VERMONT HISTORY

The Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society

WINTER 1990

VOL. 58, NO. 1

Growing Up Male in the 1830s: Thomas Pickman Tyler (1815-1892) and the Tyler Family of Brattleboro

Royall Tyler's son chose a career and a bride that satisfied family demands and fulfilled his sense of duty as a Christian.

By MARILYN S. BLACKWELL

In 1873 Thomas Pickman Tyler began a memoir of his father, Royall Tyler. "It is important," he wrote, "to recall these facts of family history and present status; of the political agitation of the time and of his father's position and estimation among men; for it is these which make and mould the boy and future man."[1] At age fifty-eight, Pickman or Pick, as he was called, invoked Royall Tyler's memory for his family and, at the same time, unconsciously compared his father's career and talents with his own. In Pick's eyes, his father had "rare gifts of genius," "wit and humor," and "literary ability."[2] Pick had shouldered the weight of Royall Tyler's achievements as a playwright, author, lawyer, and Vermont supreme court justice for much of his life. Now, as his own career came to a close, Pick sought to reconcile his accomplishments with his father's. Examining his father's life, Pick outlined the importance of Royall's heritage and claimed a similar influence for himself. He explained:

> There is great truth in the saying, that 'conduct is fate': there is serious personal responsibility for the successes or failures of life: but the qualities, mental and physical, of the person thus responsible, are, in great part determined by influences that have worked through generations of the past.[3]

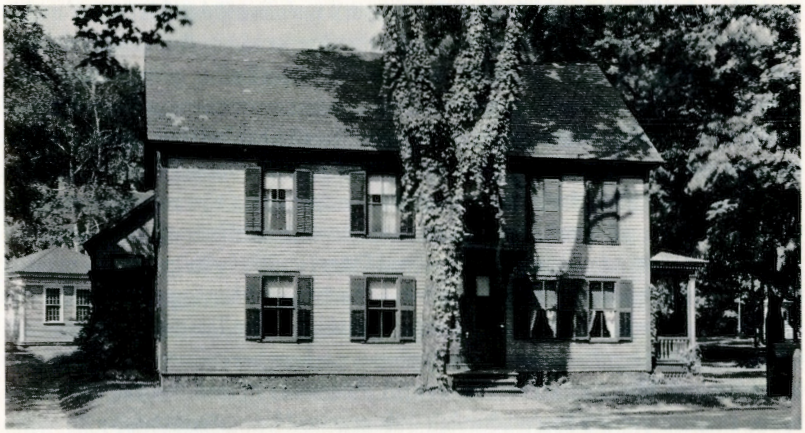
Pick's search for identity began during the crucial years of his young manhood when he faced important choices about his education, his career, and his marriage. Deeply committed to values of hard work, duty to God, and service to others, Pick struggled to satisfy his own needs within the

confines of a large and affectionate family. In his search for independence, he vacillated between self-assertion and adherence to the demands of the family that both nurtured his individualism and restrained his self-gratification. His conflict over appropriate behavior and the sacrifices he made resembled those of other young men in New England during the early nineteenth century.[4] But Pick's story is also exceptional, for his particular family helped create a degree of self-consciousness in him that made his burden as the son of a famous man even greater.

Thomas Pickman Tyler was the next to youngest child in a family of seven brothers and two sisters. His mother, Mary Palmer Tyler (1775-1866), had come to Vermont in 1796 as the young wife of Royall Tyler (1757-1826). The couple had settled first in Guilford and then moved to a Brattleboro farm, where Pick was born on November 20, 1815. During twenty years of childraising, Mary had lost one son, Royall, Jr., the oldest, who died of typhoid fever at nineteen, two years before Pick's birth. When Pick was an infant, the family moved into Brattleboro East Village, where the last Tyler son, Abiel Winship, was born and where Pick spent his childhood years.[5]

As members of prominent Boston-area families, Pick's parents had grown up in the center of Revolutionary upheaval. Royall Tyler's father, a Harvard graduate and successful merchant, had participated in pre-Revolutionary agitation in Boston, as had Pick's ancestors on his mother's side. Mary Tyler's grandfather, Joseph Palmer, a wealthy manufacturer in Braintree, had served on both the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and the committee of safety and became a general in the Continental Army. Her father, Joseph Pearse Palmer, had disguised himself as an "Indian" in the Boston Tea Party and served as quartermaster general for Massachusetts troops in 1775. General Palmer's donations to the war effort and post-war inflation depleted his fortune. Though Royall Tyler inherited a substantial sum after his father died in 1771, by the time he settled in Vermont he had spent much of his capital and consigned the rest to his widowed mother.[6] Nevertheless, Royall and Mary brought a privileged, educated, and patriotic heritage to their new home in Vermont. They anticipated maintaining a refined standard of living and hoped that their children would be educated and successful.

The family's proud history was well-known to the Tyler children as they grew up in Brattleboro. Their Boston connections remained strong, for two of Mary's and Royall's older sons, John and William, returned to the city after growing up in Vermont and renewed the family's commercial activities. By the time Pick was a young boy, his brothers were sending money home to help support the Brattleboro family, adding to his image of the family as part of "'The Brahmin Caste' of New England



The Tyler family moved to this house in Brattleboro in 1820.

society."[7] If Pick had any doubt about the details of his heroic ancestry, it was dispelled in 1833 when he recorded the reminiscences of his seventy-eight-year-old grandmother, Elizabeth Hunt Palmer. She recounted for Pick the extraordinary events of the 1770s, extolling the exploits of the Palmers once again.[8]

As a young child, Pick identified with his father, whom he idealized as a celebrated poet, orator, and wit. After graduating from Harvard in 1776, Royall Tyler studied law and circulated among Boston's intellectuals. He participated briefly in the Revolution and helped put down Shays's Rebellion by pursuing the rebels into Vermont as aide-de-camp for General Benjamin Lincoln of the Massachusetts militia. Four years later, in 1791, Royall decided to return to Vermont and practice law in Guilford. From 1801 until 1813 he served on the Vermont Supreme Court, becoming chief justice in 1807. But in Pick's eyes, Royall's fame rested on his literary achievements rather than on his law career. His father had written plays, a novel, poetry, and witty essays for literary magazines. His play *The Contrast*, produced in 1787, was the first successful American comedy; its patriotic theme confirmed Royall's place in the roster of Tyler and Palmer heroes.[9] In 1824, at age eight, Pick had a chance to imagine himself with his father's talent when he read a valedictory address Royall had written for Pick's part in a local school exhibition.[10]

Despite Pick's idealized conception of his father's literary talent, Royall had little practical influence on his young son. In his sixties when Pick was a child, Royall was old enough to be the boy's grandfather. His age, his years as a judge, the death of his eldest son, and financial difficulties had tempered his witty exuberance. Royall's frequent absences from home

and Mary's close supervision of the nursery necessarily made him a more distant figure in his children's lives. Beginning in 1818, Royall developed the first symptoms of cancer in one eye, and the disease progressed each year.[11] The Tyler children endured trying circumstances as their father suffered. Royall's health problem threatened their schooling, placed their mother under extreme stress, and put their very livelihood in jeopardy.[12] In 1826, when Pick was ten, his father died, leaving the young boy with an inheritance of literary fame he later found difficult to emulate.

Pick's efforts at cultivating his own literary ability helped him adjust to a fatherless adolescence. At eleven, he began keeping a journal. By seventeen, he was writing two personal journals, one for daily entries and the other for miscellaneous literary pieces and copies of important family information. He referred to this second journal as "Trash," using the same name that Royall had used for his column in *The Polyanthos*, a Boston literary magazine.[13] In addition to his grandmother's reminiscences, Pick's first entries included an anecdote about his father that showed Royall's great wit and sociability. Thereafter, Pick rarely wrote about his father but recorded his own intellectual progress in detail. Hoping he, too, might be destined for literary greatness, Pick filled page after page with his essays and poetry interspersed with copies of letters documenting his own life story.[14]

While Pick idolized his father's memory, it was his mother who influenced his daily life. After coming to Vermont, Mary had devoted her energies to raising her family, which often meant managing her large household alone while Royall traveled the state as a member of the Vermont Supreme Court. Mary's mother had educated her daughters and raised them using Lockean principles of natural childrearing that stressed infant malleability.[15] Employing those same principles with her children, Mary hoped to shape their physical, intellectual, and moral development. In 1811 she wrote about her experiences in a childcare manual, *The Maternal Physician*, explaining how she treated her children's illnesses and molded their characters with a mixture of love and discipline. Above all, Mary hoped to nurture children of "honor and usefulness." Encouraging them to use their intellects and to control their passions and desires, she insured that they would "be her comfort through life, and the staff of her declining age."[16] Like many other mothers in the early nineteenth century, Mary believed she had a responsibility to raise virtuous citizens for the new Republic. In her role as a moral trainer, she combined her belief in natural law and human potential with traditional values of hard work and usefulness.[17]

Mary's concern for her children's future heightened during the 1820s as Royall's health failed and as the family's income diminished. Increas-

ingly, she turned to her religion for comfort and support. As Episcopalians, the Tylers believed in a benevolent God, in self-improvement under divine guidance, and in religious toleration.[18] With no Episcopal church in Brattleboro, they went occasionally to the Congregational meeting in the village but never joined. After Episcopalians organized a church in East Guilford, Mary became a member in 1821 and began taking her young children to Episcopal services as often as possible.[19] She taught them the Scriptures, and the local minister became another role model for the Tyler boys after their father died. Hoping to please his mother, Pick took seriously her suggestion that one day he would become a minister.[20]

Finding professions for their younger sons became a major concern for the Tylers, who had scant resources to provide them an education or a start in business in the 1820s. Even before his illness, Royall had gone into debt, had become increasingly dependent on his second son, John, for support thereafter, and was unable to pay for his younger sons' college educations.[21] With a genteel heritage and expectations for attending college, the Tyler sons were ill-prepared for farming or other manual labor. After Royall's death, Mary had no land or capital to give them. Moreover, though Brattleboro and other upper Connecticut River towns flourished as marketing centers in the 1820s, expanding commercial activity had increased competition and raised the amount of capital needed to start a business, effectively limiting opportunity for all but a few in the area who had large enough resources.[22] The Tylers' strong family connections in Boston and New York had made it possible to send their older sons as apprentices to relatives in these cities. As the younger boys matured, they, in turn, lived with and learned from their older brothers, who were already established in occupations.[23]

At fifteen, Pick went to live with his older brother Edward, a Congregational pastor in Middletown, Connecticut. Pick clerked for a nearby druggist, hoping to earn money for his education and to relieve the Brattleboro family of his support.[24] His brother Edward, trained at Yale and influenced by New England revivalism, had become a powerful family leader for three of the Tyler boys, Joseph, George, and Pick. Edward advised his mother about their educations and tutored both George and Pick in theology. While Pick disliked his duties in the drugstore, he grew in religious conviction under Edward's tutelage.[25]

Despite her distance, Mary Tyler continued to use both her affection and her religion to guide Pick into virtuous behavior. In her letters she advised diligence and obedience in his work and encouraged his spiritual growth by explaining her own religious preference. Concerned that Edward might have turned Pick toward the Congregational ministry, Mary explained her beliefs, the benefits of the Episcopal form of church govern-

Mary Palmer Tyler (1775-1866) devoted her energies to raising her large family. She wrote about her experiences in an 1811 childcare manual, The Maternal Physician.

ment, and her hopes of his salvation through faith. She rejoiced that the Episcopal church, like other denominations, was experiencing revivals in New England.[26] Indeed, 1831 had been a year of successful revivals in Brattleboro's churches and throughout the Connecticut River Valley.[27] Mary tempered her advice by suggesting that Pick make his own decisions about his future. Insisting she could not direct him, she encouraged, "Let us look to Him who holds in his hands all the events of life and Death for a blessing at the same time putting our Shoulders to the wheel and lifting with all our might."[28] She delighted in May 1832 when, after a year and a half, Pick came home to Brattleboro, where she could keep closer watch over his increasing piety.

At home Pick competed with his older brothers for family funds and intellectual recognition. The family relied on his two brothers who were businessmen, John and William, for financial support. Greatly admired by the family as men of commerce and members of the militia, John was known as the "General" and William as the "Major." Edward, called the

"Pastor," and Joseph, an Episcopal minister, were Pick's mentors in the ministry. George, who became a Congregational minister, and Charles, a future lawyer, were five and three years older.[29] They were Pick's keenest competitors. To complete their educations, the younger boys had to assure both their mother's approval and their older brothers' support. When the youngest Tyler son, Winship, died in 1832, Pick not only lost his closest companion but also became the last of the sons to compete for family funds and to seek independence. Unlike Charles who went to Exeter, Pick studied a classical program at home and tutored at the new Brattleboro High School.[30]

Mary Tyler and her daughter Amelia often exacerbated the competition between the boys and played one against the other. Driven by financial hardship and the desire to maintain her family's respectability, Mary foresaw the education of her sons as vital to the family's future and to their own happiness. In a letter to Pick, she praised Charles's scholarship and economy at Exeter and George's organization of a sabbath school in Brattleboro.[31] Pick's sister Amelia, who had opened a private school in the Tyler house in 1826, corrected the boys' grammar, teased them about their spelling, and taught them French and drawing.[32] The older daughter, Mary, affectionately known as "Aunt Mary," played the role of a second mother, mending the boys' clothes and preparing much of the food. The boys often worked in the garden, but they were rarely required to perform other domestic chores, for they were expected to spend their time studying and preparing for their vocations.[33] Bolstered by his mother's prophesy that he would be both "useful & brilliant," Pick pursued his education diligently.[34]

During this period, when Pick was seventeen and eighteen and still under his mother's care, he began using his personal journals as an outlet for his inner feelings and frustrations. Both his mother and father had kept journals, although neither wrote with Pick's introspection, and the teacher at the high school also recommended the practice. His family heritage, Royall's fame, and his mother's attention had given him a sense of self-importance, but at the same time the virtuous behavior and hard work Mary demanded required that he deny his strong need for enjoyment, companionship, and independence. In his daily journal, Pick fought the temptations of laziness and passion, and he worried about his proclivity for gaiety and affability. His use of a journal was a characteristic Protestant technique; by analyzing his thoughts and behavior Pick could more easily adhere to the dictates of a "regular & systematic method of living."[35]

Pick's inner struggle also pitted his personal integrity against a self-conscious need to record his life experiences for posterity, as part of the

story of a distinguished family. Aware that he wrote for "myself and others," he was conscious of the pitfalls of insincerity:

> I do not mean to write for other times, or other eyes. It is often the case that we hesitate about recording some action or thought because it will apt to offend the wiser ears of our future selves. It is a bad plan, for when the future comes, if we recollect nothing else of the days when the journal was written we are sure to remember the fact that we practiced deception in writing it.[36]

As Pick became less self-conscious about the words he wrote, he described his feelings and created a sense of himself as separate from his family. His journal became a comforting tool for carving out his own identity.[37] Four years later, when Pick was twenty-three and had been away from home for some months, he explained the book's value:

> I should feel lost without it & it has served to while away many sad moments. Often in absence & in loneliness I turn over its pages & thus more vividly recall scenes of pleasure passed. Days of absence like the present, are soothed & cheered by the pleasant evening task of adding day by day to its record.[38]

Pick described those earlier "scenes of pleasure," however, as fraught with tension and frustration as he sought self-control under his mother's watchful eye. Expressing despair, he lamented, "I would become a Christian worthy of the name, but it seems almost impossible for me to acquire the necessary command of myself. I ought not to expect it without labour & toil." Pick filled his journal with expressions of his desire to conquer sin, "to overcome the love of the world," to master the "Levity and love" that hindered his progress in "virtue & usefulness."[39]

Pick's battle resembled that of other ardent Protestant young men who, believing in human perfectibility, sought to fulfill their duty on earth and to master their passions. Some of these young men, trained in self-control in the 1820s and 1830s and filled with a sense of Christian mission, entered the ministry like the Tyler sons. Others joined the moral reform movements of the antebellum years, channeling their energies into efforts to improve their communities. Pick's temperament was more moderate than that of most evangelical Protestants; he focused on virtue and piety as a source of happiness and on efforts to fulfill his obligation to his family.[40] To that end, he laid out his own "rules of conduct," which included a strict daily program of studies and spiritual meditation and prohibited smoking and drinking. He nevertheless allowed exceptions to all his rules, a measure of the realism with which he approached his task.[41]

Pick's concept of ideal behavior conflicted sharply with the pleasures he experienced in the social life of Brattleboro's youths. At nineteen, Pick had a number of close friends but seemed to enjoy most the company of I. H. Hills, a young engraver employed at a Brattleboro publishing

house. The two friends spent many hours together walking, talking, smoking cigars, eating oysters, and discussing women. They took girls on picnics, buggy rides, mountain hikes, and sleigh-ride parties, enjoying the freedom to socialize in unchaperoned activities that was common among young people of the 1830s. Most rural New England parents allowed their adolescents plenty of opportunity for mingling without supervision, and Mary Tyler was no exception as long as her children maintained good behavior.[42] But all this gaiety filled Pick with guilt. He deplored the waste of time and perceived bad habits that his friendship with Hills induced but felt even more threatened by Hills's scepticism. After months of ambivalence over this friendship, Pick resolved to drop his company. With some regrets, he wrote, "It is like parting with a right hand to me: but no one has a right to be an infidel."[43]

Pick's interest in women caused him even more frustration than his male camaraderie. The more he socialized with young women, the more he enjoyed their company and sought their attention. Occasionally he described a favorite companion in his journal: "She is a bright girl, rather handsome, short, solid & hearty." He pondered which girls he liked best and expressed infatuation with others.[44] The girls, in turn, responded favorably to his attentions. One reported years later that "All the Tyler boys were handsome and charming, but Pickman was the most fascinating, and handsomest—all the girls were in love with him."[45] At the same time Pick discovered that women distracted him from his studies and aroused sensual feelings he could not satisfy. After one period of much socializing, he explained with mixed exhaustion and guilt, "I am quite tired of girls, walks, rides, parties & doing nothing."[46]

Also unhappy with his self-designed study program, Pick was eager to leave his frustrations at home and attend college. First, however, he faced financial negotiations with his brothers. Edward wanted him to enter Yale, the seat of revivalistic Congregationalism. Joseph hoped he would go to Hartford and study at Washington (now Trinity) College, an Episcopal school. Plunged into a religious controversy between his brothers and unsure of his career direction, Pick sought money from William in Boston. In the spring of 1835 he entered Yale because both William and Edward agreed to assist financially. In New Haven Pick found his living expenses greater than expected. After advancing himself to the sophomore class in one term, he studied at home again and then resumed his degree program in January 1836, at Washington College, probably because expenses there were less than in New Haven.[47]

Social life at college presented even more temptations than social life in Brattleboro. No longer under his mother's scrutiny, Pick began to enjoy himself. In New Haven he courted girls, played cards, smoked, even

skipped classes and neglected his assignments. Moreover, he felt little guilt about his behavior, at least until he returned home. As he migrated back and forth between college and home, Pick vacillated in a state of semi-dependence, unsure of his direction in life and distrustful of his ability to manage on his own.[48]

At home Pick's experiences with romantic love made him increasingly distrustful of his own feelings. In the winter of 1835, just before he had gone to Yale, Pick fell in love. For a time his affections were returned, but sometime the following fall he offended his girlfriend, losing her friendship and love. Pick nursed the hope for nearly a year that he could renew the relationship but finally gave up in despair.[49] During this period, he occasionally wrote his journal entries in Latin to express his feelings more freely, to hide his opinions, and to practice his skill. Writing in Latin about his sexual desires seemed to make them more acceptable to him. Pick later erased the name of his former girlfriend from his journal and cut out many pages, hiding forever her identity, the details of their romance, and much of his private thought.[50] At the same time, he protected himself from turbulent feelings that he could not control and that he perceived as a threat to his respectibility, so important to maintaining the affections of his family and the admiration of his community. Disappointed in his first affair of the heart, Pick considered courting another girl but decided, "My love would partake too much of the sensual. She has one of the prettiest composed[?] little bodies I ever saw." As he left town to return to college, he regretted leaving all the folks in Brattleboro and hoped that "the blessing of heaven [may] rest upon me in my absence – undutiful tho I have been."[51]

Pick's failure in love had dampened his interest in socializing, but "mischievous woman" continued to distract him, much to his distress. "A man," he bemoaned, "can without doubt act as he pleases; but it is not so clear to my mind that he can feel in a given manner."[52] Pick doubted whether he could abandon his first love and turn his thoughts to heaven. Meanwhile, his sexual urges continued. After viewing "Dubufe's paintings of Adam & Eve" on display in Hartford, Pick expressed the "electric" effect on him while denying any sensual response:

> The figures are perfectly naked & there is no affectation of modesty in the disposal of them. For me they are indeed of surpassing beauty – the beau-ideals of sex. For all this display of nudal loveliness, such is the intense & overpowering & all engrossing interest of the subjects that no room is left for sensual thought.[53]

With anxiety about his future ability to resist sexual temptation and fear of wasting his intellectual powers, Pick embraced again the conclusion he had reached as early as age nineteen: his only hope rested "in living

near to God," for if left to himself, he would surely "make Shipwreck of every hope of usefulness or distinction."[54]

Student activities at Washington College also interrupted Pick's studying. During 1836 tension rose at the school as students challenged the faculty's authority to determine school rules and procedures. Similar confrontations occurred on campuses throughout New England during the 1820s and 1830s as a new, poorer, older, and more assertive group of students sought higher education and challenged conservative traditions.[55] Pick often sympathized with the professors and acted as mediator for his peers, but in January 1837 he participated in a strike action with some members of his class. Students refused to attend classes until the faculty explained the basis of certain student appointments. The rebels, including Pick, were suspended, and he did not return to school until the following October.[56]

In August 1838, at Pick's graduation from Washington College, he gave the final address at the request of his peers, a tribute to both his scholarship and popularity. Describing college life as a beneficial transition phase in a man's passage from the comforts of home to the harsh, selfish world, Pick commented on his own experience. He expressed nostalgia for his carefree boyhood and extolled the power of an affectionate household to ennoble the mind through gentleness and kindness. Recognizing that men eventually renounce their youthful dreams of fame, he concluded that most settled for a contented "plodding along" in life. At age twenty-two, Pick's growing maturity had led to a greater acceptance of himself and resignation about the limits of both his intellectual and emotional powers. Yet, he still clung to the "enjoyments of his boyhood home." His college experience had protected and sheltered him in an environment of like-minded friends, and he was still not prepared to make his own decisions.[57]

During those college years, Pick had tried to resolve his indecision about the ministry. His religious beliefs mirrored those of his mother. Mary tolerated all Protestant denominations but preferred the Episcopal church because of its liturgy, structure, and connection with her Boston heritage.[58] Her personal creed arose from her deepest feelings, but for Pick religion provided a moral code of behavior and intellectual stimulation. He could not feel Mary's deep spirituality.[59] His sense of calling was meager next to that of his evangelical brother, Edward. Meanwhile, Edward and Joseph only added to his confusion by arguing over denominational differences. Pick thought seriously about studying medicine; as a physician he could still participate in the "work of saving the world," perhaps as a missionary physician. He even considered devoting himself exclusively to missionary work, but shrunk from the idea of

preaching to heathens, concluding, "theology would be much more to my taste." Faced with uncertainty, Pick periodically succumbed to feelings of helplessness, bemoaning, "I have attempted in vain to fathom the deep chaos of feelings, motives, & influences within me. There is but one course—humbly to wait on God."[60]

But Pick finally took action. Despite his despair, he wrote John H. Hopkins, the Episcopal bishop in Vermont, inquiring about the possibility of studying with him. He arranged to teach in Hopkins's boys school in return for tuition and board, and it was this commitment that firmly tied him to the ministry. By the close of 1837, he had begun to feel less anxious about his future. The arrangement with Hopkins fell through after his Episcopal school failed, but Pick was on his way to becoming a minister despite his self-proclaimed lack of "evidence of a calling to the work."[61] The ministry satisfied his need to use his intellect, control his passionate nature, do good in the world, and please his mother.[62]

About the same time his career choice became more certain, Pick's romantic prospects also improved. In February 1837, only a few months after he had given up hope on his earliest love, Pick announced his engagement to Mary Ann Clark, a member of his youthful social circle in Brattleboro. The oldest daughter of Rufus and Sally Clark, Mary Ann was a pious young woman who met his mother's approval. After Pick returned to college, his mother reminded him about his responsibilities: "beware of your besetting sin my dear—and remember a dear and lovely Girl has ventured her whole of happiness with you."[63]

Pick expressed both love and tenderness for Mary Ann, but he emphasized the spiritual nature of their relationship over the physical. Writing to a friend, he explained, "There is happiness in plighted love when it is free from all worldly feeling." Pledging himself to one woman, Pick controlled his sexual desires and lessened his anxiety about his future. Mary Ann, a faithful friend, became an anchor in an uncertain world; in another year or two he would find "her heart as warm & lip as fresh & sweet" as he had left them.[64]

Though Pick had decided upon his career and his marriage partner, his financial debts to his brothers continued to weigh heavily on his conscience. Consequently, in the fall of 1838 when a college friend offered him an opportunity to take his place as a tutor in Virginia, Pick accepted. He spent the next two winters, from October until June, on a plantation in Belle Farm, Virginia, near Norfolk, earning four hundred dollars each winter. This was the first time he had been independent of family and friends.[65]

During his first winter at Belle Farm, when he was twenty-three, Pick was lonely, desolate, and self-absorbed. His duties involved tutoring and

general management of two young boys, a task he found "troublesome and irritating." Keeping order was particularly difficult in a strange household in which the "irregular & ill defined authority of the children over the slaves & of the slaves over the children" failed to match anything in his experience. Pick's chief complaint, however, was lack of love and affection; he was "a child yet" in his love of home. He isolated himself in his room, refused to socialize, and received scant pleasure from books, his journal, and letter writing. Concern for his own health coupled with anxiety about the alien slave system resulted in fears that he might die "with the clank of chains" above his grave.[66]

Pick continued to carry on his romance with Mary Ann Clark by mail. Mary Ann sent long affectionate letters that pleased him, but his mother's intervention marred even this source of comfort. She and Mary Ann were in daily contact; they scheduled their letters on alternate weeks, and Mary often reported Mary Ann's latest activities. Much to Pick's distress, they even exchanged his letters. His mother explained she was "grateful for the confidence" and sympathized "with the tenderness of two faithful hearts, when separated from each other." When Pick protested, his mother assured him that she would not read another letter addressed to Mary Ann without his permission. Pick felt outraged at his mother's persistent invasion of his privacy.[67]

After several months, Pick gradually began to show interest in life at Belle Farm and to observe southern customs. His assigned slave Nancy peaked his interest. Attractive and considerate, she was the only member of the plantation household who seemed to care about him, and he missed the attentions of the Tyler women. Pick also began to take long walks and to appreciate nature; the stars, he felt, were his "only old acquaintances." After weeks of brooding in his room, he finally joined family parties, began visiting neighboring plantations, and enjoyed late night gatherings. Despite periodic headaches and bouts of self-deprecation, Pick made new friends and enjoyed southern society.[68]

Pick's adjustment to southern life meant a practical acceptance of slavery, despite his firm moral stance against the institution. The white Southerners he met in 1838 and 1839 were adamant about preservation of slavery, even to the point of dissolving the Union. Arguing against slavery, Pick upheld a Tyler tradition that had been reinforced by his abolitionist brother Edward.[69] At Belle Farm, Pick learned much from his personal observations of blacks, for whom he became increasingly sympathetic. He described his slave Nancy as delicate and thoughtful; others appeared "shrewd & intelligent." He remarked about the "degradation" of blacks in a country that championed "Equality & Liberty." At the same time Pick noted the affectionate relationship that sometimes existed

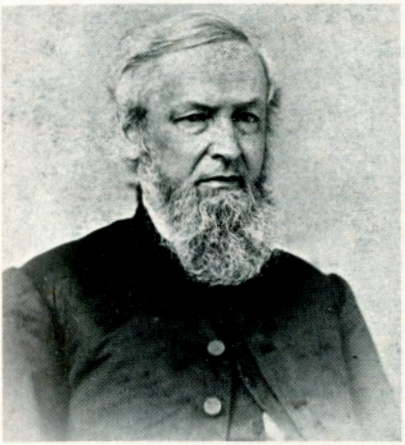
between whites and their servants, which eased his mind about the harsh reality of slavery. Continuing to refer to domestic slaves as servants, Pick thus justified to himself his acceptance of their attention and service.[70]

After his second winter at Belle Farm, Pick returned north in the summer of 1840, still unsure about his immediate future but with a new perspective on his world and confidence in his ability to manage on his own. That second year had been relatively pleasant. No longer feeling desolate and alone, Pick all but abandoned his journal. He had studied theology, managed his pupils, and begun to see himself "in God's service."[71] He even considered spending another winter or two at Belle Farm to clear his debts, but, once again, his family intervened. With the encouragement of his brother George, his mother, and Mary Ann Clark, Pick went to New York City as a tutor in October. Unable to both tutor and pursue his studies as he had hoped, he returned home again to prepare for entering the General Theological Seminary in New York City. After finishing his studies at the seminary the next winter, Pick was ordained an Episcopal minister on September 15, 1841, and was licensed to preach in Vermont.[72]

Three months later Pick married Mary Ann Clark. The marriage, like his ordination, brought pleasure to his mother, for she had assured herself that the couple's "mutual affection" was "based on true piety." In Mary's eyes, Mary Ann's piety was appropriate for her role as a minister's wife and would also insure that a woman's moral influence remained constant in Pick's daily life.[73]

One final decision remained, however, before Pick began his "plodding along" in life: the choice of a parish. While still in New York, Pick had inquired about preaching in Guilford, Vermont, thinking he might live at home for a short time. The Guilford congregation, however, divided on theological issues, could not financially support a minister. Thereafter, Pick did not actively seek a Vermont parish despite having chosen to be ordained in the diocese.[74] There were many Episcopal openings in Vermont, but in December 1841 Pick accepted an invitation from the warden of Grace Church in Canton, New York, a community of about five hundred people on New York's northern frontier. Unable to confirm a salary, the warden only guessed the church could raise a hundred dollars in six months, for its status as a missionary station had not yet been determined.[75]

Pick's decision to abandon the comforts of settled society and the nearness of family and friends for a distant church partly reflected changes in the relationship between New England towns and their ministers. During the period of revivalism from the early 1800s to the 1840s, the growth of new sects and expansion of church membership changed the way congregations hired new ministers in rural towns. The need for many ministers



Rev. Thomas Pickman Tyler, 1815-1892

resulted in new recruitment techniques that encouraged potential ministers to leave their home towns, professionalized their training at new colleges and seminaries, and set them loose to seek a congregation. Evangelicalism and changes in the way churches raised funds had resulted in competition between new denominations and financial insecurity for ministers who had to compete for congregations.[76] During Pick's search a fellow minister warned that "now-a-days . . . a clergyman cannot readily succeed without three qualifications besides that of piety—he must be able to write good sermons—must have an interesting elocution—and must possess social pastoral qualities."[77] No longer guaranteed permanency, ministers were at the mercy of their congregations. By 1841 economic decline and religious dissension in many New England communities made securing a parish even more difficult. In addition, the Episcopal church in Vermont was in upheaval as Bishop Hopkins sought to recover from the bankruptcy of his Episcopal school after the Panic of 1837. With thirteen vacancies in the diocese already, it lost still more clergy in 1841, and in the following year six churches were dissolved for lack of support.[78]

In this environment Pick found it difficult to sell himself as a promising young preacher. Dependent for so many years on his mother for direction and his brothers for financial help and insecure about his calling, Pick lacked the self-assertion necessary to promote himself in Vermont. For years he had toyed with the idea of missionary work. A parish on the frontier held out the possibility of satisfying that sense of mission and renewing the contentment, self-confidence, and independence he had experienced in the South while away from his family. At twenty-six, Pick had spent nearly ten years in uncertainty about his future, exposed to new opportunities yet confined by parental authority. His dilemma was

not unusual. Other young men in New England had experienced similar confusion when faced with difficult choices and caught between traditional deference to their families and the new competitive society of the 1830s.[79] Pick had chosen a career and a bride that satisfied family demands and fulfilled his sense of duty as a Christian; now he was ready to select his own parish and remove himself from family controls.

After several months at his church in Canton, Pick felt pleased with his decision and decided to stay in New York. Two years later in 1843 he moved to Fredonia on Lake Erie and remained in various parishes in western New York for the remainder of his career as a minister. In 1871, at age fifty-six, he returned to Brattleboro.[80]

After three decades, Thomas Pickman Tyler reunited with his large family. Despite his absence, Pick had maintained close ties to Brattleboro and had even sent his children back home to his mother's and sisters' care after Mary Ann died in 1856. He had remarried, but now, unable to minister because of his poor health, Pick came back to the comfort and security of the Brattleboro community. His mother and several brothers had died; one of his sons had been killed in the Civil War, and another died in a shipwreck in 1866. But other Tyler children and grandchildren had taken their places at the family homestead.[81]

At home, Pick faced the familiar scenes of his youth but with the experience of age. While he contemplated his life and prepared his memoir of his father, he shaped his role as the family historian and sharpened his memory of his heritage. Recalling his patriotic ancestors, the hopeful days of the early Republic, and the part Royall had played, Pick felt himself to be a member of an important American family once again. As he wrote about Royall's literary talent, he refreshed his past dreams of intellectual distinction. Pick had accepted his pathway in life long ago. As he had described to a friend while at Belle Farm in 1840, "I have been plodding along in a regular, monotonous, business like way—resigned to my exile from a sense of duty, and being gallant, gay, or sedate, not as inclination, but as propriety dictated."[82] By writing about his father Pick gained a vicarious means of living his father's life and established his connection to a man with "rare gifts of genius."[83] As family historian, carefully collecting old letters and journals, Pick satisfied his need to preserve his family's past while placing himself in it as the son of a significant American.

Notes

[1] Ada Lou Carson, "Thomas Pickman Tyler's 'Memoirs of Royall Tyler': An Annotated Edition," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1985), 10. T. P. Tyler's manuscript is in Royall Tyler Collection, gift of Helen Tyler Brown, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont.

[2] *Ibid.*, 83, 87.

[3] *Ibid.*, 10.

[4] For male development and ideals in the nineteenth century, see Edward Anthony Rotundo, "Manhood in America: The Northern Middle Class, 1770-1920," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1982) and Charles E. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role," chapter in *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961). For problems of adolescents, see Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 17-35, and John Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 99-102. For changing conditions in eastern Vermont that helped create difficulties for youth, see Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 117-141, 196-207.

[5] Mary Palmer Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book: The Recollections of Mary Palmer Tyler*, ed. Helen Tyler Brown and Frederick Tupper (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), Appendix A; Dorothy Sutherland Melville, *Tyler-Browns of Brattleboro* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 14; G. Thomas Tanselle, *Royall Tyler* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 29-30.

[6] Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 21-23, 30-38, 85-89; Mary R. Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro, 1681-1895*, vol. 1 (Brattleboro, Vt.: E. L. Hildreth, 1921), 251; Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 2-27; Ada Lou Carson and Herbert L. Carson, *Royall Tyler* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 15-22; [Edward R. Tyler], "Biographical Sketch of General Joseph Palmer," *The New Englander* 9 (1845):4-23. The exact amount of Royall Tyler's inheritance is unclear. See Tanselle, 224n.

[7] Carson, "Memoirs," 10.

[8] Thomas Pickman Tyler [TPT], Commonplace Book, 1833-51, Helen Tyler Brown Papers, Royall Tyler Collection, gift of Helen Tyler Brown, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vt. All manuscripts cited are in the Royall Tyler Collection.

[9] Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 3-44; Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 16-25; Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 251-255; Carson, "Memoirs," 95.

[10] Mary P. Tyler [MPT] Journal, October 23, 1824; MPT to Amelia Curtis, October 10, 1824.

[11] Royall Tyler Daybook, 1818-1821; MPT Journal, 1821-1826; Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 47-48; Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 25-27.

[12] George P. Tyler to Charles and Pickman Tyler, 1821(?), TPT Letterbook, 1821-1843; MPT to Amelia Tyler, April 10, 1826; Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 26-27.

[13] TPT Journal, March 21, 1835; TPT Commonplace Book; For Royall's "Trash" column, see Carson, "Memoirs," 192-195; Marius B. Péladeau, *The Prose of Royall Tyler* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1972), 412-425; Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 261; Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 91-92; and Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 117-118.

[14] TPT Commonplace Book.

[15] Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 51; Unlike Calvinists, John Locke believed that children were naturally good, that they learned best through experience, and that they could be molded by shaping the environment in which they grew. See Peter Gay, ed., *John Locke on Education* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964).

[16] [Mary P. Tyler], *The Maternal Physician: A Treatise on the Nurture and Management of Infants From the Birth Until Two Years Old. Being the Result of Sixteen Years' Experience in the Nursery.* (New York: Isaac Riley, 1811; 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Lewis Adams, 1818; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1972), 10. For *The Maternal Physician*, see Christina Gibbons, "Mary Tyler and *The Maternal Physician*," *Journal of Regional Cultures* 3 (1983): 33-45. Mary Tyler's story, her role as a wife and mother, and the difficulties she encountered as a widow are the subject of a broader study the author is researching based on the extensive Tyler collection.

[17] For Republican childrearing, see Ruth Bloch, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815," *Feminist Studies* 4 (1978): 101-126; Jacqueline S. Reinier, "Rearing the Republican Child: Attitudes and Practices in Post-Revolutionary Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 150-163; and Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 283-84.

[18] For Mary's views on religious toleration, see MPT to TPT, March 27, 1832. For Episcopalian attitudes in Vermont, see Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 55-56.

[19] Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 263, 272; Paul A. Carnahan, *The History of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Brattleboro Vermont, 1853-1978* ([Brattleboro, Vt.: St. Michael's], 1982), 16; RT Daybook, June 29, 1821; MPT Journal, December 1821-June 1826.

[20] MPT to Edward R. Tyler, July 4, 1819. Pick's early interest in the ministry can be found in "Addressing Christian Mothers," TPT Commonplace Book, and Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 352.

[21] Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 47; Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 25.

[22] Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 117-130.

[23] John Tyler apprenticed with his Uncle George Palmer in Boston. Edward and William clerked for Palmer in New York. See Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 312; RT Daybook, February 18, 1818;

and MPT to Edward Tyler, September 1, 1816. George clerked in Boston for a family friend and later lived with Edward. Charles clerked in John's store in Boston. See MPT to Mary W. Tyler, April 12, 1827; Edward Tyler to MPT, September 12, 1831; and Charles Tyler to MPT, June 16, 1828.

[24] TPT Journal, February 10, 14, 1831 ("Extracts from former Journals"); for the practice of sending adolescent boys out of the home as apprentices, see Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 17-35.

[25] Edward R. Tyler to RT and MPT, 1822; Edward and Sarah Tyler to MPT, September 12, 1831; TPT Journal, December 31, 1831 ("Extracts from former Journals").

[26] MPT to TPT, March 27, 1832, TPT Letterbook.

[27] Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 351-352; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 189; Elizabeth H. Palmer to TPT, July 20, 1831, TPT Letterbook.

[28] MPT to TPT, March 27, 1832, TPT Letterbook.

[29] Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 275-279, 539-540.

[30] See copies of letters to and from Pick's brothers, TPT Commonplace Book. The opening of Brattleboro High School in 1832 gave Pick the opportunity to stay at home and study under preceptor John S. Brown. See, Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 400.

[31] MPT to TPT, March 27, 1832, TPT Letterbook.

[32] Amelia Tyler to TPT, June 11, 1831, and May 13, 1836.

[33] MPT Journal, 1821-1839, describes household management.

[34] TPT Journal, November 1834-March 1835; MPT to TPT, June 11, 1831, TPT Letterbook.

[35] TPT Journal, November 9, 1834; On the uses of personal journals by Protestants, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 168-193.

[36] TPT Journal, November 19, 1834.

[37] See Huck Gutman, "Rousseau's *Confessions*: A Technology of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, 99-120 (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), for analysis of a similar process of self-definition in Rousseau's *Confessions*. As a technique for self-examination, Pick's use of a journal resembles that of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Puritans, but unlike the Puritan tradition, Pick also wrote in his journal because he valued the particular experiences and emotions that set him apart from others. See also: Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety* and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 18-20, 144-145. For nineteenth-century diary writing, see Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, vol. 1, *Education of the Senses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 447-451.

[38] TPT Journal, November 9, 1838.

[39] *Ibid.*, November 29, 22, 1834.

[40] See Rotundo, "Manhood in America," 149-158, and Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role," 72-86. For evangelical and moderate temperaments, see Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 52-206. For examples of other Vermont youths with similar frustrations, see Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 196-206.

[41] TPT Journal, March 15, 1835.

[42] *Ibid.*, November 1834-January 1835; MPT Journal, May 21, 23, June 18, 1834; for youthful social life, see Ellen Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 23-25.

[43] TPT Journal, January 27, 1835.

[44] *Ibid.*, November 19, 1834.

[45] Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 353.

[46] TPT Journal, November 14, 1834.

[47] Copies of letters to and from Pick's brothers, TPT Commonplace Book.

[48] TPT Journal, July 1-August 15, 1835. Joseph Kett uses the term "semidependence" to describe the condition of youth age ten to twenty-one who experienced alternating periods of independence away from home and subordination to family authority at home. See Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 26-31.

[49] *Ibid.*, August 1835-September 1836.

[50] *Ibid.*, October 23, 1836. I am grateful to Juan A. Moreno of the Classics Department, University of Vermont, for a translation of the journal's Latin portions. On the use of Latin by nineteenth-century diarists and the practice of editing and destroying diaries, see Gay, *Senses*, 11, 127, 414-415.

[51] TPT Journal, September 21, 1836.

[52] *Ibid.*, June 11, 1836.

[53] *Ibid.*, July 21, 1836; see Gay, *Senses*, 379-390, for a discussion of nineteenth-century nudes in painting and sculpture.

[54] TPT Journal, November 20, 1834.

[55] TPT Journal, March 1836, November 1836; David F. Allmendinger, *Paupers and Scholars: The Transformation of Student Life in Nineteenth Century New England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 97-118.

[56] TPT Journal, March 1836, January 6-20, 1837. For similar confrontations over the grading system, see Allmendinger, *Paupers and Scholars*, 123-124.

[57] "Well—classmates, it is finished!" TPT Commonplace Book.

[58] MPT to TPT, March 27, 1832; MPT to Sophia Pickman, January 12, 1823. Royall Tyler's father belonged to King's Chapel, Boston, and Mary's parents had purchased a pew in King's Chapel in 1787. See Tanselle, *Royall Tyler*, 6, and Tyler, *Grandmother Tyler's Book*, 99.

[59] TPT Journal, December 31, 1836, April 28, 1839.

[60] *Ibid.*, December 18, 31, 1836.

[61] *Ibid.*, November 14, December 31, 1837, April 28, 1839; John H. Hopkins to TPT, February 16, 1837 and November 9, 1837; MPT to Joseph Tyler, October 5, 1837; MPT to TPT, December 4, 1837, TPT Letterbook. For the failure of Hopkins's school, see Edward Mayo Green, *The Episcopal Church in Vermont* (Woodstock, Vt.: Elm Tree Press, 1959), 8.

[62] Edward Anthony Rotundo, "Learning about Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1840*, ed. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 43-47. Rotundo found that mothers stressed Christian duty and piety with their sons more than fathers, who more often focused on achievement. In Pick's case, Mary's influence outweighed that of any men he knew. Moreover, Pick's closest role models were his brothers Edward and Joseph who exemplified the ideals of piety, self-control, and virtue. For a psychoanalytic analysis, see Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 187. Chodorow believes close mother-son relationships result in a "pseudo-independence" in sons causing a generalized desire to please and dependency on others.

[63] MPT Journal, February 26, 1837; Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 230; MPT to TPT, December 4, 1837.

[64] TPT to Charles W. Everest, October 21, 1839.

[65] A. P. Marvin to TPT, September 10, 1838; TPT to John S. Tyler, December 24, 1839, TPT Letterbook.

[66] TPT Journal, October 30, 1838-January 30, 1839.

[67] *Ibid.*; MPT to TPT, December 9, 1838, TPT Letterbook. On the importance of nineteenth-century letter writing for courting couples, see Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, 9-12.

[68] TPT Journal, February-May 1839.

[69] Cabot, *Annals of Brattleboro*, 276; Edward gave an anti-slavery speech in Brattleboro in 1836. For Royall Tyler's views on slavery, see Carson and Carson, *Royall Tyler*, 62-65, 95-96.

[70] TPT Journal, February 2, March 26, April 28, May 11, 1839; TPT to MPT, April 5, 1839.

[71] TPT Journal, December 25, 1839.

[72] TPT to MPT, October 17, 1840; Carson, "Memoirs," xiv; Certificate of Ordination, TPT Letterbook.

[73] MPT to TPT, March 29, 1841, TPT Letterbook. The concept of ideal womanhood in the mid-nineteenth century is outlined in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174.

[74] For problems in Christ Church, Guilford, see John B. Pratt to TPT, April 23, 1841, and *Journal of Proceedings of the Fifty-First Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Vermont; Being the Ninth Annual Convention Since the Full Organization of the Diocese; Held in St. Paul's Church, Vergennes, on the 15th and 16th Days of September, 1841* (Burlington, 1841), 22. For Pick's lack of interest in Vermont parishes, see John H. Hopkins to TPT, April 13, 1841, and October 25, 1841; and Carleton Chase to TPT, November 17, 1841, TPT Letterbook.

[75] *Journal Episcopal Church*, 1841; R. N. Harrison to TPT, December 10 and 29, 1841, TPT Letterbook.

[76] Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: the New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 36-79; Daniel H. Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspiration, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 108-112; Allmendinger, *Paupers and Scholars*, 50-76.

[77] Carleton Chase to TPT, November 17, 1841, TPT Letterbook.

[78] David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont 1791-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; repr. AMS Press, 1966), 25-62; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 80-116, 187-246; Green, *Episcopal Church*, 8; and *Journal Episcopal Church*, 1841; 1842.

[79] Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal*, 99-102; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 196-206. Demos stresses the general confusion for youth over questions of authority. Roth concentrates on anxiety over the future stemming from a decline in economic opportunity.

[80] MPT to TPT, May 9, 1842; Carson, "Memoirs," xiv-xv.

[81] Melville, *Tyler-Browns*, Appendix.

[82] TPT to Caroline Clark, April 22, 1840, TPT Letterbook.

[83] Carson, "Memoirs," 83.