

Allegra di Bonaventura. *For Adam's Sake: A Family Saga in Colonial New England*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013. Pp. 441. Paper \$18.95.

The various settlers of colonial North America and how they lived have long been a subject of historical inquiry. Allegra di Bonaventura's deep analysis of Joshua Hempstead's diary, a shipwright in New London, Connecticut between 1711 and 1758, adds to this scholarship in astonishing ways. Other historians have used the diary to shed light on New England agricultural and economic practices. Di Bonaventura, an Associate Dean at Yale, concentrates on a few cryptic references to Adam, an enslaved worker in the Hempstead household. In doing so, she reveals the hidden and important story of slavery in New England.

The focus on Adam requires an extensive study of five families across multiple generations. Through court and public records, the Hempstead diary and private letters, di Bonaventura pieces together a portrait of Adam Jackson's life. The number of characters and the amount of information presented about their individual experiences demonstrates her extensive familiarity with these primary sources. More than just the story of Adam Jackson, *For Adam's Sake* shows a wide social spectrum as it played out in New London in the century and a half prior to the American Revolution.

The recurring themes reflect di Bonaventura's intended focus on the public and private affairs of colonial families. The Hempstead, Winthrop, Livingston, Rogers, and Jackson families represent widely varying levels of economic success, social standing, and domestic stability. The book is ultimately about daily experiences in this small New England settlement that show just how intertwined the lives of black and white, free and unfree people were. This purpose is highlighted further through the use of fascinating anecdotes about divorce, adultery, out-of-wedlock offspring, interracial sex, and not least of all, the colorful Rogerenes, the first American-born religious sect led by John Rogers.

The first ten chapters detail the time before Adam Jackson's appearance in the Hempstead diary, and provide extensive background information about each of the many characters and the complicated interactions and circumstances that led to Hempstead's ownership of Adam. It is truly for Adam's sake that di Bonaventura excavates the stories because we can know so little about Adam himself. Often switching between historical analysis and captivating narratives, the complex storylines allow di Bonaventura to address standards of litigation, property ownership, family, fornication, crime and punishment, and religious practices. Though at times confusing, because of the plethora of people who often share first names, the personal dramas will keep readers engaged.

John Jackson, Adam's father, battled his entire adult life to free his family and to keep his children together as the laws of colonial slavery pulled them apart. Though John earned his freedom, his children were slaves due to their mother's enslaved status at the time of their birth. Eventually John Jackson secured freedom for his wife and all but two of his children, including Adam. As the Jackson family navigated between freedom and enslavement, their experiences illustrate important features of colonial life: slave ownership was a significant part of household property and a recurring theme in the legal proceedings in New England.

The second half of *For Adam's Sake* draws mostly on, and is thus limited by, the parameters of Hempstead's daily journal. Shining a spotlight onto this colonial New England town exposes the marginalized members of the community, ranging from little-known Rogerenes

to the Jackson family. These new insights of individuals previously lost to history, are indicative of di Bonaventura's mastery of the primary sources. *For Adam's Sake* adds to Early American historians' understanding of colonial life; the detailed excavation of evidence and the beautiful prose make it a worthwhile example to all graduate students of history. Finally, her creative narrative can engage a wider audience including screenwriters, who will enjoy the intricate web of human interaction.

*Gordon Sutton*