

Bathsheba Spooner

1778 March 4 (Wednesday). *Fay (Jonathan)* was here p.m. when the storm was over. He relates a fresh Story of a *horrible Murder*. One Mr. *Spooner* was murdered by two soldiers lately, at *Brookfield*. He was knocked down and thrown into a Well. Tis said they were hired by his Wife, who is a Daughter of Brigadier *Ruggles*.

1778 April 23 (Thursday). I rode up to *Worcester* [torn] to [torn] the Tryal of the Murderers of the late Mr. [torn]hua [torn]pooner. Was very kindly received by Mr. *Richard Pratt* and his Wife. The criminals (Viz. *William Brooks, James Buchannan, Ezra Ross* and *Bathsheba Spooner* but *Dux Femina Facti*) were arraigned in the Afternoon; and then remanded to Jayl.

1778 April 24 (Friday). Attended the Tryal. It was at the Meeting House between 8 and 9 a.m. A great Throng! A most sad Sight! Many Evidences were Sworn. Three were brought from Jayl, who were made use of as Witnesses. Namely, the widow *Stretton* and her son, and *Alexander Cummings*, a Scottish Youth, who deserting from *Burgoyne's Army*, lived in Mr. *Spooner's* House. The Court continued till past Midnight, during all which time I continued at my Seat in the Meeting House. The Court was adjourned to 8 o'Clock next morning.

1778 April 25 (Saturday). In the Morning repaired again to the Court (which sat at the Meeting House). The Criminals were brought. The Jury brought in their Verdict, *Guilty!* Upon which the awful and Shocking *Sentence of Death* was pronounced -- and they were remanded to Jayl.

1778 June 6 (Saturday). I rode to Mr. *Nathan Goddards* (in compliance with Mr. *Maccartys* Request) to let him know I was going to *Worcester*. Dined at Mr. *Sumners*. Proceeded to Visit the Prisoners. *James Buchannan, William Brooks, Ezra Ross, and Bathsheba Spooner*. I conversed with the Men in their Apartment and the Woman in hers. The former were very Penitent, and think they have each of them experienced the Special Grace of God. But the Woman, though she appeared to be Sober and was employed in reading the Scriptures, yet I could not find that She had a due sense of her Condition. She did not think that her Condemnation was just. She acquainted me with her having [illegible] Letter from Rev. and aged Mr. *Carpenter*. [illegible] with me into the Mens Room [illegible] they all desired me to pray with and for [illegible] I would remember their [illegible] [Parents?] [illegible] Speaking of his *Hope towards* God etc., [illegible] that nigh a fortnight agoe, on the [Saturday?] Night, and Sabbath morning he had wonderful Manifestations of the Grace of God. It was the Day of his Baptism. I repaired to Mr. *Maccartys*, and lodged there.

1778 June 7 (Sunday). Preached at *Worcester*, the Prisoners present (and desiring Prayers) on *Heb. 10.31*, "It is a fearful Thing to fall etc.," a. and p.m. Which may God grant success to! Mr. *Maccarty* was with us.

1778 June 8 (Monday). I had desired, and my Thoughts had been much upon visiting the prisoners again (they having themselves requested it) but the weather proved rainy -- and I was

obliged to get home as soon as I well could, because of the Communion next sabbath and the preceeding Lecture.

1778 June 14 (Sunday). Received from Mr. *Nathan Fiske* his Sermon at the Interment of the late Mr. *Joshua Spooner* of *Brookfield*.¹

1778 June 18 (Thursday). Left *Billeys* and returned home. I called at Col. *Weeks'*. They were going to Lecture which I attended. Mr. Daniel *Foster* preached on *Mat. 17.46*. Conversed after Meeting with him, he having been lately with the Prisoners.

1778 June 25 (Thursday). In *Worcester* Mr. *Cunningham* shewed me Mr. Carpenters Letter to Mrs. Spooner. I went in to See the 3 Men: in the Jayl *Ross's* Brother *Timothy*, and *Lucy McDonald* (who was with Child by *Ezra*) were there. The Criminals are very penitent and behave well. I questioned them concerning the first Beginnings of the [work?] proceedings? They Said Mrs. *Spooner* began them. Each of them affirmed it. But on visiting Mrs. *Spooner*, I found her of no different mind from time past, unless it was in more evident denial of the Legality of her Condemnation. She was free and friendly in Conversation -- offered me Wine, which I drank. She Answered me as heretofore, that She took it kindly that I came to see her etc. but when I asked her who was foremost in the horrid and bloody Acts, She laid this on *Ross*; which being contrary to what I had met with from the Prisoners below, I enquired whether She would say this before *them* if they were together? She said She would be willing to with *Ross*, but did not want to have the other two present. We went down to prayer. (N.B. [She at?] mention of [illegible] answered that Mrs. *Curtis* was very [kind and?] obliging to her [illegible] did not love to impose upon her. [illegible] I answered that Mrs. *Curtis*, I could be sure, would be far from taking [illegible] the least hard, if she desired to go down on that Occasion. "Will you ask for me?" says She. "Yes, readily." I did: and she had leave. I went to the men a little while before She came: for the Guard waited on her. A paper was delivered me, which *Buchannan* had drawn up from *Ross's* Mouth, and *Ross* had Signed it, while I was in the Chamber. When we were together *Ross* by my Desire read the Paper containing the *First of her promoting her Husbands Death*. The Paper was thus,

"I *Ezra Ross* do desire that Mrs. *Spooner* will take particular Notice. The following is the first of her promoting her husbands Death.

As She was going to *Hardwick* She asked me the Reason of my being so low Spirited? I made answer It was my long absence from home. She replied that her Opinion was, I wanted some one to lodge with -- I told her it would be agreeable. She asked me if Such an One as her self would do? I made answer If She was agreeable I was. [*Marginal notation*: The Dialect was so.] Upon which She said "After She came off her Journey she would See."

¹Nathan Fiske, *A sermon preached at Brookfield, March 6, 1778: On the day of the interment of Mr. Joshua Spooner, who was most barbarously murdered at his own gate, on the Lord's day evening preceeding, by three ruffians, who were hired for the purpose by his wife* (Boston, New-England: Printed by Thomas & John Fleet, 1778). Evans 43453.

N.B. After her Return She Gave me an Invitation to Defile her Marriage Bed; which I *Expected*. And after that she proposed constantly every *sheam* for her Husbands Death. [*Marginal notation*: The spelling is so.]

Ezra Ross.”

This *Ross* Said he declared was the very Truth, as a dying Man, and soon to be in Eternity -- but it was but a sketch -- there was much more of the like sort. [Mr. *Maccarty* at his House shewed me another Testimony of *Ross's* (as a dying Man) concerning Mrs. Spooners [urging?] him very much to [poison her husband that?] he would give the Poison to Mr. [Crosby?] also (a Neighbour of theirs at *Brookfield*). But he [*illegible*]ly refused.] At their repeated [Request?] I prayed with them and giving them Serious Charge, I took Solemn Leave of them all. Their *Ages*, respectively I took from their Mouths.

Mrs. *Spooner*; She was 32 Feb. 15 last.

James *Buchannan*; He was 36 Jan. 25 last.

William Brooks of *Walsal* in *Staffordshire*, old England, in his 27th year, which would be compleat if he could live till July 30th next.

Ezra Ross, would be 18, could he live to July 20th next.

1778 July 2 (Thursday). *The Day of the Execution....* My Thoughts have been much employed upon the Case and Condition of the Criminals, whom I have fervently recommended to the infinite Mercy of God and hope the penitent [are improved to Paradise?] Concerning the poor Woman, it is with me, [*illegible*] certain whether she is hanged or not, or what has become of her.

1778 July 3 (Friday). Hear that *all Four Criminals* were hanged yesterday.

1778 July 4 (Saturday). The Conversation is wholly upon the Case of the Criminals, especially respecting Mrs. Spooner and her Behavior.

1778 July 5 (Sunday). A.M. Preached on *Prov.* 6.26, those words, “the Adulteress hunts for the precious Life.” P.M. on *Eccl.* 7.17, what was for the main of it delivered on Occasion of *Arthurs* Death,² but with Additions of the late Criminals dying Declaration and Warning.

1778 July 6 (Monday). N.B. wrote by Col. *Wheelock* to Mr. *Maccarty* concerning Mrs. *Spooner*.

²Arthur was executed on Oct. 20, 1768. On Oct. 23, Parkman “Preached on *Eccl.* 7.17 occasioned by the Death of *Arthur*, Negro, executed last Thursday.”

1778 July 11 (Saturday). A.M. came Mr. (Lawyer) *Stearns* and Mr. B. *Bradshaw*. Mr. *Stearns* informed me of the method taken by the late Jury of Matrons, etc. in the Examinations of the Pregnancy of the late Mrs. *Spooner*; and by his Account it was very indecent and cruel.