

AMST 335
New England
Roger Williams University
2:00-3:20
CAS 228
Fall Semester, 2006

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Week of October 31, 2006

I've never had this class fall on Halloween before. It strikes me that there is reason to commemorate the event for reasons which I'm going to post to the class website rather than discuss at length here. The magic word is *Salem*, outside of Boston probably the most well known New England location, for reasons loosely associated with October 31.

**For Tuesday, October 31,
Read or re-read, in *Nylander*,**

Chapter III. *Going to Housekeeping*, pp. 54 - 73

Going to Housekeeping refers to the rituals surrounding courtship, marriage, and the establishment of new households. You will want to note the ages at which marriage happened, and also the relationship between marriage and household establishment...these two things were not as closely allied as they are in our day. Note the degree to which marriage remained a financial arrangement, and the legal aspects, including those designed to protect women. New England (more particularly, Boston) became a center of self-help books for women establishing new households, and women's magazines start to shape "taste" much the way they do today.

Chapter IV *Frosty Mornings and Stinging Fingers: The Effects of Winter* pp. 74 - 103

Evidence suggests that New England was a colder place in the mid 19th century than it is today. Perhaps the effect of this chapter could best be realized by reading it in front of an open window! Firewood provided both a problem and an opportunity. Imagine the amount of wood necessary to heat the residences of a city the size of Boston. I'll recruit someone to bring a tape measure as an aid to visualization. Recognize, too, the dangers of fire and the tragedies which resulted from causes as simple as a random spark. Some quaint New England customs arose as a response to incredibly frigid temperatures... *indoors*. Among these, bundling is perhaps the most famous.

For *Friday, November 3,*

Read, in Nylander,

Chapter V *Clean, Bright, and Comfortable: Dimensions of Housework* pp. 104 -142

Chapter V reminds us of two related things. First, inefficient technologies are frequently dirty technologies, and second, nothing drives invention harder than necessity. Text and illustrations alike will provide evidence of both the desire for, and difficulty of attaining of, cleanliness. We'll also see how innovations begin to make the lives of New Englanders more pleasant. Be careful to recognize the truth in the old saying that we don't miss what we've never had.

Chapter VI: *Clean and Decent: A Family's Clothing* pp.143 -162

This chapter is about more than mere clothing. Of course, clothing isn't really "mere," anyhow. All one needs to do is think about how much time and effort we spend choosing our garments. This chapter marks the transition from a period in which clothes were almost entirely home products (homespun becomes a metaphor for everything from moral sayings to humor) to products made at least partly by machine in the great mills of towns like Lawrence and Lowell and Fall River. Be aware of who or what served as an "arbiter of taste". Note, too which occasions called for "special regalia". Finally, be aware that Nylander has chosen to consider *personal cleanliness* in this chapter, and not the preceding one.