

## Last Will and Testament of Ebenezer Parkman, November 5, 1782<sup>1</sup>

Transcribed by Ross W. Beales, Jr.

The Reverend Ebenezer Parkman preached his final sermon on Sunday, October 27, 1782, and four days later, he wrote, "From the Evening before, at Midnight [and?] this morning I was so exceed[ingly] short breathed that I was as if Expiring. But God was pleased to relieve me. All praise to His Name!" Thus began his final illness, and on November 5, Peter Whitney, the minister of Northborough, "was again, *by Request* here, and assisted in making a *Will* which I signed, declared and owned before Justice *Hawes*." Parkman died a month later, December 5.

In making bequests to his daughters, he mentioned Mary (or Molly), the wife of the Reverend Eli Forbes, and Susannah, wife of the Reverend Jonathan Moore. Both Mary and Susannah had died, Mary of breast cancer on January 16, 1776, and Susannah on November 30, 1772, following the birth of her daughter, Anna Sophia (October 19, 1772). As the will provides, their share was "to their heirs."

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In the Name of God, Amen, I Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough  
in the county of Worcester, & commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Clerk, frail in body, but of Sound mind & memory, (thanks be given  
to God therefor,) knowing that it is appointed unto all men once to die,  
Do, in the fear of God, make & ordain this my last Will & Testament — —

First of all I resign my immortal Soul up to the great almighty Author  
reliiing wholly on the merits of the great Redeemer, through the mercy of  
God, for pardon & eternal Salvation — —

My Body I recommend to the earth, to be  
buried in decent Christian Manner, at the discretion of my Executrix, not  
doubting but that I Shall receive the Same again by the mighty <sup>power</sup> of God, at the  
resurrection, at the last day.

And as touching Such worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased the most  
merciful creator to bless me, I give & bequeath thereof, as follows ———

Imprimus. I give to <sup>my</sup> well beloved wife Hannah, the improvement of all my Estate  
both real & personal, during her life, or during her remaining my widow,  
all my just debts & funeral Charges being (first of all) paid out of the Same,  
duely & Seasonably. —————

Item. To my eldest Son Ebenezer, (who has already received five hundred  
pounds old Tenor) besides other helps from time to time, I give & bequeath  
all my wearing apparel, my buckles, & my buttons, Rings etc.

Item. To my four Daughters, Mary, married to the Rev<sup>d</sup> Eli Forbes, Lucy

married to Col<sup>l</sup> Jeduthun Baldwin, Sarah, married to Rev<sup>d</sup> John Cushing, Susannah, married to Rev<sup>d</sup> Jonathan Moore, (each having receiv<sup>d</sup> four hundred pounds old tenor, to be estimated, however, according to the true value of the money about the time they were married, & to be accounted as So much of their portion,) or to their heirs, So much out of my estate <sup>^</sup>if any there be after the decease of my wife, as Shall make them equal with my other Children hereafter to be named. \_\_\_\_\_

Item. I give to my four Sons, William (who has already had a tract of land estimated at one hundred eighty pounds old tenor <sup>^</sup>~~crossed out~~), Alexander, (who has already received two hundred pounds old tenor) Breck, (besides what he has received in lands [*blot*]) & to Samuel (, <sup>(Besides<sup>2</sup>)</sup> all my right greater or less, in the mansion house, derived from my Ancestors, Situated near North battery in Boston, to each of them, So much, (when at the decease of my wife there Shall be a dividend of my Estate,) as Shall make them equal with my other Children.

Item. I give to my daughter Anna Sophia, married to M<sup>f</sup> Elijah Brigham (allowance being made for what She has already received) So much in any future dividend of my estate, as Shall give her an equal Share, in my estate, with the rest of my Children. \_\_\_\_\_

Item. I give to My Son Elias, (besides the Charges of his past liberal education) the work entitled “The religious Philosopher,”<sup>3</sup> in three Volumes, as being his full Share of my estate \_\_\_\_\_

Lastly. I constitute & appoint my wife, Hannah Parkman <sup>^</sup>abovesaid Sole Executrix of this my last will & Testament, recommending to her, to take for her assistance therein, Such of my Sons, as She pleases: hereby revoking all other wills & Testaments, by me made, & declaring this to be my last will & testament, & no other: In witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand & Seal, this fifth day of November in the Year of our Lord, one thousand Seven hundred, & eighty two, & in the Seventh Year of American Independence.

Eb<sup>r</sup> Parkman

Signed, Sealed, & published  
as the last will of Rev<sup>d</sup> Ebenezer Parkman  
in presence of,

Josiah Brigham  
Thomas Thacher  
Peter Whitney

<sup>1</sup>This transcription is from Parkman’s will, Worcester County Office of Probate, Series A., Case 45373, accessed through the website of AmericanAncestors (<https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/worcester-county-ma-probate-file-papers-1731-1881/image/?volumeId=30215&pageName=45373:1&rId=52242287>, Feb. 11, 2022).

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<sup>2</sup>The writing is not clear at this point. Samuel's name appears to be followed by a left parenthesis and comma, with the word "Besides" superscripted with another left parenthesis; there is no right parenthesis.

<sup>3</sup>Probably Bernard Nieuwentyt (1654-1718), *The Religious Philosopher: Or, the Right Use of Contemplating the Works of the Creator...Designed for the Conviction of Atheists and Infidels*, trans. John Chamberlain (3 vols.; London: Printed for J. Senex in Salisbury-Court, and W. Taylor, at the Ship in Pater-Noster-Row, 1718). This was not among the many books that Parkman mentioned in his diary. On his books, see Ross W. Beales, Jr., "Ebenezer Parkman's World of Print: A Country Parson and the Print Culture of Eighteenth-Century Anglo-America." *Library and Information History* 31, No. 4 (Nov. 2015), 229-57.