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The Groton Indian Raid of 1694 and Lydia Longley*

By

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*(The story of Lydia Longley was first popularized by Helen A. McCarthy Sawyer of Groton, Massachusetts. Curiosity aroused this school teacher and history devotee when she became puzzled to read in Samuel Green's local history that the Indian captive Lydia had been "placed" in a Canadian convent. As a result of meticulous research, Mrs. Sawyer privately published a charming, illustrated children's account in 1958 called *Lydia Longley: The First American Nun* (190 pages). The success of this monograph justified a reprint in 1983. I am grateful to the author for having introduced me in the 1970s to this fascinating story. According to a Montreal professor, William A. Styles in *The Sign of November*, 1936, the first nun of birth in the future United States was captive Mary Anne Davis, who became an Ursuline. The author gives no date of profession to back his claim, while the reliable Emma Lewis Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada 1677-1760* (Portland, Maine: 1925), 2 vols., records 1701 as the year of the Davis profession of vows.)

A little over 300 years ago, shrieking war cries and flying tomahawks shattered the summer calm in a frontier town of the Massachusetts Province. At the time, France was still ruling Canada prior to 1763 as French Catholics and English Protestants contended in a bitter struggle over the northeastern corner of the future United States. The 1694 Indian raid on the village of Groton numbered among its victims the Longley household, thereby forever altering the survivors' fate.

The King Philip's War of 1675-1676 had crippled Indian power in the Northeast. In terms of revisionist historian James D. Drake, this "civil war" uprooted the incipient "covalent society" of English settlers and aborigines.¹ Yet the struggle further ignited a series of shorter violent episodes called King William's War of 1690-1699 that included the Groton assault. Writing eight decades later, one author observed that "... the people were yet contending with the natives for possession of the soil, and the ground was wet with blood of the slain, and the war cry was ringing in the forests of Maine..." whence the Groton assailants were to originate.²

The first settlers of 1655 erected frame houses with thatched roofs, as well as several garrisons to house a few soldiers and to serve as shelter in case of Indian attack. A stockade provided protection for both people and animals. The fertile fields, sparkling rivers and game-rich woods furnished a bountiful supply of food. In no time, these pioneers were planting and harvesting "Indian corn," barley, oats, potatoes, rye, and growing abundant meadows for hay.³

Lydia Longley's grandfather, William Longley,⁴ with his wife and children, had come by wagon to Groton in 1663 from the ocean shores of Lynn where he had held a variety of public offices. He quickly established himself on a farm purchased on June 17, using money from the sale of property in Lynn.

The hardy Longleys engaged in a challenging life, unmolested by Indians until the widespread violence of King Philip's War. By February of 1676 marauders braved the winter snows to strike more frontier towns, repeating a raid on nearby Lancaster that netted among its captives the celebrated Mary Rowlandson. Soon Groton suffered a pair of attacks on March 2 and March 13, as survivors fled for their lives to safer frontier

¹ James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 14, 30.

² John Stetson Barry, *History of Massachusetts: The Provincial Period* (Boston, 1856), 455.

³ Caleb Butler, *History of the Town of Groton* (Boston, 1848), 242-50.

⁴ For details about the Longley family, see Robert Dalton Longley, *Longley Family: Some Descendants of William Longley* (private publication, 1952), 3-5.

villages. Among the refugees were the Longleys who escaped to Charlestown on the Atlantic coast.⁵

Still, fear proved no deterrent for repatriation. Within a year, the returning Longleys joined their resilient colleagues, rebuilding Groton. In the restored village, Lydia's father, also William, married a woman named Lydia on May 5, 1672. The bride, whose maiden surname is unknown, died early in the marriage, survived by a daughter, also Lydia, who is the focus of this study.

Typical of those days, the Longleys were a large family. On the eve of the 1694 disaster, the Longley household consisted of the father, William, stepmother Deliverance, twenty-year old Lydia, twelve-year-old John, an infant Betty, and five other children whose names are not known.

Life in this Puritan household fell into a predictable pattern. Girls would learn by tutoring, or through lessons gained outside the farming season of planting, growing, and harvesting. No doubt, according to their age, all the children shared in chores such as milking cows, feeding pigs, tending sheep, weeding gardens, and minding younger siblings on the large Longley farm of thirty acres that included a large corn field. Some formal schooling was the lot of the boys. A ruling of the General Court issued in 1642 demanded a teacher for each town of fifty or more households. In 1660 Benjamin Harris wrote his handbook, *The New England Primer*, intended to inculcate virtues in little schoolboys. Most likely the Longley children had access to this primer in their one-room schoolhouse.

Sunday worship occupied much of the Lord's Day, given the lengthy sermons of that era. Very likely *The Bay Psalm Book* of 1640 provided a source of prayer and singing. Since William Longley was somewhat literate (he had been a selectman), perhaps he managed to devote time to read to his offspring and encourage them in the basics of

⁵ For a contemporary account of the Groton assault, see William Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England* (1677; Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books facsimile reprint, 1990), 193-201; on the Nipmuck attackers and other New England Indians, see Steven F. Johnson, *Ninnuock (The People): The Algonkian People of New England* (Marlborough, MA: Bliss Publishing Co. Inc., 1992), 187 and passim.

learning. Whatever the parents were able to instill in their children prepared them for the tragedy that lay ahead.⁶

The colonists' triumph over the Indians in King Philip's War scattered the surviving foes to the outskirts of western Massachusetts, upstate New York, Pennsylvania, and into Canada, with some later relocating even further west. The remaining natives of New England were left impotent, but not entirely so. The English still had to reckon with the determined Abenaki tribes in the north, and the yet unvanquished, perennial French enemy in Canada. In an effort to protect themselves, the colonists erected a string of forts along the Maine coast to guard the frontier towns of Falmouth, Kittery, Scarborough, York, and Wells – all of which were settled by 1665. A successful attack on Fort Pemaquid was to embolden the Abenaki warriors. Meanwhile, the French had survived the naval incursions of Sir William Phips from Massachusetts in the early 1690s. In the face of Abenaki bravado and French stubborn resistance, the renowned divinity figure Cotton Mather was to utter his uncompromising cry: "*Canada delenta est.*" (translated as "Canada must be destroyed.")⁷

Here a word about the Abenakis is in order. These aborigines had been long-suffering. Imported diseases annihilated thousands of them in plagues of 1617 and 1633-1634. Such a memory haunted the natives for decades to come. In the eyes of the Protestant Francis Parkman, this "nimble enemy," "swift and intangible" sought revenge in many a "petty, secret, and transient attack" by "dodging scouting parties, pouncing on victims, and escaping." The Catholic John Gilmary Shea saw these natives in another light. He admitted that the Abenakis were "distinguished as warriors," but glowingly asserted that "they never were

⁶ For more observations on the Longley household, see the masterful, painstakingly researched dissertation of William Foster, "The Captors' Narrative: Captive Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early North American Frontier, 1653-1760," (Cornell University, 1999), 72-75.

⁷ Henry D. Dunnack, *Maine Forts* (Augusta, Maine: 1924); Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America* (Library of America reprint, 1983), Vol. II, 172-191, describes the Phips ventures as well as other attacks on Canada.

charged with cruelty, while a certain purity of morals and amenity of manners raised them above most of the surrounding tribes.”⁸

Their priest mentors were on hand to bless the warriors, and prayerfully accompany their rallies. The missionaries did seek to inculcate “mercy in war as well as every other Christian virtue,” according to John Gilmary Shea. All the same, when it came to territorial quarrels between the French and English, “...the Abenakis, attached to the former by a common faith, and former acts of kindness and good-will, were embittered against the latter wrongs and oppression sustained at their hands.” Similarly, alongside clergy pastoral fervor for souls, the missionaries zealously adhered to their French allegiance. For the natives, loyalty to the black-robed missionaries was an Abenaki characteristic. Ever loyal and faithful to their beloved blackrobe, Fr. Gabriel Druillette, they proclaimed: “Know that he is now of our nation...we respect him as the ambassador of Jesus. Whoever attacks him, attacks all the Abnaki tribe.”⁹

On May 31, 1695, Hezekiah Miles, also known as the friendly Indian named Hector, would give a deposition in Boston in the presence of the Lieutenant-Governor and the Council. According to his testimony, the scheme for the Groton raid of July 1694 was hatched at the Indian Fort Amsaquonte, north of Norridgewock in the heart of Maine. By the 1640s, this locale had become the principal Abenaki village. Leaders such as Egeermet, Bomaseen, Warumbee and Ahasombamet joined in the deliberations for a strike on Oyster River (present-day Dover) in New Hampshire territory and then Groton. Days later the same witness was to

⁸ Parkman, *ibid.*, Vol. II, 402, 269-271; John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529-1854* (1854), 129, 142-144; Shea devotes three chapters to the Abenakis, 129-162, but is curiously silent about their 1694 raid on Groton; two-hundred-forty years later, only the Penobscots and Passamaquoddies survived in reservations at Old Town, Eastport, and Princeton. See *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'* -- Federal Writers Project of the WPA for the State of Maine, 1937, 24. For Parkman's view of the Catholic clergy, see Vol. 2, 269-271; for details of their missionary work see Lord, Sexton & Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston* (Boston, 1945), Vol. 1, 38-63.

⁹ Shea, *ibid.*, 141-143. On Abenakis, see e.g., Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996) Vol. 15, 1-2; also, Steven F. Johnson, *Ninnuock*, *passim*.

view the victors' return, laden with plunder, some scalps and two hostages. Prior to the expedition, several days of merry-making took place, featuring a feast of boiled dogs.¹⁰

Abenakis struck the first target on July 18, 1694. The Jesuit Jacques Bigot and Sulpician Louis Thury accompanied the Indians. Some ninety inhabitants were killed or captured. The attackers then continued overland directly southwest to Groton spanning some seventy miles. One surmises that the raiding party engaged in a three-day march for the forty fleet-footed Abenaki, led by their Chief Taxous. Very likely the Abenakis paddled along the Merrimac River for a stretch of the expedition. The party numbered braves from the Penobscot and Kennebec tribes. Evidently they reached the outskirts of Groton in the waning hours of 25 July in that ill-fated year of 1694. The brief but bloody assault took place early dawn the next day.

Oral tradition relates that the attackers released the Longley cattle from their enclosure into a cornfield, setting up an ambush. The unarmed father raced out to retrieve the straying cows. William and Deliverance Longley were slain, as were several adult children -- five according to tradition. Hastily excavated graves on the property swallowed up their mutilated corpses.

Taken as captives were an infant Betty, twelve-year-old John, and twenty-year-old, Lydia. During the flight, the baby died of exposure. Her remains lie buried in an unmarked grave somewhere north of Groton, in either Massachusetts or New Hampshire.¹¹

As to the fate of Lydia and John, an Oyster River captive, Ann Jenkins, offers a clue. In her statement on June 11, 1695, the Jenkins woman testified that she, along with nine others, were confined to the village of Penacook to be kept under guard. The raiding party proceeded to Groton, returning after nine days with twelve Groton hostages, including siblings Lydia and John. The Indians then took all twenty-one

¹⁰ Samuel A. Green, *Groton During the Indian Wars* (Groton, 1883), 72-73.

¹¹ Green, *ibid.*, 72-76; Butler, 93-94; Lord, Sexton & Harrington, Vol. 1, 58-61, mention clergy involvement but are silent about the captives; the earliest account of the Groton raid is given briefly by Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702; reproduction from 1852 edition, Russell & Russell, Division of Atheneum House, Inc., 2 vols.), Vol. 2, 627, though Mather was unaware of the Longley tragedy.

by canoe and overland northward to Norridgewock, fifteen days journey. Jenkins further gave witness that the prisoners remained captive several months, split into small units, constantly on the move until the Indians finally delivered their captives to Captain March at Fort Pemaquid, except for Lydia and her brother John. From this account, it appears that they were singled out and taken to Canada.

From Norridgewock the Longleys had trekked on foot under guard. During this long ordeal, Lydia suffered horribly. In the words of John Demos, this radically new experience would have been a kind of “initiation” in a “set of cultural lessons.” He further ruminates:

Certainly the captives knew pain: the assault on their homes, and the loss of their loved ones, and the rigors of the “march” that followed. The march, indeed, was a kind of torture, which they must somehow endure or die. And if they endured, they saw vivid instances of the Indians’ commitment to equality and sharing. Food was scrupulously divided, even in periods of extreme scarcity.¹²

At the end of the trail, the Longleys found themselves at an exchange mart in Ville Marie (Montreal). Evidently there was a committee (vaguely described as “*les Francais de Montreal*”) that facilitated such exchanges, recruiting suitable recipients. In the case of Lydia, “...*placee sous la protection de la famille Le Ber.*” While John was whisked away to an Indian village, Lydia’s captors traded their booty for ransom from her benefactor, Jacques Le Ber. This wealthy fur merchant then took the weary captive to his home in Montreal.

Parkman records a few fragments about the Frenchman. Le Ber was known in Montreal as “one the principal merchants and most influential inhabitants of the settlement...” He and his wife sold goods to whites and Indians alike. In a dispute over control of fur commerce, he had become an avowed enemy of La Salle. To enhance his rank, the

¹² Coleman, Vol. 1, 269, 261-265; John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 1151.

ambitious entrepreneur bought himself the prestigious title of *gentilehomme*.¹³

Le Ber's business pursuits did not interfere with the religious ambience of his home. Indeed, it was here that the extraordinary religious calling of his favorite daughter Jeanne germinated. She did not choose any of the three extant communities on hand in Montreal -- neither the Ursuline Sisters, Sisters of Hotel Dieu, or the Congregation of Notre Dame. She forsook her suitors and renounced the comforts of her family home. Instead, Jeanne chose to live in the Notre Dame convent as a recluse behind the chapel altar. Before she entered the enclosure, Lydia and Jeanne had occasion for a brief time to become acquainted, exposing the ransomed young woman to intense religious dedication.¹⁴

A priest in Montreal who spoke English, which was a rarity, eased Lydia's adaptation to new surroundings. Fr. Henri-Antoine Meriel was an invaluable link with many captives, instructing and baptizing as many as thirty-four of them. This Sulpician priest was pastor of the Notre Dame parish, chaplain at Hotel Dieu, and also director and confessor for the pupils in the care of the Sisters of the Congregation.¹⁵

While Lydia was adjusting to her French Catholic environment, her surviving townspeople learned of her safety over a year after the Indian raid. Lydia's name first appeared on a prisoner list of October, 1695, surviving in the state archives. Lydia, listed as "Lidey Langly," was

¹³ Green, *ibid.*, 73; Coleman, Vol. 2, 419; Parkman, Vol. 1, 786, 789, 1282-1283; *Histoire de la Congregation de Notre Dame de Montreal*, Vol. IV (Montreal, 1941), 405; Foster, 78-79, recreates the scene at the prisoner exchange; Arthur J. Riley, *Catholicism in New England to 1788* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1936) furnishes invaluable tables in Appendix E, 346-371, about captives taken to Canada during the French and Indian Wars. Lydia was one of sixteen such Groton residents. Five of her townspeople would become Catholics.

¹⁴ For details about Jeanne's life, see Parkman, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, 1350-1353, drawn from Faillon, *L'Heroine chretienne du Canada, ou Vie del Mlle. Le Ber*. Foster, 80-87, reflects on Lydia's life in the Le Ber household and Jeanne's tie with Lydia.

¹⁵ For the names of those baptized by Meriel, see Riley, 364; Foster discusses other household members and their relationship with Lydia, 89-90; in her two volumes, Coleman offers a dozen references to Meriel.

among forty-two “remaining still in hands of the French at Canada.” Lydia was the sole Groton resident on this roster, alongside Oyster River captives. The rest were from other New Hampshire and Maine villages. Thus, not until fifteen months after the Groton assault did Lydia’s neighbors gain confirmation of her survival and whereabouts.¹⁶

At this time, Lydia had no knowledge of sibling John’s fate. Lydia harbored only the lingering nightmarish horror of the death of her parents and other siblings. Nevertheless, her grief was considerably assuaged by this time. A whole new world had opened up for her in Montreal. She had been living in surroundings of elegance, in sharp contrast to the drab Groton household of her upbringing. She soon learned to speak French. For the first time in her life, she was exposed to the elaborate Catholic ritual of the Latin Mass. How different it must have seemed, unlike the reputed “idolatrous” ceremony, alleged in a sermon, remarks of her parents, or in a catechism.

Soon Lydia voiced an interest in learning about the Catholic faith, much to the delight of the Le Ber family. Accordingly, on March 24, 1696, her benefactor confided Lydia to a tutor, Marguerite Bourgeoys, dynamic foundress of the Congregation de Notre Dame.¹⁷

The instructions must have served as a review and clarification about the Catholic faith that Lydia had already learned about in the Le Ber family. Only a month later on April 24, in under two years since her kidnapping, Father M. Caille poured the waters of Baptism on Lydia’s forehead. As an infant, Lydia would have been baptized at the local Groton house of worship. Yet, given the mutual, bitter Catholic-Protestant enmity of the times, Lydia’s Protestant Baptism might have been questionable, in contrast to the accepting ecumenical policies of nowadays. Accordingly she was baptized anew.

¹⁶ Coleman, Vol. 1, 75-76.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1911) Vol. XI, 1127-1128; Simone Poissant, *Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700)*, transl., Frances Kirwan (Montreal: les Editions Bellarmin, 1982); Patricia Simpson, *Marguerite Bourgeoys and Montreal, 1690-1665* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); Maryann Foley, “Uncloistered Apostolic Life for Women: Marguerite Bourgeoys’ Experiment in Ville-Maire,” *U. S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 10, Numbers 1 & 2 (1989), 37-44.

Her rescuer, Jacques Le Ber, served as godfather, and a marine captains' wife, Madame Marie Madeleine Dupont, was the godmother. The former Groton resident was baptized as Lydia Madeleine, retaining her original baptismal name. The choice of her second name suggests an affectionate bond that had arisen between her and her godmother. At the time of the Baptism, Lydia had already been living in the convent of the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame where her future lay. Apparently she had taken up residence as an "aspirant." The Baptism took place in the convent chapel, sanctioned by the bishop of Quebec, Messire Francois. One researcher speculates that the congregation foundress, Marguerite Bourgeoys, witnessed the ceremony. The location for the christening required episcopal consent, since the usual site would be the nearby parish church. The reason seems to have hinged on Jacques Le Ber's daughter, Jeanne.

Recall that she felt summoned to the life of a recluse. At the time of Lydia's baptism, Jeanne was housed in an isolated cell in the rear of the chapel altar. Since Lydia and Jeanne were of similar age, living in the same household earlier for many months, the tie between them must have ripened into a sisterly spiritual bond. Jeanne's asceticism did not preclude a desire for the joy of witnessing Lydia's welcome to the Catholic faith, or at least hearing the baptismal vows if Jeanne remained out of sight in her enclosure.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Lydia's grandmother Crispe had died, unaware of her granddaughter's fate. In the Crispe will of April 13, 1698 (probated December 28, 1698), the elderly woman left a book to each of her three captive grandchildren. If they were to return to freedom, they would receive a bible, sermon book, and psalm book, respectively. Historian Samuel Green discloses his dark view of Catholicism in a biting remark about Grandmother Crispe's ignorance of Lydia becoming a Catholic. Had Mrs. Crispe learned of this, "knowledge of this fact would have

¹⁸ Green, 75-79; Coleman, Vol. 1, 285-86; Riley, 363, indicates that Le Ber was also godfather for other captives: Deborah Cole and Grizet Warren. Riley tabulated a grand total of 1,196 captives from 1677 to 1767; 250 of whom became Catholics, 348, 349-358. Though Lydia was baptized outright, many captives were christened only conditionally ("*sous condition*") as records indicate.

been an affliction scarcely less than the massacre of her daughter's family."¹⁹

In contrast, the grandmother would have been much relieved and overjoyed had she lived to see her grandson, John. Born on January 6, 1680, he spent part of his exile in an Indian colony in Canada. Later, as a captive Indian's servant boy, he experienced life in a Penobscot village during his formative mid-teen adolescence. He had survived near starvation in his early days of captivity until a kindly Indian handed him a dog's foot to chew, overcoming extreme hunger. Eventually, though, teenager John had become attached to his outdoor adventurous life of fishing and hunting as an adopted Indian, known as John Augry. When a prisoner exchange provided him with a chance to return to his native Groton, his relatives had to come to take him by force back to his birthplace. When Lydia learned of her brother's return to Groton, she wrote to him in vain, encouraging him to forsake his Protestant religion to embrace the Catholic faith.²⁰

Back in Groton, John soon readapted to colonial living. He became Town Clerk from March, 1723 to 1726, and again from March, 1728 to 1729; he also functioned as Town Treasurer and church treasurer, and as a deacon for his church from 1722 to his death in 1750 at the age of sixty-seven. His legacy included nine sons and three daughters; five by his first wife, Sarah Prescott, who died on March 8, 1713, and seven with another wife, Deborah Houghton. His son, Joseph (born on September 12, 1724) was to become a fatality at Greenbush, New York, in 1758, fighting against the French. At least fifteen Longleys were to become soldiers in the Revolutionary War.

John must have retained an affection for his sister, for he did not hesitate to give the name Lydia to one of his daughters, born on June 26, 1716. It is not clear if, by this time, he knew of the fate of his sister, now removed by distance and lost to him and his Protestant faith. John's son, William, also had a daughter whom he named Lydia, born on December 31, 1743. The name Lydia appeared periodically among the Longley heirs. Possibly this choice was made to memorialize what the Protestant

¹⁹ Green, 75-76.

²⁰ Ibid., 76; Coleman, Vol. 1, 91-92.

mind would have perceived as the dreadful involuntary lot of becoming a Catholic and a nun, or as Green put it: “being placed in a convent.”²¹

Returning to Lydia, one notes that in the course of her lessons in the Catholic faith, yet another entirely hitherto unknown world dawned on her -- the dedicated life of a religious woman. Besides the three cloistered religious communities of women in Montreal, Lydia had become acquainted with another community. In France, Marguerite Bourgeoys, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame, had come to Montreal in 1653, where she began to teach and perform charitable works, adding more recruits gained in return visits to her homeland. Marguerite opted for a non-cloister rule with simple vows. Soon her Sisters opened missions to teach Indian girls, gaining clergy attention by their reputation for success. This more active life appealed to Lydia. She entered the novitiate soon after her baptism and pronounced her final vows on September 19, 1699.²²

Through the next decade, the fact that Lydia was now a Catholic and worse yet, Sister Lydia Madeleine still remained unknown to Massachusetts authorities and former townspeople. Her name as a captive appeared a second time on a 1710 “Roll of English Prisoners in the hands of the French & Indians at Canada.” The roster named fifty-six kidnapped persons. This tally embraced eleven Oyster River inhabitants and four other Groton residents, including Lydia’s cousins: John, Sarah, and Zechariah Tarbell. During negotiations over a prisoner exchange, English officials handed over this list to the French intermediary, Rigaud de Vaudreuil. What grief there would have been back home if anyone could ever imagine that Lydia by this time was completing her first decade under religious vows.²³

Eventually Mother Bourgeoys’ community instructed over 40,000 children at the hands of more than 3,000 Sisters. Their apostolate

²¹ Samuel Abbot Green, M.D., *Groton Historical Series: A Collection of Papers Relating to the History of the Town of Groton, Massachusetts* (Groton, 1887), Vol. III, 244-246; Butler, 279, 417.

²² See Foster’s reflections on the appeal of religious life to the Puritan Lydia, 91-93.

²³ Coleman, Vol. 1, 91-92; 17, 294. Sarah’s younger brothers: John and Zechariah, lived in Indian villages where they absorbed their Catholic Indian surroundings and eventually married Indian women.

included a domestic arts school. This “*La Providence*” program, the first of its kind in Canada, numbered some English captives. Among them was Lydia’s cousin Sarah, kidnapped in Groton on June 20, 1707. The ransomed Sarah was delivered to the Sisters at La Chine and was baptized a Catholic at age fifteen. Lydia would surely have visited her cousin and possibly instructed her at the Notre Dame School.²⁴

Fragments of information about Lydia’s further life have survived. We catch sight of her several decades later. She was then residing at the Holy Family Convent on the Island of Orleans outside Quebec. On April 17, 1733, she became godmother to a child of a Judge Premont. This honor suggests that Sister Lydia was convent superior of wide repute.

Another Indian hostage, Mary Sayward of Dover, New Hampshire, also became a Sister of the Congregation of Notre Dame. This counterpart of Lydia pronounced her vows about 1699, the same year as did Lydia. According to testimony from a Sister of the community in 1896, Mary, as Sister of the Angels, was assigned to Quebec as a mark of “great esteem,” among religious women “distinguished by the virtues of courage and prudence.” The testimonial adds: “I am proud to tell you that this honor was shared by Lydia Longley.”

Lydia enjoyed good health that spanned more than eight full decades. She died in Montreal at the age of eighty-four on July 21, 1758. The circumstances of her demise bespeak her reputation. Not one but two priests prayed at her deathbed: Pere M. Vallieres and Pere Poncin. Lydia’s burial place also attests to the high regard in which she was held. In contrast to recourse to the local parish cemetery, she was interred in the chapel of the parish church of the Infant Jesus. This was an honor ordinarily reserved to lofty dignitaries, such as bishops.²⁵

Some reflections and speculations are appropriate in a quest to assess Lydia’s survival strength and perseverance. To begin, could she have been influenced by the Rowlandson captivity narrative, first circulated in 1682? It is highly probable that Lydia read the account, penned by her Lancaster neighbor. Three indications suggest this likelihood. First, Lancaster was only twelve miles from Groton, barely a few hours journey by wagon. News of that 1682 raid would surely have reached Groton swiftly, stirring frequent conversation for months and years to come. Second, the printed Rowlandson story spread rapidly,

²⁴ Coleman, *Ibid.*, 239; Riley, 362.

²⁵ Coleman, Vol. 1, 239, 286.

warranting a second edition within a year. Writing in 1903, editors of a reprint asserted that “No book of its period in America can boast equal evidence of enduring public favor...” By 1903 the narrative had enjoyed some thirty reprints, and even by then had become a collector’s item.²⁶ It is hard to believe that nearby Groton lacked a copy. Third, as an older and literate teenager, Lydia could hardly have escaped reading and pondering the Rowlandson testimony. In that case, what lessons could Lydia have derived from Mary?

In her brief captivity, Mary happily received a bible from a friendly Indian. Daily recourse to the scriptures and prayer helped immensely to sustain her. Her narrative shows sixty references to God, in most cases accompanied by an allusion to Sacred Scripture or an exact quotation. For Mary, God was a deity of wrath and vengeance. The misfortune of captivity was divine, retributive judgment. Thus, Mary stoically bore her misery in hope that God would relent. Supporting her concept of a gloomy God, she harvested citations chiefly from the Psalms, Deuteronomy, Job, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Her pessimism underlay her choice of selections solely from the Old Testament, with just four exceptions. Throughout her experience, she was totally conscious of divine Providence, ruling every detail of her life’s unfolding.

Doubtless, Mary Rowlandson acquired much of this sense from her clergyman-husband, Joseph. How many lives he must have shaped with the type of sermon he preached in 1678, whose text was appended to the printed version of his wife’s recollections. The eighteen-page sermon is replete with Old Testament references, with not a single allusion to the New Testament and its Christ of mercy. The very lengthy title of Rev. Rowlandson’s presentation makes his mentality so evident. The title in the attractive frontispiece reads in the original script as follows:

The Possibility of Gods Forsaking a people,
That have been visibly near & dear to him
TOGETHER, with the Misery of a People thus
forsaken, Set forth in a SERMON, preached at
Weathersfield, Nov. 21, 1678. Being a Day of
FAST and HUMILIATION.

²⁶ *The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (original, 1682; Norse & Thayer, facsimile reprint, Lancaster, Massachusetts, 1903), v-vi.

Indeed, James Drake asserts that many colonists viewed the entire King Philip's War as a divine punishment. The Longley household could hardly have been unmindful of this way of viewing God. For Lydia, the 1694 family slaughter, captivity and ransom must have fit into this mold.

Thus, a Puritan maiden, victim of a raid on her household, was soon transformed in captivity into a Roman Catholic and a nun. To her new vowed life she brought the meritorious courage and strength of her Protestant upbringing.²⁷

²⁷ Drake, 24; Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (University of California Press, 1994), discusses Protestant religious and cultural perceptions about Indian captivity in her chapter, "Rome and Her Indians," 87-98.