

**MRS. LUCRETIA  
(CHANDLER)  
BANCROFT**

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Mrs. Lucretia (Chandler) Bancroft by Mrs. Lucretia (Chandler) Bancroft & Horace Davis & Andrew McFarland Davis

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HORACE DAVIS & ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS**

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LUCRETIA (CHANDLER) BANCROFT.

MRS. LUCRETIA (CHANDLER) BANCROFT.

A LETTER TO HER DAUGHTER,

MRS. GHERARDI,

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

HORACE DAVIS,

AND HISTORICAL NOTES BY

ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS.

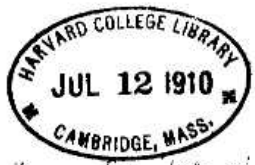
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FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, AT THE  
ANNUAL MEETING, OCTOBER 24, 1900.

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Worcester, Massachusetts:  
PRESS OF CHARLES HAMILTON,  
311 MAIN STREET.  
1901.

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From the estate of  
Gen. J. B. Huntington

### MRS. LUCRETIA (CHANDLER) BANCROFT.

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THE letter presented to the Society herewith was written in 1828 by Mrs. Bancroft, wife of Rev. Aaron Bancroft, of Worcester, to her daughter Mrs. Donato Gherardi. Mrs. Gherardi gave it to her daughter Clara, afterwards wife of George H. Davis, and Mrs. Davis took it to California, where I copied it in 1855.

What has become of the original I do not know, but I am sure that this is a perfect transcript of it. It is worthy of a place in the Archives of the Society from its connection, direct or indirect, with so many well known persons;<sup>1</sup> but to me it has a much deeper interest from the glimpses it gives of the home-life, the trials, the endurance, the patience of the women who shaped American Society in the days of the Revolution.

Mrs. Bancroft was a younger daughter of Judge John Chandler, of Worcester, whose portrait adorns the walls of our hall. He was the fourth John Chandler in lineal succession in that family, and after a career of unusual prosperity was banished for his loyalist sentiments, to which he owes the sobriquet of "Tory John," by which he was remembered in Worcester a hundred years ago.

The Chandlers were among the wealthiest and most distinguished families in the Worcester County aristocracy

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<sup>1</sup> The history of the family is closely identified with this Society. The husband of the writer of the letter was vice-president; her son-in-law, John Davis, was president; her son, George Bancroft, was vice-president; and three of her grandsons are at this time members of the Society, J. C. Bancroft Davis, Horace Davis, and Andrew McF. Davis.



of Colonial times. Starting from the humblest beginnings, for William Chandler, of Roxbury, the progenitor, died an object of charity; his son, the first John, emigrated to Woodstock, then part of Massachusetts Colony, where he gained a firm foothold. The second John advanced considerably in position. He accumulated a comfortable property; he represented Woodstock in the General Court and served in the Indian wars with some distinction as Major and Colonel. When Worcester County was formed in 1731 he was made Probate Judge and Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and he was for seven years a member of the Governor's Council.

The third John moved to Worcester, where he held pretty much every office in the County. He was Selectman, Town Treasurer, County Treasurer, Sheriff, Register of Probate, Register of Deeds, Probate Judge, Chief Justice of County Courts, Representative to the General Court, Colonel in the Militia and a member of the Governor's Council. He was also appointed by Governor Shirley, in 1754, a delegate to the proposed congress designed to concert measures for the union of the British American Colonies. He died, in 1762, wealthy and full of honors. In him the family reached its zenith.

His wife was Hannah Gardiner, great-granddaughter of Lieut. Lion Gardiner, who is one of the most picturesque figures of the early times. He was an English military engineer, sent over from Holland in 1635, by the Puritans, to construct and maintain a fort at the mouth of the Connecticut, as a check on the Manhattan Dutch. Gardiner built Fort Saybrook and commanded it till 1639, during which time he was constantly fighting, not with the Dutch, but with the Pequots. In 1639 he bought of the Indians Gardiner's Island, which lies at the east end of Long Island, whither he moved with his family. Many years later he wrote a very lively account of his four

years' experience at Fort Saybrook, which is still spicy reading.

In 1699, Gardiner's Island was visited by the notorious Capt. Kidd, who left in charge of the proprietor, John Gardiner, considerable merchandise and treasure, which Gardiner surrendered to the Governor of Massachusetts Bay when Kidd was arrested.

Hannah Gardiner, Chandler's wife, was born the year of Kidd's visit. Her portrait and her husband's, both by Smibert, are still in existence.

The fourth John Chandler, of whom we get a glimpse in this letter at his own fireside, smoking his pipe and petting his little daughter, succeeded his father in nearly all his public honors. He was Selectman, Town Treasurer, Town Clerk, County Treasurer, Sheriff, Judge of Probate and Representative to the General Court. He was also Colonel of the Worcester Regiment, and in 1757 saw active duty in that capacity. Chandler was married twice: first, to Dorothy Paine; second, to Mary Church. The latter was mother of Mrs. Bancroft and as such appears in this letter. Mary Church had in her veins the best of Pilgrim blood, going back even to the *Mayflower*. On her mother's side she was grandchild of Judge Nathaniel Paine, of Bristol, Judge of Probate, and of the Court of Common Pleas; also one of the Council of Massachusetts Bay. On her father's side she was granddaughter of Col. Benjamin Church, the distinguished soldier, who commanded the final expedition against King Philip; of which he left an account which is to-day the principal historical authority. Church's mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Warren, one of the *Mayflower's* passengers. Church's wife was Alice, daughter of Constant Southworth, who was step-son of Governor Bradford and took an active part in public affairs at Plymouth during the first generation.

Up to 1774 Chandler's life had been one of almost unbroken prosperity, but when the storm of rebellion

against England broke out, his loyalist sentiments brought him into angry opposition to popular feeling, and he was compelled to leave home and family and retire to Boston. When Boston fell into the hands of the Continental Army, he fled to Halifax and thence to London, where he spent the rest of his life, twenty-four years. This experience gave him in Worcester the nickname of "Tory John," while in England he was called the "Honest Refugee," because of the modesty of his claims against the British Government for losses sustained by reason of his loyalty.

After his flight his estate was probated as though he were dead. Dower was set off for his wife and the remainder was confiscated. Thus Mrs. Chandler was reduced from affluence and comfort to narrow circumstances, with a large family of young children to care for. This letter recalls the harshness of the change with a touch of bitterness that was very natural.

Mrs. Chandler survived her husband's flight only seven years, and died in 1783, leaving her daughter Lucretia (afterwards Mrs. Bancroft) virtually in charge of the family, though she was only eighteen years of age. Three years later, against the wishes of her brothers, she married the Rev. Aaron Bancroft, a young clergyman, of very narrow means, just settled at Worcester. His record is so well known in this Society as to require but little detail from me. He came of good family in Reading, was graduated at Harvard College in 1778; studied for the ministry, and came to Worcester in 1784 to preach as a candidate for the pulpit of the town church. The church being Calvinistic while Mr. Bancroft leaned to Arminianism, they refused to settle him, whereupon sixty-seven men left the old church, formed what was called a poll-parish, and invited Mr. Bancroft to occupy the new pulpit on an annual salary of \$500.00, which he accepted, and was duly settled in February, 1786.