

“I have not had won minuts rest today”

The Diary of Mary Cooper

A farm wife on Long Island

1768-1773 EXCERPTS

Mary Cooper (1714-1778) began her diary at age 54 while tending the family farmstead with her husband on Long Island, New York. Her entries, while often cryptic, chronicle the hardships faced by colonial families and the solace they sought through faith and each other. When she died at age 64, Mary Cooper had survived all six of her children: two had died as infants, two in childhood, and two in their adulthood.¹

1768 _____

October the 3, Tuesday. Dear Lord, bless the day to us and prosper the worke of our hands. A fine warm day. Ms. Weekes com here to make my gown.²

[October 5] Wednesday. A very warme rain most of the day. Sent wheate to mill.

...

[October 11] Tuesday. Like for rain. Wee are much hurried³ drying appels. Extreeme high wind this night but no rain.

[October 12] [We]dnesday. Fine clear day. Much hu[rried dr]ying appels.

...

[November 17] Thirsday. A fine clear and still day. [Line missing.]

Evening. I am much tired cookeing and washing dishes. Evening Epreham went home with the girls but come bak again.

November the 18, Friday. A fine warm day with a south wind. Ester and Epreham is gon to Huntan Town to carry my coverleds to the weaver.

...

November the 20, Sabbath. A very grevous storme of rain and snow. It has beene a tiresom day to me. It is now bed time and I have not had won minuts rest today.

...

[December 23] Friday. Very cold with a north west wind that blows the snow all day. We are cleaning the house. I am tired almost to death.

National Humanities Center, 2008: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds. In *The Diary of Mary Cooper: Life on a Long Island Farm, 1768-1773*, ed. Field Home (Oyster Bay [New York] Historical Society, 1981); permission pending. Bracketed omissions and annotations in Field edition. NHC notes added as footnotes. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becoming_amer/imagecredits.htm.

¹ Natalie A. Taylor, “Surviving the Ordeal: Long Island Women during the Revolutionary War,” *Long Island Historical Journal* [SUNY-Stony Brook] 20: 1-2 (Fall 2007/Spring 2008), p. 115.

² Gown: in the eighteenth century, gown referred to a woman’s garment. [Field]

³ Hurred: hurried. [NHC]

[December 24] Saturday. Very cold. I am tired almost to death. Rachel⁴ is gone to town. We are a lone. I am drying and ironing my cloths til allmost brake of day. This evening is the Newlights' Covnant meeten.⁵ I am thinking of the events of tomorrow with greate delight. O Lord, prepare us to selebrate the day of thy nitevity and o my Saviour be neare to them that shall commorate thy dying love the day ensuing.

December the 22 [sic], Sabbath. Christmas. A fine clear day. The sun shines warm. Oh, may the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. Peter Underhill gave out the breade and wine this day to some whose hear[ts] the Lord had touched. Though I sat in the meeten with grea[te] delight, yet I came home with a heavy hearte. I went to meeten in the slay⁶ with Whippo and come home with John Wright and Nic[ol]as and their sister Anne Crooker.⁷

...

1769_____

...

[January 7] Saturday. A fine clear and still morning with white frost on the ground but soone clouds over. Some hail but soone turns to a small rain and [struck out: hail] mist. Sister gone home. Evening. O, I am tired almost to death waiteing on visseters.⁸ My feet ach as if the bones was laid bare. Not one day's rest have I had this weeke. I have no time to take care of my cloths or even to think my [] thoughts. Did ever poore creeture [] ch a life before. Oh, that the Lord [] ose the peapel to stay at [].

[February 12] Sabbath. Something cold still. I hoped for some rest but am forst to get dinner and slave hard all day long [] Old [Ge]orge Weekes here. Hannah and Edd Weeks [] e.

...

Febeaury the 19, Sabbath. Fine warme and still as ye[ster]day and more so. I went to the Newlig[ht] meten with greate delight and offer[ed] my self to be a member with them. [] seemed to be very glad but I was sudingly seased with a great horr[blot] and darkeness. E[] think darkeness as migh[t] be felt. O, my God, why hast thou forsaken me. Thou knowest that in the sinsarity and uprightnes of my hearte I have done this, moved as I did belive by Thy spirit. Evening, I came home before the worship began, most distrest.

[February 20] Moonday. Fine warme weather. O, I am in greate darkness still.

...

Feabery the 26, Sabbath. A storm of rain with a nor[th] east wind. The wind and rain cease by the midel of the afternoon. I feel dul and distr[est] and did not go to meeten

...

[M]arch the 12, Sabbath. Much warmer and like to be a fine day. O, I am trying to fit my cloths to go to meeten in as much distres as my heart can hold. Am. L. and Eb Colw. came here. I am forced to get diner and cannot go to meten atall. Alas, how unhappy and meresabel I am. I feele banished from God and all good.

...

[April 14] Friday. Some clouds and wind, cold. Easter⁹ gone from home on some buisness. Tabthea come here. Our peopel¹⁰ quriel with her and Semon Cooper turned her out of doors and threw her over the fence to my greate [gr]ief and sorrow. [half page lost]

⁴ Rachel Weeks was married to Mary Cooper's nephew. [Field]

⁵ Meeten: meeting; church worship. New Lights: see note 14. [NHC]

⁶ Slay, i.e., sleigh. [Field]

⁷ John, Nicolas, and Anne were the children of Mary Cooper's brother, John Wright. [Field]

⁸ Although the Cooper farmstead was not operated officially as an inn, it is apparent that the Coopers provided room and meals for travellers on the busy commercial road near New York. [Field]

⁹ Esther, the Coopers' daughter, came to live with them after separating from her husband. [Field]

¹⁰ "Our people," i.e., the Coopers' slaves. [Field]

April the 16, 1769. Sabbath. Clear but a cold west wind. The sun shine bright to my sorrow, for had it hid his face it might have hid sorrow from my eyes.

[April 17] Moonday. A small shower [] but soon clears with a [half page lost].

[April 19] Wednesday. Like to be a rainy day but clear in the afternoon. I am unwell and up very late.

[April 20] Thursday. O, I am so very sik so that I cannot set up all day nor all night. Very cold snow some hours in the day.

[April 21] Friday. Clear but cold. I feele much beter all day. Evening, I am sik again.

[April 22] Saturday. Clear but cold. O, I am sik all day long. Up very late but I have got my cloths iorned.
Endurstres.

...

[May 3] Wednesday. A fine clear morning. The early songsters warbling their notes and all nature seemes to smile, but a darke cloud hangs continuly over my soul and makes the days and nights pass heavily along.

[May 4] Thursday. A fine clear morning. I went frome hom on some buisness. Come home disopinted.

May the 6, 1769, Saturday. A fine warme day. Cleare and pleasant. I a hurred, dirty and distressed as ever.

[May 7] Sabbath. I am much distrest. No cloths ironed, fretted and tired almost to death and forst to stay at home.

...

[May 13] Saturday. Much hard worke, dirty and distrest. This night is our Covnant meeten but I cannot go to my greate surprise. Sister comes here this night much distrest about her sons. We seeme to have little or no sence of any thing but our troubel.

May the 14, Sabbath. Very hot weather. We went to meeten senceles dull and sleepe.

[May 15] Moonday. Very hot. We began to cleane house much hurred.

[May 16] Tuesday. Exceeding hot. Linde here. Evening. Peter here. We are all very dul and lifeless. Oh Lord, direct our ways.

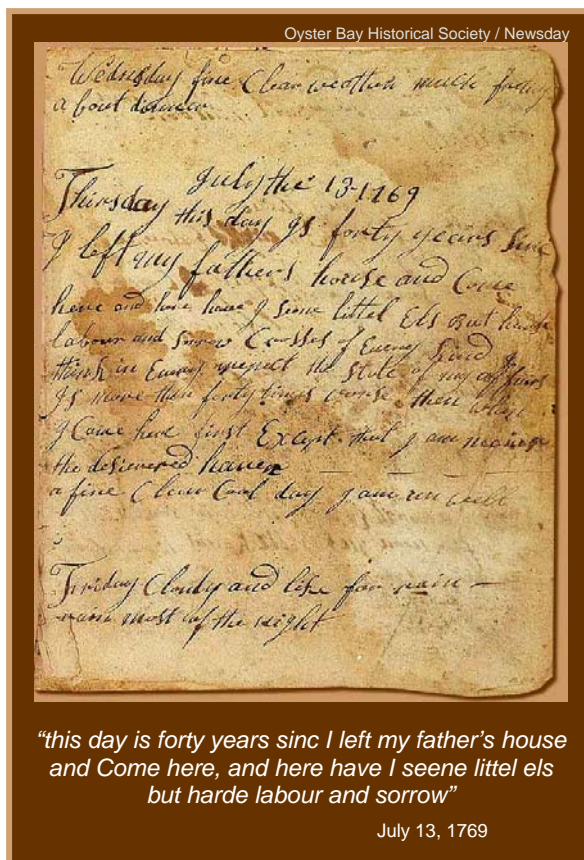
...

June the 1, 1769, Thursday. A most vemant cold north east wind [struck out: and rain]. We all went to the Quaker meeten where a multitude were geathered to here a woman preach that lately come from England, and a most amebel woman she is. Tex: "Of the leaven put in three masuess of meal."

...

July the 13, 1769, Thursday. This day is forty years sinc I left my father's house and come here, and here have I seene littel els but harde labour and sorrow, crosses of every kind. I think in every repect the state of my affairs is more then forty times worse then when I came here first, except that I am nearer the desierered haven. A fine clear cool day. I am un well.

...



August the 1. New moon this morning. Tuesday. A fine clear cool morning. I feele much distrest, fearing I shall hear from some of my credtors.¹¹ Afternoon, I have done my worke and feele something more comfortabl. I went to Salle Wheeler's to meet Ester and Salle but am sent after in greate hurre. Ben Hildrith is come here in a littel boate with two men with him. I am up late and much freted them and their two dogs which they keep att tabel and in the bedroom with them.

[August 2] Wednesday. The first I hearde this morning was Ben's dogs barking and yeling in the bed room. They did nothing but drink them selves drunk all the day long and sent for more rum.

[August 3] Thirsday. The wind is not fare to go home, so they cary the girls to town¹² in the boate. Ben behaved like a blackgarde sound[rel] and as if he had been hurried by the devel.

[August 4] Friday. They set sail to go home to my great joy, and I desier I may never see them here again. I greatly dread the cleaning of [...] house after this detested gang.

[August 5] Saterdag. A fin clear cool day. Much hard worke cleaneing the house. An old Indian come here to day that lets fortans and ueses charmes¹³ to cure tooth ach and drive away rats. O Lord, thou knowest that my soul abhors these abominations. Lay not this sin to my charge. On Thirsday I had an extreme pain in my back and hip so th I could not go with out cryin out.

...

August the 20, Sabbath. Like for rain but the shower went by us. I and Ester went to meeten. Some Indans and one Black man com from Montalk. Ben Jethrow and Siah Baman preach all day long and while late in the night. I and Ester come home alone very late in the night. I fell in the Brook. I am tired and very much distrest.

...

[August 23] Wednsday. A fine clear morning with a cold north wind. My hearte is burnt with anger and discontent, want of every nessesary thing in life and in constant feare of gapeing credtors consumes my strength and wasts my days. The horrer of these things with the continued cross of my family, like to so many horse leeches, prays upon my vitals, and if the Lord does not prevent will bring me to the house appointed for all liveing. Salle Burtis here.

...

August the 27, 1769, Sabbath. Very gretely hurried getting this company a way to the Greate Meten. I went to the Nigh light meeten to here a Black man preach. Felt nothing but distres. Very greatly tired and freted, walkin home so fast.

[August 28] Moonday. Clear weather but not a fair wind for New England. Up late this night. I am much distrist and know now what to dow. O Lord, lead my ways and let my life be [] in this sight. Docter Wright come here this day.

August the 29, Tuesday. We are hurried to set said for New England, very greatly against my will. The tumulting waves look frightfull. But thro infinite mercy we came safe to Mr. Hildrith house in two hours wheare we weare recived with many welcoms and used with the utmost kindness by all the famaly. Cloudy and like for rain every day this weeke but none come except some small showers, not more than due. Nothing remarkabel except that we had the heaviest bread I have ever seene. Mr. Dibel come to se us and said that he was going to change places with Epnetus for the nex Sabbath. After he had talked against Mr. Whitefield¹⁴ as much and something more than we could well beare to, he left us and we saw him no more.

One day we went into the woods to gether. [] one day Benne and the girls went to Mr. [? Prots]. Ms. Hildreth and [] drt tea. I went to Ms. Ferris dr tea.

...

¹¹ Creditors. Mary Cooper often felt harrassed by those to whom they owed money. [Field]

¹² Town: Oyster Bay, three miles from the Cooper farmstead. [Field]

¹³ I.e., tells fortunes and uses charms. [NHC]

¹⁴ George Whitefield, from 1738 an evangelist in the colonies and one of the chief movers of the Great Awakening. The adoption of his methods by the Baptists was responsible for their schism into the New Lights, who followed him, and the Regulars, who adhered to the old way and disparaged revivals. [Field]

[September 30] Saturday. Very high north east wind. Very cloudy most of the day. Afternoon changes to a south wind. We are very busie cooking for the work men. Evening, they eate ther supper. The more parte went away. Some stay to dance, very greatly aganst my will. Some anger about the danceing. Some time in the night come up a shower of rain and thunder. Easter and Salle was frighted very greatly and come down. Easter like to have fits.

October the 1, 1769, Sabbath. West wind and like for fair weather. Simon Cooper quarel very greatly about Ester dancing. He got in a unxpresabel rage and struck her. I am going to meeten but no not how to get over the Broock, the tide is so high. I come to meeten just as the [] ware coming out of the house. I did not stay to the evening meeten and yet come home sometime in the night.

...

November the 9. This day is ten years since my father departed this life.

[November 10] Friday. Some small rain this morning but soon clears. Fine and warme.

[November 11] Saturday. Warme pleasant weather.

November the 12. Sabbath. Some small rain this morning tho it did not rain hard, yet hendered me from going to meeten. Salle and Lidg here most of the day. Clears at evening with a very harde north west wind. I and Ester went to the night meeten. We had a comfortabel meeten, but coming home the tide was high and the wind extreme harde but throw mercy we got safe home. I went to bed very cold. We had little or no fier.

...

November the 19, Sabbath. Very cold, frose hard last night. We are hurreing to meeten. Siah Baman and Melat Peter is com to town. I come to town just as the meeten was out. I went to se Rebeca Weekes. Evening, we went to meeten to Phebe Weekes' house. Siah Bamon tx: "Except ye eate the flest of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Peter Undrill tx, of Abraham's sarvant sent to take a wife for his master's son. A very greate number of peopel was thare. I am Frances come home but the girls staid all night. We had a very happy meeten.

...

[December 13] Wednesday. Clears with a most frightfull harde west wind. Grows extreme cold and freses hard all of a suding. This day is thirty seven years since my dear and amible sister Elisabeth departed this life.

...

1771_____¹⁵

[January 24] Thursday. A fine clear still morning with a white frost. This afternoon is 3 weeks since Easter and those with her took the small pox.¹⁶

...

Febeaury the 1, 1771, Friday. Clear but a harde west wind. The Lord has brought my daughter home to me, well of the small pox. What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercys?

[February 2] Saturday. I an unwell and much affected for fear of the small pox. I had envited some of my friends to come here to se Ester and dade¹⁷ would not let me have a turkey to roast for supper and I am so affected and ashamed about it that I feele as I should never get over it. I got to bed feard and distressed at 1 or 2 a'clock in the morning.

Feb. the 3, 1771, Sabbath. I waked up frighted much about the small pox. Fine clear weather, a west wind but not cold. [Es]ther thought the people would a fraid of her, so we did not go to meeten. Nico and Anne []t from here this morning but John [] all day long.

¹⁵ There are no entries between Dec. 16, 1769, and January 22, 1771. [NHC]

¹⁶ At the time of the diary, inoculation for smallpox was just coming into general acceptance. [Field]

¹⁷ Dade: Mary Cooper's husband, Joseph. [Field]

...

March the 10, Sabbath. This surprising storme continues yet and encreases. The thail cesses this this morning and floods of rain pores down with frightfull gusts of wind which blew away parte of the kitchen. We have hardly a dry place in the house. I suffered much this day with the wet and cold, and am up all night.

...

May the fifth, 1771, Sabbath. Very cold with a west wind. I went to town and found Ester in the Cove. I took her with me. We went by the New Lite meeten and so along til we come to the Quaker meeten ho[use] where we went in and hear so[me] poor preaching. O Lord, grant some lite to these poore benighted peopel. I spoke with those that I wanted to [] so we come back and went to the New [] Lite [] meeten and then home at night. O, I [] sik with the cholic.
We had some showers of rain as we went.

...

1772 _____

...

[June 27] Saturday. A fine clear pleasant day and Ester went to the Quaker meeten. one woman preach, tx: "He come to his own, but they recived him not, but as many as recived him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God." One man preach, another woman prayd. O Lord, is not this peopel ignorant of the greate and needfull doctrine of the gospil? O thou that has the residue of the spirite, I pray the, enlitein these that set in darkness.

...

[August 9] Sabbath. A fine pleasant day. We hurried to meeten and a very happy meeten we had. The Christians seemes full of exersise. Five Negor men gave them selves members to the meeten.

...

October 15, Thursday. Clear and warme. I went from home to carry a letter and tea cittel to Jet's boate that is loading above Eel Creeck. I went to March Coons, to Robersons, to Prock Coon's. I stayed a littel while att each house and then sot of with old Mrs. MCoon and Prock to find the way home. Prock wint with me to Cove Brook. We tramed up high hills, crosst woods and barran fieds, crost a find orchard full of appels, and at last arived at Cove Brook where Prock left me. In my way home I met Cus John Wright who had been in persute of the same boate. When I come home I found Bille Wright and Josh Hammon waiteing for the boate to take them in. They are going to Yorke. Jest after sundown come Jet and Ben Hawx in persute of the boate. They are going to Yorke, two.

...

[November 24] Tuesday. Very warme still. Dade is gon to carry the hogs to Townsend Parrish. Salle and Bette Burtis went to Docter Potter to day to take the small pox. O Lord, have mercy on them, are they not some of thy redeemed ons? Reveal thy love to them, heal thier souls and bodys and bring them home to thier mouring mother in helth and safty. New moon at 7 a'clok this night, north east wind and some littel snow but very warme. Jerushe and Sarah MCoon here. Abb Colwell here.

...

Christmas, December the 25 day, Friday. Warme, the sun shines bright and warme. I and Salle hurried away to meeten and staide to the night meeten. A very great white frost and very cold coming home.

[December 26] Saturday. North east wind and rain but not cold. Ruth and some man to be baptised at Samuel Townsend's. I hurried a way on horse back with out any saddel, but they was gon before I got thare, so I come home in the rain and did not go down to meeten. I hearde they had a very greate meeten and 12 people offered to the church.

[December 27] Sabbath. Cloude and some small rain, very mude. A very greate meeten, some much affected, others crying out aloud. Salle unwell, I carred her to Josh Hammon's. Ester gon to Whippo's. His wife is unwell. Some small rain and very darke. I come home alone and had no hurt or fright thro mercy.

...

1773 _____

[January 13] Wednsday. Fine clear weather, not very cold. I and Salle are going to the night meeten. I went to se Daniel parish. He told me he had a sight of me and tho I had done many things that ware good in theme selves, yet I was not in the spirite of the Gospel. O Lord, known to the is the case of every soul which thou hast made. If I have had no saveing grace all this while, but have been deceiving my self, O Lord, the gift is thine and not in my power. O Lord, now let me share with a number whome thou delitest to bless.

...

[March 24] Wednesday. A fine clear warme day. I felt heavy harted and so distrest that I colud hardly set up about Uncel and Aunt. After Ester was gon to se Uncel about five a'clock this afternoon the Lord met with my soul in mercy and told me that thier departed souls should mount on the wings of saraphs to the relms of eternal day, and that thier weathered limbs should have their dusty bed like the bounding robe and made parfet in thier Saviour's righteousness. Immortal youth and beauty mount to meet their redeemer in the clouds of heaven.

...

May the 8, Saturday. A cold south wind. Ester and Polle come home this morning from meeten. To day is thirteene years since I parted with my son Isaac. O, sorrow and loss unspakabel.

...

June the 29, Tuesday. South west wind, cloude, some thunder and a fine shower of rain this after noon and a bright rain bow appeared some thing longer then uesal which raised my thoughts to the bright relms of day. I longed to se that head once crowned with thorne, that dean parson treated with scorn and cruelty for sinful me. The dasling luster of his face I faint. I can find no word to express my ideas, my greatest vews seeme to be of my Jesus seated on a throne of glory in the bright relms of eternal day. The pleaseing luster of his eyes out shine the wonders of the skys. In raptures and sweet delight I fell a sleep. O, that my last moments may be like these.

...

[September 12] Sabbath. A stormy wind and some rain in the fore noon. I and Ester went to meeten the afternoon but very few peopel at meeten. I feele much distrest to se the dissolute state of the New Lite church which but few weekes past was greate and a flourishing peopel. Why is it forsking and dissolate the Lord only knows. I and Ester come home in the rain.

...

October the 4, [Mo]nday. A fine clear warme day. My [h]arte is full of anguish for the deplorabel state of the Newlite church. O Lord how long?

[October 5] Tuesday. A fine clear day. North wind but not cold.

[October 6] Wednesday.

[October 7] Thirsday.

[October 8] Friday. Warme weather. I and Ester [] much talk about the New Lite [ch]urch. I feel [] and sorely

[The diary apparently continued but any subsequent leaves have been lost.]