

Pickering and Coe Family History

A single thread can connect to the early history of an entire region, but it also makes that history vividly real. The objects once belonging to Temperance Pickering Knight (1732-1821) are tangible evidence of the security, wealth, and connections the Pickering family built from the earliest days of European settlement in what would become New Hampshire. John Pickering (about 1600-1669) emigrated to what is now Portsmouth some time in the early 1630s, earning his way as a house builder. By 1640 he was a landowner with grants from the town, steadily growing his wealth: the present-day South End area of Portsmouth was all once Pickering land, stretching from Marcy Street to the Old South Church, which stands on land gifted to the city by Pickering's eldest son, John (1645-1721). Pickering's second son, Thomas (1657-c. 1719), inherited a portion of his father's estate — 500 acres of land on Great Bay, with a homestead on the Piscataqua River along the Dover-Portsmouth road, in what is now Newington. This is where Temperance was born in 1732, the daughter of Thomas' own son, who was also named Thomas (1703-1786), and Mary Downing.

By this time the Pickerings were a wealthy and prominent family, and Temperance married well. At the time of her wedding in 1752, Portsmouth was booming with trade, and as the residence of the royal governor, Benning Wentworth, it set a fashionable tone for the region. The vital social, commercial, and political connections between Durham, Newington, and Portsmouth relied on river traffic, and Temperance's new husband, John Knight, was happy to oblige. He owned and ran Knight's Ferry between Newington and Dover Point, providing a crucial — and profitable — service to the area. All of this is evident in the clothes Temperance once wore. Her gowns made with imported silk and hand-printed cotton, her brilliantly yellow silk quilted petticoat, her bright red kidskin slippers and cardinal red cloak are not the clothes of someone in a provincial backwater, but rather those of a stylish woman of consequence connected to the wider world beyond the colony in which she lived.

The Knights had no children and when John died, Temperance returned to the Pickering homestead in Newington. Her younger brother Richard Pickering (1755-1831) now lived there with his bride, Mary "Polly" Thompson Pickering (1767-1837), and their children. Polly was born in Durham to Judge Ebenezer Thompson (1737-1802) and Mary Torr Thompson (1740-1807), a family established in the area by William Thompson (d. 1676) since at least 1656, before New Hampshire's independence from Massachusetts, when he received a land grant from Dover. William's grandson Robert (1664-1752) settled in Durham, still called Oyster River Plantation, around 1707. Robert married Abigail Emerson (1704-1757), whose own grandfather had received a land grant there in 1656. The family roots into New Hampshire's soil already ran deep and would spread far, with its members serving the state as lawmakers, elected officials, soldiers, clergy, and community-builders, even giving the University of New Hampshire its home. Polly Thompson Pickering's brother, Col. Ebenezer Thompson (1762-1828), married her husband Richard's niece, Mary Pickering (1774-1849), and their son Benjamin (1808-1890) bequeathed the family farm to what was then the New Hampshire College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts. Established in Hanover in 1866, the college moved to Durham in 1893 after Benjamin's death, and was renamed the state university in 1923. Among Richard and Polly's seven children was a daughter named after Temperance, born in 1789. "Aunt Knight" handed down furniture, silver, and the clothes that had been special to her in her youth to her favorite niece and namesake. When she married Joseph Coe, the young Temperance Pickering brought her inheritance with her. Joseph sprang from the same strong clan: his mother Anne (1761-1829) was a Thompson, Polly's sister, who had married Curtis Coe (1750-1829) in 1781. The Coe family had arrived when Robert Coe (1629-1659) emigrated to Boston at age eight, traveling with his father and step-mother, eventually settling in Connecticut. The Reverend Curtis Coe, Robert's great-great-grandfather, came to Durham to be the town's pastor. From

Temperance Pickering Knight to Temperance Pickering Coe, and on down three further generations, these were the cherished clothes and accessories that mattered enough to care for, and eventually to bequeath to the Bowen Collection:

- **Museum Number 47a,b** is a c. 1750-1770 robe à l'anglaise made of ivory silk damask.
- **Museum Number 117a,b** is a c. 1770 robe à l'anglaise made of block-printed cotton.
- **Museum Number 58** is a c. 1750-1800 woman's red wool cloak.
- **Museum Number 69** is an 18th century quilted petticoat made of yellow silk.
- **Museum Number 439** is a pair of 1780-1790 red kidskin shoes with white kidskin accents.
- **Museum Number 440** is a pair of c. 1760-1790 ivory damask pattens.
- **Museum Number 475** is a pair of c. 1780-1790 brown linen stays.
- **Museum Number 404** is the only item not belonging to Temperance herself, but rather to her husband, John Knight: an embroidered man's wallet.

The gift was made on January 21, 1949 by the sisters Janet Coe Stearns, Margaret Coe Ninde, and Anne Coe Curry, and their sister-in-law, Sarah Crapo Tappan Coe, widow of their brother Richard.

The Coe family's continued strong ties to Durham and their gift of Temperance's bequest made the University a natural choice when gifts worn by more recent members were made:

- **Museum Number 77** is a c. 1906 gray silk crepe Aesthetic movement style dress from Liberty of London, worn by the donor, Sarah Crapo Tappan Coe (1873-1961). She likely purchased it during a trip to Europe that year, ahead of her marriage to Richard E. Coe (1866-1934), Temperance Pickering Knight's great-great-great-grandnephew.
- **Museum Number 1995.2** is the wedding vest worn by Richard on March 26, 1907, when he and Sarah married in Durham at the Coe family house, The Pines. Gift of their daughter, Serena Paine Hurlbert, who spent summers there before settling in Durham herself.
- **Museum Number 2019.2.a,b,c,d** is Sarah's wedding dress, worn March 26, 1907 to her Durham wedding to Richard. Gift of Sally Ford, granddaughter of Richard and Sarah Coe.

The family story continues.