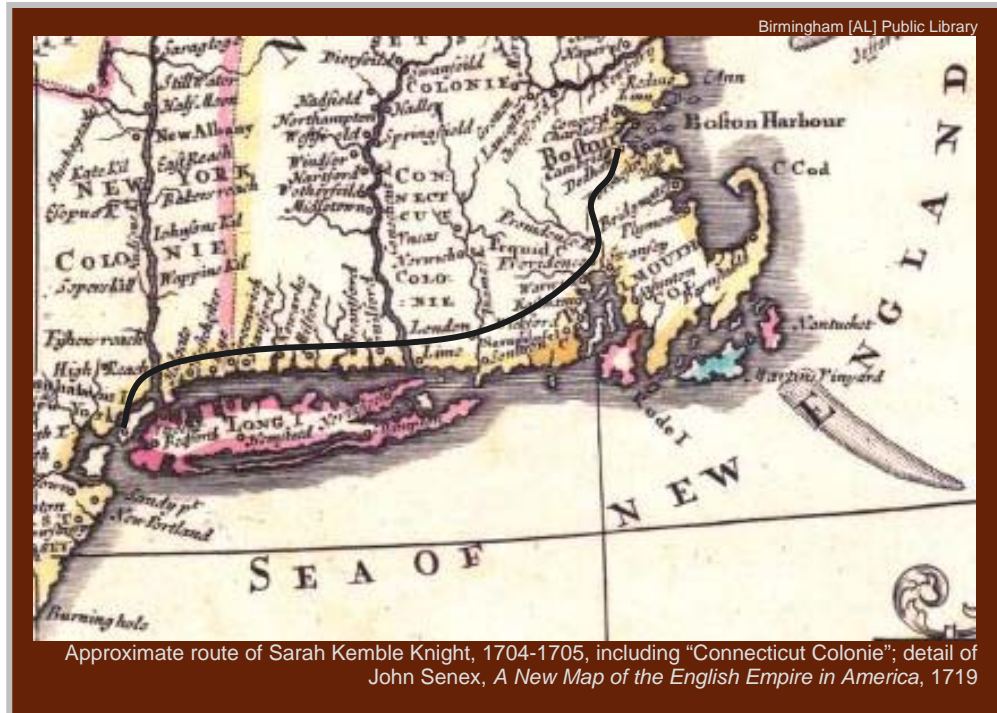
Sarah Kemble Knight

Remarks on
 “this whole
 Colony of
 Connecticut”

1704-1705

In contrast to the homogenous colony of Massachusetts Bay, other northern colonies such as Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania became more diverse as German, Scot, Irish,

Dutch, and French immigrants arrived by the thousands — a development often noted in colonists’ diaries and travel journals. In October 1704, a Boston widow named Sarah Kemble Knight began a five-month round-trip journey to New York City to complete some family business after a cousin’s death. She travelled alone, staying in inns along the route, and employing local men as guides. In these excerpts from her travel journal in which she combines observation and satire (and which she later read aloud at a women’s literary “tea-table” which she hosted), Knight describes the colony of Connecticut, emphasizing the diversity and prosperity of its white inhabitants: “No one that can and will be diligent in this place need fear poverty, nor the want of food and raiment.”



Approximate route of Sarah Kemble Knight, 1704-1705, including “Connecticut Colony”; detail of John Senex, *A New Map of the English Empire in America*, 1719

SATURDAY, OCT. 7TH [1704], we set out early in the Morning, and being something unacquainted with the way, having asked it of some we met, they told us we must Ride a mile or two and turn down a Lane on the Right hand; and by their Direction we Rode on, but not That coming to the turning, we met a Young fellow and asked him how far it was to the Lane which turn’d down towards Guilford [Connecticut]. He said we must Ride a little further, and turn down by the Corner of uncle Sam’s Lot. My Guide vented his Spleen at the Lubber; and we soon after came into the Road, and keeping still on, without anything further Remarkable, about two o’clock afternoon we arrived at New Haven, where I was received with all Possible Respects and civility. Here I discharged Mr. Wheeler with a reward to his satisfaction, and took some time to rest after so long and toilsome a journey; And Inform’d myself of the manners and customs of the place, and at the same time employed myself in the affair I went there upon.

They are Govern’d by the same Laws as we in Boston (or little differing) throughout this whole Colony of Connecticut, And much the same way of Church Government, and many of them good, Sociable people, and I hope Religious too: but a little too much Independent in their principles, and, as I have been told, were formerly in their Zeal very Rigid in their Administrations towards such as their Laws made Offenders, even to a harmless Kiss or Innocent merriment among Young people. Whipping being a frequent and counted an easy Punishment, about which as other Crimes, the Judges were absolute in their Sentences. They told me a pleasant story about a pair of Justices in those parts, which I may not omit the relation of.

A negro Slave belonging to a man in the Town stole a hogshhead [wooden barrel] from his master, and

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gave or sold it to an Indian, native of the place. The Indian sold it in the neighborhood, and so the theft was found out. Thereupon the Heathen was Seized and carried to the Justice's House to be Examined. But his worship (it seems) was gone into the field, with a Brother in office, to gather in his Pompions [pumpkins]. Whither the malefactor is hurried, And Complaint made, and satisfaction in the name of Justice demanded. Their Worships can't proceed in form without a Bench: whereupon they Order one to be Immediately erected, which, for want [lack] of fitter materials, they made with pompions — which being finished, down set their Worships, and the Malefactor call'd, and by the Senior Justice Interrogated after the following manner. You, Indian, why did You steal from this man? You shouldn't do so — it's a Grandy wicked thing to steal. Hol't Hol't, cries Justice Junior Brother, You speak negro to him. I'll ask him. You, sirrah, why did You steal this man's Hogshead? Hogshead? (replies the Indian,) me no stomany. No? says his Worship; and pulling off his hat, Patted his own head with his hand, says, Tatapa—You, Tatapa—you; all one this. Hogshead all one this. Hah! says Netop, now me stomany that. Whereupon the Company fell into a great fit of Laughter, even to Roaring. Silence is commanded, but to no effect: for they continued perfectly Shouting. Nay, says his worship, in an angry tone, if it be so, *take me off the Bench*.

Their Diversions in this part of the Country [colony] are on Lecture days and Training days mostly: on the former there is Riding from town to town.

And on training days The Youth divert themselves by Shooting at the Target, as they call it (but it very much resembles a pillory) where he that hits nearest the white has some yards of Red Ribbon presented him, which being tied to his hatband, the two ends streaming down his back, he is Led away in Triumph, with great applause, as the winners of the Olympic Games. They generally marry very young: the males oftener as I am told under twenty than above; they generally make public weddings, and have a way something singular (as they say) in some of them, viz. [such as] Just before Joining hands the Bridegroom quits the place, who is soon followed by the Bridesmen, and as it were, dragg'd back to duty — being the reverse to the former practice among us, to steal ms. Pride.

There are great plenty of Oysters all along by the seaside, as far as I Rode in the Colony, and those very good. And they Generally lived very well and comfortably in their families. But too Indulgent (especially the farmers) to their slaves: suffering [allowing] too great familiarity from them, permitting them to sit at Table and eat with them (as they say to save time) and into the dish goes the black hoof as freely as the white hand. They told me that there was a farmer lived near the Town where I lodged who had some difference with his slave, concerning something the master had promised him and did not punctually perform; which caused some hard words between them; But at length they put the matter to Arbitration and Bound themselves to stand to the award of such as they named — which done, the Arbitrators Having heard the Allegations of both parties, Order the master to pay 40s [shillings] to black face and acknowledge his fault. And so the matter ended: the poor master very honestly standing to the award.

There are everywhere in the Towns as I passed a Number of Indians, the Natives of the Country, and are the most savage of all the savages of that kind that I had ever Seen: little or no care taken (as I heard upon enquiry) to make them otherwise. They have in some places Lands of their own, and Govern'd by Laws of their own making; they marry many wives and at pleasure put them away, and on the least dislike or fickle humor, on either side, saying *stand away* to one another is a sufficient Divorce. And indeed those uncomely *Stand aways* are too much in Vogue among the English in this (Indulgent Colony) as their Records plentifully prove, and that on very trivial matters, of which some have been told me, but are not proper to be Related by a Female pen, though some of that foolish sex have had too large a share in the story.

If the natives commit any crime on their own precincts among themselves, the English takes no Cognizance of. But if on the English ground, they are punishable by our Laws. They mourn for their Dead by blacking their faces and cutting their hair after an Awkward and frightful manner; But can't bear You

should mention the names of their dead Relations to them: they trade most for Rum, for which they'd hazard their very lives; and the English fit them Generally as well by seasoning it plentifully with water.

They give the title of merchant to every trader; who Rate their Goods according to the time and specie they pay in: viz. Pay, money, Pay as money, and trusting. *Pay* is Grain, Pork, Beef, &c. [etc.] at the prices set by the General Court that Year; *money* is pieces of Eight, Ryalls, or Boston or Bay shillings (as they call them,) or Good hard money, as sometimes silver coin is termed by them; also Wampum, vizt. Indian beads which serves for change. *Pay as money* is provisions, as aforesaid one Third cheaper than as the Assembly or General Court sets it; and *Trust* as they and the merchant agree for time.

Now, when the buyer comes to ask for a commodity, sometimes before the merchant answers that he has it, he says, *is Your pay ready?* Perhaps the Chap Replies Yes: what do You pay in? says the merchant. The buyer having answered, then the price is set; as suppose he wants a sixpenny knife, in *pay* it is 12d — in *pay as money* eight pence, and hard money its own price, viz. 6d. It seems a very Intricate way of trade and what *Lex Mercatoria*¹ had not thought of.

Being at a merchant's house, in comes a tall country fellow with his *alfogeos* [cheeks] full of Tobacco; for they seldom Loose their Cud but keep Chewing and Spitting as long as their eyes are open — he advanced to the middle of the Room, makes an Awkward Nod, and spitting a Large deal of Aromatic Tincture, he gave a scrape with his shovel-like shoe, leaving a small shovel full of dirt on the floor, made a full stop, Hugging his own pretty Body with his hands under his arms, Stood staring round him, like a Cat let out of a Basket. At last, like the creature Balaam Rode on,² he opened his mouth and said: have You any Ribbon for Hatbands to sell, I pray? The Questions and Answers about the pay being past, the Ribbon is brought and opened. Bumpkin Simpners, cries its confounded Gay, I vow; and beckoning to the door, in comes Joan Tawdry, dropping about 50 curtseys and stands by him: he shows her the Ribbon. *Law, You,* says she, *it's right, Gent,* do You, take it, *tis dreadful pretty.* Then she inquires, *have You any hood silk, I pray?* which being brought and bought, Have You any *thread silk to sew it with,* says she, which being accommodated with, they Departed. They Generally stand after they come in, a great while speechless, and sometimes don't say a word till they are asked what they want, which I Impute to the Awe they stand in of the merchants, who they are constantly almost Indebted to; and must take what they bring without Liberty to choose for themselves; but they serve them as well, making the merchants stay long enough for their pay.

We may Observe here the great necessity and benefit both of Education and Conversation; for these people have as Large a portion of mother wit, and sometimes a Larger, than those who have been brought up in Cities; But for want of improvements, Render themselves almost Ridiculous, as above. I should be glad if they would leave such follies, and am sure all that Love Clean Houses (at least) would be glad about it too.

They are generally very plain in their dress, throughout all the Colony, as I saw, and follow one another in their modes [fashions]; that You may know where they belong, especially the women, meet them where you will.

Their Chief Red Letter day is St. Election, which is annually Observed according to Charter, to choose their Governor: a blessing they can never be thankful enough for, as they will find, if ever it be their hard fortune to loose it. The present Governor in Connecticut is the Honorable John Winthrop, Esq. [Esquire, i.e., gentleman], A Gentleman of an Ancient and Honorable Family, whose Father was Governor here sometime before, and his Grandfather had been Governor of the Massachusetts. This gentleman is a very courteous and affable person, much Given to Hospitality, and has by his Good services Gained the affections of the people as much as any who had been before him in that post.

¹ *Lex Mercatoria* (Latin): Law Merchant, the rules of commerce devised by medieval merchants in Europe.

² Balaam: the donkey, capable of speech, on which the prophet Balaam rode; in the Old Testament book of Numbers.

After concluding her family business in New York, Knight again travels through Connecticut on her return journey to Boston.

Having here transacted the affair I went upon and some other that fell in the way, after about a fortnight's stay [two weeks] there I left New-York with no Little regret, and Thursday, Dec. 21, set out for New Haven [Connecticut] with my Kinsman [relative] Trowbridge, and the man that waited on me about one afternoon, and about three come to half-way house about ten miles out of town, where we Baited [fed the horses] and went forward, and about 5 come to Spitting Devil, Else Kings bridge, where they pay three pence for passing over with a horse, which the man that keeps the Gate set up at the end of the Bridge receives.

We hoped to reach the French town and Lodge there that night, but unhappily lost our way about four miles short, and being overtaken by a great storm of wind and snow which set full in our faces about dark, we were very uneasy. But meeting one Gardner who lived in a Cottage thereabout, offered us his fire to set by, having but one poor Bed, and his wife not well, &c. or he would go to a House with us, where he thought we might be better accommodated — thither we went, But a surly old shoe Creature, not worthy the name of woman, who would hardly let us go into her Door, though the weather was so stormy none but she would have turned out a Dog. But her son whose name was gallop, who lived just by Invited us to his house and showed me two pair of stairs, viz. one up the loft and t'other up the Bed, which was as hard as it was high, and warmed it with a hot stone at the feet. I lay very uncomfortably, insomuch that I was so very cold and sick I was forced to call them up to give me something to warm me. They had nothing but milk in the house, which they Boiled, and to make it better sweetened with molasses, which I not knowing or thinking of it till it was down and coming up again which it did in so plentiful a manner that my host was soon paid double for his portion, and that in specie. But I believe it did me service in Clearing my stomach.

So after this sick and weary night at Eastchester (a very miserable poor place), the weather being now fair, Friday the 22d Dec. we set out for New Rochelle, where being come we had good Entertainment and Recruited ourselves very well. This is a very pretty place, well compact, and good handsome houses, Clean, good and passable Roads, and situated on a Navigable River, abundance of land well fined and Cleared all along as we passed, which caused in me a Love to the place, which I could have been content to live in it. Here we Rode over a Bridge made of one entire stone of such a Breadth that a cart might pass with safety, and to spare — it lay over a passage cut through a Rock to convey water to a mill not far off. Here are three fine Taverns within call of each other, very good provision for Travellers.

Thence we travelled through Merrimack, a neat, though little place, with a navigable River before it, one of the pleasantest I ever seen — Here were good Buildings, Especially one, a very fine seat, which they told me was Col. Heathcoat's, who I had heard was a very fine Gentleman.

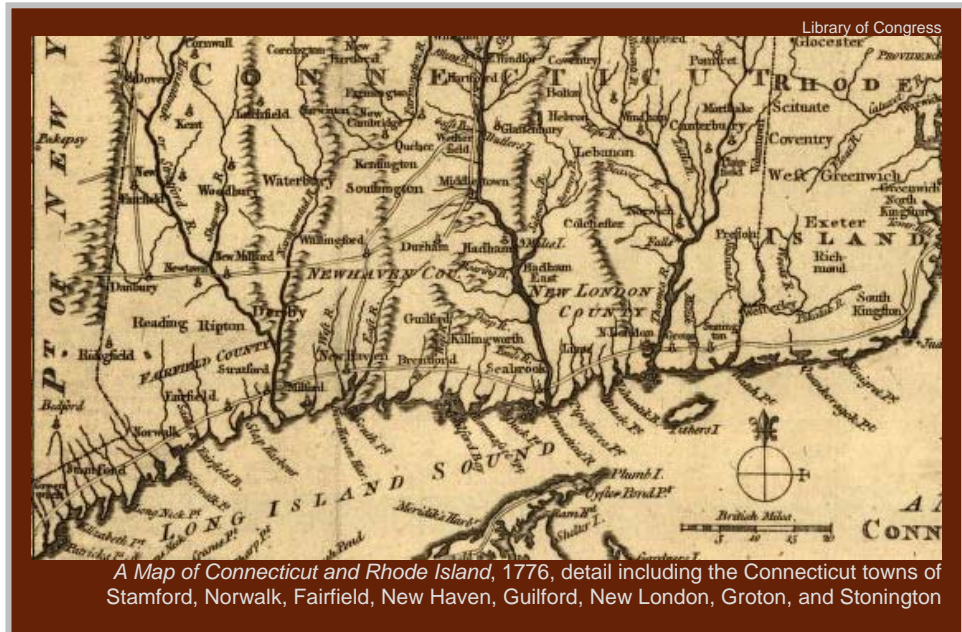
From hence we come to Horseneck, where we Baited [fed the horses] and they told me that one Church of England parson officiated in all these three towns once every Sunday in turns throughout the Year; and that they all could but poorly maintain [tolerate] him, which they begrudged to do, being a poor and quarrelsome crew as I understand by our Host; their Quarreling about their choice of Minister, they chose to have none — But caused the Government to send this Gentleman to them.

Here we took leave of York Government, and Descending the Mountainous passage that almost broke my heart in ascending before, we come to Stamford, a well compact Town, but miserable meeting house [church], which we passed, and through many and great difficulties, as Bridges which were exceeding high and very tottering and of vast Length, steep and Rocky Hills and precipices (Bugbears to a fearful female traveller).

About nine at night we come to Norwalk, having crept over a timber of a Broken Bridge about thirty foot long, and perhaps fifty to the water. I was exceeding tired and cold when we come to our Inn, and could get nothing there but poor entertainment, and the impertinent Babble of one of the worst of men, among

many others of which our Host made one, who, had he been one degree more Impudent, would have outdone his Grandfather. And this I think is the most perplexed night I have yet had. From hence, Saturday, Dec. 23, a very cold and windy day, after an Intolerable night's Lodging, we hasted forward, only observing in our way the Town to be situated on a Navigable river with indifferent Buildings and people more refined than in some of the Country towns we had passed, though vicious enough, the Church and Tavern being next neighbors.

Having Ridden through a difficult River we come to Fairfield where we Baited and were much refreshed as well with the Good things which gratified our appetites as the time took to rest our wearied Limbs, which Later I employed in inquiring concerning the Town and manners of the people, &c. This is a considerable town and filled, as they say, with wealthy people



A Map of Connecticut and Rhode Island, 1776, detail including the Connecticut towns of Stamford, Norwalk, Fairfield, New Haven, Guilford, New London, Groton, and Stonington

— have a spacious meeting house and good Buildings. But the Inhabitants are Litigious, nor do they well agree with their minister who (they say) is a very worthy Gentleman. They have abundance of sheep, whose very Dung brings them great gain [profit], with part of which they pay their Parson's salary, And they Begrudge that, preferring their Dung before their minister. They Let out their sheep at so much as they agree upon for a night; the highest Bidder always carries them, And they will sufficiently Dung a Large quantity of Land before morning. But were once Bit by a sharper who had them a night and sheared them all before morning —

From hence we went to Stamford, the next Town, in which I observed but few houses, and those not very good ones. But the people that I conversed with were civil and good natured. Here we stayed till late at night, being to cross a Dangerous River ferry, the River at that time full of Ice; but after about four hours waiting with great difficulty we got over. My fears and fatigues prevented my here taking any particular observation. Being got to Milford, it being late in the night, I could go no further; my fellow traveller going forward, I was invited to Lodge at Mrs. —, a very kind and civil Gentlewoman, by whom I was handsomely and kindly entertained till the next night. The people here go very plain in their apparel (more plain than I had observed in the towns I had passed) and seem to be very grave and serious. They told me there was a singing Quaker lived there, or at least had a strong inclination to be so, His Spouse not at all affected that way. Some of the singing Crew come there one day to visit him, who being then abroad, they sat down (to the woman's no small vexation) Humming and singing and groaning after their conjuring way — Says the woman are you singing Quakers? Yea, says They — Then take my squalling Brat of a child here and sing to it, says she, for I have almost split my throat with singing to him and can't get the Rogue to sleep. They took this as a great Indignity and immediately departed. Shaking the dust from their Heels, [they] left the good woman and her Child among the number of the wicked.

This is a Seaport place and accommodated with a Good Harbor, But I had not opportunity to make particular observations because it was Sabbath day — This Evening.

DECEMBER 24TH [1704]. I set out with the Gentlewoman's son who she very civilly offered to go with me when she sees no persuasions would cause me to stay which she pressingly desired, and crossing a ferry having but nine miles to New Haven, in a short time arrived there and was Kindly received and well accommodated amongst my Friends and Relations.

The Government of Connecticut Colony begins westward towards York at Stanford (as I am told) and so runs Eastward towards Boston (I mean in my range, because I don't intend to extend my description beyond my own travels) and ends that way at Stonington — And has a great many Large towns lying more northerly. It is a plentiful Country for provisions of all sorts and it's Generally Healthy. No one that can and will be diligent in this place need fear poverty nor the want of food and Raiment [clothing].

JANUARY 6TH [1705] . . . We went from New Haven upon the ice (the ferry being not passable thereby), and the Rev. Mr. Pierpont with Madame Prout Cuzin Trowbridge and diverse others were taking leave, we went onward without anything Remarkable till we come to New London and Lodged again at Mr. Saltonstall's — and here I dismissed my Guide, and my Generous entertainer provided me Mr. Samuel Rogers of that place to go home with me — I stayed a day here Longer than I intended by the Commands of the Honorable Governor Winthrop to stay and take a supper with him whose wonderful civility I may not omit [mentioning].

The next morning I Crossed the Ferry to Groton, having had the Honor of the Company of Madame Livingston (who is the Governor's Daughter) and Mary Christophers and diverse others to the boat — And that night Lodged at Stonington and had Roast Beef and pumpkin sauce for supper. The next night at Haven's and had Roast fowl, and the next day we come to a river which by Reason of the Freshets [water swells after heavy rains] coming down was swelled so high we feared it impassable and the rapid stream was very terrifying — However we must over and that in a small Canoe. Mr. Rogers assuring me of his good Conduct, I, after a stay of near an hour on the shore for consultation, went into the Canoe, and Mr. Rogers paddled about 100 yards up the Creek by the shore side, turned into the swift stream and dexterously steering her in a moment we come to the other side, as swiftly passing as an arrow shot out of the Bow by a strong arm. I stayed on the shore till He returned to fetch our horses, which he caused to swim over, himself bringing the furniture in the Canoe. But it is past my skill to express the Exceeding fright all their transactions formed in me.

We were now in the colony of the Massachusetts and taking Lodgings at the first Inn we come to, had a pretty difficult passage the next day, which was the second of March, by reason of the sloughy ways then thawed by the Sun. Here I met Capt. John Richards of Boston who was going home. So being very glad of his Company we Rode something harder than hitherto, and missing my way in going up a very steep Hill, my horse dropped down under me as Dead; this new surprise no little hurt me, meeting it just at the Entrance into Dedham from whence we intended to reach home that night. But was now obliged to get another Horse there and leave my own, resolving for Boston that night if possible. But in going over the Causeway at Dedham the Bridge being overflowed by the high waters coming down I very narrowly escaped falling over into the river, Horse and all, which t'was almost a miracle I did not.

Now it grew late in the afternoon and the people having very much discouraged us about the sloughy way which they said we should find very difficult and hazardous, it so wrought on me being tired and dispirited and disappointed of my desires of going home that I agreed to Lodge there that night which we did at the house of one Draper, and the next day being March 3d we got safe home to Boston, where I found my aged and tender mother and my Dear and only Child in good health with open arms ready to receive me, and my Kind relations and friends flocking in to welcome me and hear the story of my transactions and travels, I having this day been five months from home, and now I cannot fully express my joy and Satisfaction. But desire sincerely to adore my Great Benefactor for thus graciously carrying forth and returning in safety his unworthy handmaid.