

OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND

*A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Ancient Buildings,
Household Furnishings, Domestic Arts, Manners and Customs,
and Minor Antiquities of the New England People*

BULLETIN OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES

Volume LII, No. 3

January-March, 1962

Serial No. 187

The Forgotten Courtship of David and Marcy Spear 1785-1787

A series of letters arranged and edited by Robert Bartlett Haas, Head, Department of Arts and Humanities, University Extension, University of California, Los Angeles

DAVID Spear, junior, was the eldest son of David and Sarah Stoddard Spear of Boston. He was born, as family records show, "at 12 O'clock in the day" on September 18, 1764. He was a descendent of George Spear of Weymouth, England, who settled in Braintree, Massachusetts around 1640.

In the year of his birth, David's father purchased the property adjacent to Long Wharf (between Butler's Row and the warehouses and shops on King Street) to be known as "Spear's Wharf." Two decades later David Spear, senior, was a merchant of consequence. He had weathered the Revolution with two docks on the Boston Harbor, had sizable ships of his own, a well-stocked store on State Street, and a three-story residence with "47 windows" on Friend Street, over-

looking the Mill Pond and the Charles River beyond.

David was twenty when his father wrote this description of his expanding business:

"We have been removed about three weeks to a Store justly celebrated for its Elegancy and Grandeur, its situation in every respect agreeable, from it we have no obstruction to prevent a most beautiful prospect of the Harbour on one side, and as pleasing a prospect of the Green-fields of Dorchester on the other, and what in my opinion adds very considerably to its lustre, is an elegant variety of Goods with which the Shelves all round are crowded, the quantity of which I presume you will not think small when I tell you that its more than three times as large as we removed from in State- Street—

We have in this Store ten Doors and about thirty Windows. This truly Elegant as well as capacious Store is situated on Foster's Wharf."

David was ready to get started in an occupation of his own, but times were parlous. For a while he supercargoed on his father's brig. The elder Spear's was not the easiest temperament for an optimistic young man to get along with:

"The anniversary of the Independence was celebrated yesterday, but in a manner not worth description. I never saw a public-day less splendid, the Oration nor any other of the diversions were worthy attention."

"There's a Lady here from England, Madame Hayley, I never saw her till yesterday. It was truly ridiculous to see the homage paid to the conceited thing, they'd do better to pay their obeisance to their Creator, than to this proud Lump of Clay. Money's the cause—O Tempore! O Mores! I find deceit so prevalent in the world that it makes me exceedingly discontented.

"I hope you are well. I an't; I wish I was.—Am Yrs.

D.S."

Not wanting to fail in business as so many of his contemporaries had, David swallowed his pride and began to clerk for his father.

In 1785, at the most financially inconvenient and humanly natural time of his life, David fell in love with Marcy Higgins. She was the youngest daughter of Freeman and Thankful Higgins of Eastham. Marcy was nineteen. She was spending the winter in Boston when she met David. Two and a half years elapsed before financial and family difficulties were surmounted and their marriage could take place.

The letters which record their courtship were recently discovered in California. They are still in the possession of a branch of the Spear family which came west during the Gold Rush and settled in San Francisco.

The Letters of 1785

Their courtship begins in secrecy to avoid family interference. David sends his letters to the home of Marcy's sister in Cross Street. Gradually his letters move away from the cautious formalism of a young man in his first experiments with love to the abandoned expression of one who has made his full avowal. He urges Marcy to express herself freely too, to write often, and to utilize the correspondence for improving her spelling.

Only one of Marcy Higgins' letters remains. Family legend says she destroyed the others after her marriage in deference to David's superior education. Yet, from the one letter left, we can conjure up more of Marcy's whimsical personality than we can David's, despite his many stilted "epistles."

[1] [ca. Feb. 1785]
Miss M. HIGGINS—Cross Street—
Dr. Miss

As you was so kind as to accept of my Invitation so readily, perhaps I may walk down your way at half past Six—and if it be agreeable to you I will be at the head of the Street and wait on you—if you incline to go you may tell the Bearer to tel me yes—and if not—no—but if your Sister is acquainted with your going, send word *she is* and I will walk in—my reasons for being backward in wait'g on you in the house, is if your Sister does not know it already, I would not wish her to—Yr. in haste D.S.

[2]

[ca. Feb. 1785]

Excessive importunity has obliged me to put a restraint on my own inclinations, to comply with the earnest solicitations of another, and will deprive me of the exquisite pleasures and felicity which otherwise I should expect to enjoy in your Company tomorrow evening. Permit me my Dear to transcribe a few lines of Mrs. Rowe's and consider them as meant for a description of the Happiness I enjoy when with you.

"Not Bless'd Arabia, where her spices flow,
And load the western Breezes with their Spoils,
Is half so sweet, nor half so sweet the Breath
Of op'ning roses, when the dewy morn
Knows the garden's pride, while the glad sun
Calls out the blossoming life of every flow'r."

I know of no better way than this of communicating it to you. To prevent a mistake, I have sent by the Bearer, both for your amusement and to serve as a Blind in delivering this, should he see anyone else beside yourself, a Magazine I sent to London for . . . which perhaps you may find entertaining, as it is calculated solely for the amusement of your Sex—I wish you every enjoyment necessary to your Happiness—and are sincerely yours D.S.

[3]

[Wed Eveng. 8 o'clock]

Miss MARCY HIGGINS—Cross Street

My Dear Marcy

I have just read your most welcome and enchanting Epistle. Nothing unexpected must again transpire to blast me in my present agreeable connexion with you. You seem rather backward in expressions of the tender kind, but I believe you sincere. Do my dear let me hear from you in this manner again—banish Diffidence—be assured of my fidelity—and be emboldened by it to speak your mind more freely. Did I ever deceive you? It is not my intent, do therefore put off all re-

straint and be as explicit as possible. I admire your good sense, but think you may improve, a constant correspondence kept up in this way will be useful to us both, it will make writing come more easy and familiar, you know the saying "practice makes perfect"—

I am my dear your sincere admirer and constant Friend—D.S. Jr.

[4]

[ca. March, 1785]

Miss MARCY HIGGINS—Cross Street

. . . You tell me you ever hope I shall be Dear to you, as if you was doubtful whether it would always be so or not, but it makes up for it in the next sentence, when you tell me my absence will ever Distress you, this sounds pleasingly, as if you took some pleasure in my Company, . . . and that it was ever likely to be so. I thank you for your Compliment, but think myself little deserving it. . . .

. . . I will just remind you of your letter not being *directed* to any one, I however suppose by the tenor of it that it was meant for me.

[5]

[State Street June 22d 1785]

MY DEAR MISS H.

You charm me more and more, every letter I receive from you adds to my former opinion of your abilities, I think it a great pity that so much good Sense as you are possessed of should have remained so long in obscurity. You give me great encouragement by saying that as often as I chose to write it will always give you pleasure. . . . But my Dearest you cannot surely mean for me to write you and for you not to return me an answer to each Letter. . . . I am extremely glad you begin to feel the advantages to be gained in this way, and I must freely confess to you that you have answered my most sanguine wishes. I think you now deficient in no

one thing except sp—l—g. But in this I have not the least doubt, you will soon be nearly perfect in, for in my opinion you are very Docile. Pray write me as often as opy. and leisure will permit, and consider well of the advantages to be gained by it.—You may rest assured of their always being kindly received by—Your sincere Friend etc.

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[6] [State Street Saturday Afternoon
June 25, 1785]

My Dear Marcy

Your reply to my last was not so copious as I might reasonably have expected; but my dear it gives me great pleasure to find I have already gained your Friendship, and by your expressions it appears to be your particular Friendship too—though not by the Flattery which you please to term it, that my last was made up of. Be assured my dear what was there wrote were the genuine feelings which proceeded from my Heart; and I am sorry my Dearest Dear, you misconstrued them so widely from my meaning. You can not think I flattered you when I tell you this last of yours is not sp—it nigh so well as the one preceding it, but the late hour at which you wrote it sufficiently apologises for this. The next I hope will be more correct . . . and that you will endeavor to improve as much in your sp-l—ng as possible. Pray excuse my boldness in speaking so freely and depend on it I am *only* Yours—David Spear Jr.

[7] [No date: after the above]
JOHN J. SPEAR

MY DEAR

I RESEVED YOUR KIND LETTER SUNDY NIGHT WICH WAS AS WELCOME TO ME AS A CORDIL TO FAINTING SPIRITS HEAVEN GRANT THE DESIGN BE REAL. LOVE IS NEVER FREE FROM FEARS AND

MY PRESAGING MIND BIDS ME NOT BE TOO CONFIDENT MY DEAR I GO ASTRAY IN MY SP BUT WHEN BLIND LOVE GUIDES WHO CAN FOR BEAR GOING ASTRAY BUT MY DEAR LET ALL OF MY FAULTS BE FORGIVEN BY YOUR TENDER HEART MY DEAR YOUR SENCE IS CLEAR LIKE YOUR ACTTIONS. AND THE SPIRIT THAT SHINES IN YOUR LIENS GLOW IN YOUR EYES O MY DEAR MAY YOU LIVE LONG AND HAPPY IN THE ENJOYMENT OF THOSE BLESSINGS WICH PROVIDENCE HAS BESTOWED ON YOU O MY HEART LIKE A POOR BIRD WHICH IS HUNTED FROM HER NEST IS STILL RETURNING TO THE PLACE OF ITS AFFECTIONS AND AFTER SOME VAIN EFFORTS TO FLY OFF SETTLES AGAIN WHEAIR ALL OF ITS CARES AND ALL ITS TINDERNESS ARE CENTERED.

[8] [June 29th 1785]

MISS MARCY HIGGINS [Cross Street]

Dear Marcy

My last to you would not be more welcome and pleasing to you than this last of yours to me.—my Dear was it possible for you to search the inmost recesses of my Love-stricken Heart, I am sure you would then be confident I have no other Design but to promote your Happiness; but as this *cannot be* I have no other way of making you sensible of it than by a symmetry of Conduct and a respectful behavior towards you, which I believe you will not say I ever swerved from. My heart cleaves to you, and, as a feeble Vine entwines itself around a tree for support and security, just so my Dear it is I find you my only support and comfort, when tired out with the Fatigues of the Day past, I can enjoy a tranquil Hour in the Bosom of one on whom my happiness in this world entirely depends. You are my only Dernier of resort. . . . I must compliment you on your rapid improvement,

and do not doubt you will soon be nearly perfect in every accomplishment requisite, if you will continue a correspondence as usual.

The Letters of 1786

After spending a second winter in Boston, Marcy again returns to Eastham. David has made her two gifts: a copy of *Pamela*, whose maxims he urges her to follow, and his "image" in the form of a portrait-miniature.

Marcy has endeared herself to the Spear family by patching up a rift between David's mother and sister. Since David and Marcy appear bent upon marriage, David's father "has gone so far as to say" he will not hinder their union providing business improves enough to put David "in circumstances to change (his) present Condition."

[9] [Boston, May 9th, 1786]
MISS MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

By Capt. Higgins
My Best Beloved.—

I have been waiting with a tolerable degree of patience in expectation of hearing from you; but with very little hopes as the Winds were unfavorable to come here and very favorable to go from hence, in consequence I think you must have had a tolerably good passage. . . . There is several things transpired which are greatly in our favor. One very important circumstance is that my father has even gone so far as to say to my Sister that he shall not hinder our Union provided we are bent upon it. . . . The good news has conduced to raise my Spirits considerably—You may depend upon it my Dear it is my most sanguine wish and intent.

. . . I dare not ask your parents consent at present as you know my Love I am not in Circumstances to change my present

Condition. I have advised with my Father with regard to entering into Business, and . . . he thinks I had better tarry where I be as long as I am wanted . . . this is the only [thing] which prevents our being United in Hymens Bond's excepting Providence shall intervene and seperate us. . . . Believe me to be now and ever most truly and sincerely yours DAVID SPEAR JR.

[10] [Boston, June 4th 1786]
MISS MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

By Capt. Knowles
My Dearest Dear

You will please to excuse my writing on Sunday, but I have but little time to spare on other Days. I have not however neglected going to Meeting; I have been all Day. . . . Pray come [back] as soon as ever you can—I do not see how I can endure it much longer—You have my image visibly before you, and this may possibly help to make my Absence more light and easy—But I have nothing of that kind to divert myself with—Your image however is so deeply imprinted in my mind, that you are ever before my eyes though invisible—I often clasp you in my arms, and kiss the sweet ambrosia which distills from your balmy Lips, in my dreams. But on waking, find I have only grasped a Phantom, and what I then thought a reality I find to have only been in imagination.

You tell me that you are grown much fatter than you was when you went from here, and that I should hardly know you and I suppose you might have added that you had grown handsomer withal; you was esteemed by everyone who saw you here before you went home, extremely pretty; and if you are now grown much handsomer, you must certainly be a perfect Beauty—Indeed I should actually be

afraid of being *Rival'd* did I not put the greatest confidence in your Fidelity to me—I don't know but I shall find it necessary to get a mask for you, least some lewd Fellow, who being captivated by your pretty Face, may be tempted to steal you. . . . You need not be afraid of tiring my patience by writing too much, I would set up all Night to read your Letters, if I could find no other time to read them in, and should not think my time ill spent neither. My Parents . . . join me in wishing you . . . a Happy-New-Year and it is my sincerest Wish my Dearest-Life that you may live to enjoy very many Happy-New-Years in concert with your Sincere Friend and Affectionate Lover—DAVID SPEAR JR.

[11] [Boston, June 17th, 1786]
Miss MARCY HIGGINS [Eastham]

In Capt. Gray, care of Squire Freeman's Lady
My Dear Miss Higgins

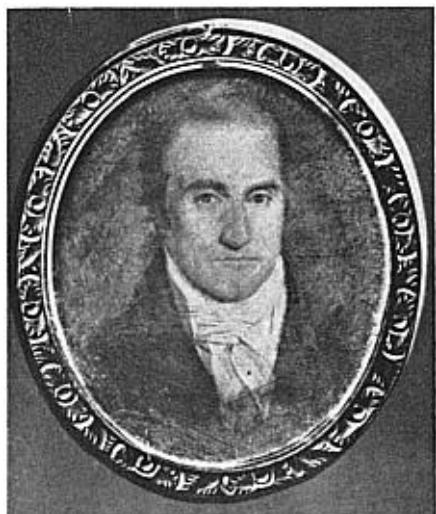
While others are enjoying the pleasure of traversing the Bridge to and fro which is this day opened . . . across the Charles River from this Town to Charlestown . . . for people of every denomination to pass upon free cost, I have in preference of partaking of this kind of diversion, retired to my chamber alone to write to you. . . . I have not however omitted seeing the procession cross over, and have also walked over the Bridge myself today, in Company with our own Family. The Bridge is computed to be large enough to contain Fifteen thousand people at one time, and it is supposed there were that number crossed over it. . . . This is a vast number my Dear, and while they were passing . . . it seemed to look alive. The Carriages which pass over it make a great noise—we can hear them very plain at our House and we have a very fair prospect of it. The Lamps which are light up-

on the Bridge . . . made a most magnificent appearance. I have something to boast upon which every one can not, that I have crossed over Charles River, which is a much greater distance than Peter went over the Water, without having his doubt as to the solidity of the foundation —there is however this difference, he having walked upon the Water and I over it.

. . . Being deprived of you my fair-one, I will now depart from matters relative to the Bridge, and will give you a description, as well as I know how, of the new *Fashions* we have here since you left us. Mr. Geyer and his Family, who lately arrived here from London, have introduced them among us—The Ladies Head-Dresses are composed of a Cap which comes down over their Ears and almost meets upon each side of their Face, and then they have a very curious Hat, made of stamped Paper. . . . This Hat is monstrous large and keeps the Sun from their Faces equally as well as an Umbrella—The crown is made of Yellow-silk, like the crown of a Bonnet, and is set off with yellow Ribband, which is tied in a Beau and hangs down over their shoulders—They wear white Calico Gowns, with the waists pleated, which looks very neat and they have yellow Sashes. Their Shoes are also trimmed with yellow—But what I like in them is, their Bosoms and Necks being well covered, with a good thick lawn Handkerchief or Nabob, which is ruffled and pinned very close. Then they have 2 pieces of Paste-Board, I believe, which makes their Stomaks come out very full. I hope you will not think me captivated with them by my taking such particular notice of their Dress—I assure you at present it looks very odd and fantastical, for you know my Dear that yellow was never generally esteemed a genteel colour, but

I suppose if it becomes Fashionable it will of consequence be pretty. . . . Scarlet is much worn by the Gentlemen, and is reckoned very Fashionable; without the addition of yellow trimmings to set it off. I have not got my scarlet coat as yet—indeed I have been very negligent of my Dress since your Absence, as there is no one here whom I wish to please in this way.

We had two very fine Lobsters for Supper—it did me good to see how much



DAVID SPEAR, JR.

From a miniature, now lost.

perfect harmony subsists between my Sister and my Mother's Friends—and when I reflect that this was brought about by no other than you, My Sweetest Dear, I am in raptures with you,—But my sweeten, when I reflect further that I am at present deprived of your agreeable Company, and know not when I shall see you again, I feel extremely disagreeable. I have almost always in memory the song which you used sometimes to repeat to me, of, "Shepherds, I have lost my Love etc." I am my pretty Dear

with the highest veneration your Affectionate Adorer—

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[12] [Boston, July 8, 1786]

Miss MARCY HIGGINS [Eastham]

Capt Nathaniel Knowle

My Dearest Love,

Your Letter to my Sister was a very good one. There was but very little of it spelt wrong. This I rectified and Sealed it up and delivered it the same evening I received it. She was very much pleased with it. I went next Morning with the appearance of a great deal of impatience to see what you had wrote, and she showed it to me, without the least suspicion that I had seen it before she did. You see, my Dear, how well I can play the Hypocrite. . . . My Father has also seen it; he said that it was a very sensible and well wrote Letter, and is much pleased with your manner of writing.

Nature has been very lavish to you in this respect, as well as in *almost all* other good qualities, and I think I may justly bring *Pamela* as a comparison for you, provided your future conduct comes as nearly up to hers as I think your present does. You have this *Book* with you, and I hope that you read it often and endeavor to live up to Pamela's Maxims. In my Opinion they are truly worthy of Imitation. I am sure that I shall have reason of rejoice exceedingly, in being possessed of you.

There has been more young Fellows of my Acquaintance failed in Business since I wrote you last about it—I am afraid as yet to fill a space in the Gap, by entering into Business myself.

I am going to tell you a strang piece of News—Mr. Towle is at length *married* to Miss Sally Makepiece—his Marriage was as odd as his *Courtship*—there is not

one that I can find who knows the exact time—My Brother and Sister where he boarded did not know of it until afterwards, and altho he has gone into House-keeping in his new House, he yet keeps his Clothes at my Sisters, and goes there as usual when he wants to shift them. He is a very strange man. I take pleasure in pestering such people, I therefore distributed Writings among the printers and got it put into almost all the Newspapers in Town so that by this means it has become very public and his intentions of keeping it private baffled!

Miss Fanny Boyd has returned—But she is in a bad state of Health. She fell out of a Chaise while at Newbury.

We have a famous Horse-Rider arrived among us from one of the Southern States—he has come highly recommended by General Washington, as being very serviceable having suffered very considerably in his Army during the War. Being an American withal, our Selectmen have granted him permission to perform his Equestrian *Feats* at the bottom of the Mall, on the same spot where the much famed *Orchestra* stood last summer—They have moved it nearly opposite on the other side of the Street and have converted it into a Stable—It is truly degrading, that this place should thus degenerate, being designed solely, as was said, to please the Lovers of Musick with its melodious sounds. I have enclosed you one of his advertisements.

You will please to remember me as desired in my other Letters to all your Friends at Home and believe me as ever to be truly your Friend and Lover

DAVID SPEAR JR.

The Letters of 1787

David is at last able to ask the consent of Marcy's parents. Everyone concerned

is now reconciled to their marriage in the spring of 1787. The elder Spears are arranging an apartment for the couple in their home on Friend Street. David's father provides the household furnishing and a "gay" wardrobe for both the lovers. He is not so dour after all.

Marcy requests a private wedding. David sets out for Eastham on April 30, 1787, trusting in God and the health of Parson Bascom. The last letters are written against the background of "Shay's Rebellion."

[13]

[Boston, 1787]

To Miss MARCY HIGGINS [Eastham]

By Capt. Kimball Clark, enclosed in a letter to Squire Freeman

My Dear,

I have not yet heard whether you got safe home or not—a whole month and not even hear this, my Dear! Is not this almost insupportable? All I have heard is that the Vessel you went in was seen going into the Harbor the next Friday after you went from here. The weather was such that I had flattered myself with the hopes that you would turn back again—

I found that you had left some of your things, although you was so certain you had left nothing. Your umbrella I have got locked up safe in my Chest, and I have not wore it since that first evening to Mr. Hayden's for the little Box you had left there, and also the little Sermon Book. *Pamela*, I suppose, remains there still, as I have not taken it away as you desired I should not. At Mrs. Boardman's you left behind your Thread-case and needles and your Velvet-Girdle. I intend to send them to you by the first opportunity I know to be a good one.

And now, my Dear, for matters more immediately important to our Future

Manner of Living. We have at length got two Master Carpenters at work in our house. Mr. Howland who is by far the best workman, is to finish the Lower Room—But the Front Room is to be done in a more elegant Manner, according to the newest Taste. It is to have no Closets, but instead thereof to have Arches, excepting a small Closet at one side of the Chimney, which will be convenient, but will not be perceived unless when the door is opened. In these Arches there will be two of those Lolling-Chairs you wished to have—one of them to stand in each Arch instead of Tables—these Chairs being more Fashionable. In the Window-Seats I propose to have two of them fixed with Draws and the other two to have Lids to lift up at the Top for the Convenience of containing Bottles. The other parts of the Room will be nearly the same as the one already finished, excepting this will have a Double-Cornish and the other has only a Single one. In short, my Dear, it is proposed to be fitted in the most Genteel manner and at the same time to be made as convenient as possible.

Now, My Dear for the Furniture. My Father told me in plain words that he means to make me a present of all we shall want, I mean the most Bulky part. This is very clever my Dear. He tells me that he does not wish me to lay out my Money in this way. But means to have me keep it for a help to me in getting into Business for myself.

You wished for a pair of plated Candlesticks. I have not got real ones. But I have got a pair that are much more durable and full as handsome, so much so that they have been taken to be Solid Silver. I have two other pair that are Brass and a pair of Steel Snuffers. This is something towards Housekeeping.

My Father is going to get Mr. Bright to do the Mehogany Furniture, who is

esteemed the neatest workman in town. My Father means to afford us a painted Carpet for the Room and likes our plan in the Figure we proposed having if the Painters can do it, and they approve of it also.

Mr. Hartwele is to finish the Chamber. They have both promised to keep steady at work; they do not doubt but that they can do the whole by the beginning of March. Everything will be ready for your reception as soon as you please. We have got another Maid in the stead of Molly, whome we intend to unship as soon as she gets well.

We have been more troubled with the Insurgents since you went from here than we were before. They again threatened coming to Cambridge and had actually assembled together in a number of Country Towns for this purpose, but hearing of the preparations that were making for their reception, this struck them with such a panick that they instantly dispersed—a number of Gentlemen from this Town and those adjacent taking advantage of this, went out upon Horses and took three of their Leaders prisoners. They are now in Jail, with a guard of Inhabitants set over them every night. This enraged Shay and his party to such a degree, that they assembled near two thousand men at Worcester who stopped the Court from sitting there and gave out that they would positively come immediately here and relieve the Leaders that were here confined—but the Season coming on so uncommonly severe, and they not having any means of subsistence, they thought it not advisable to stay there and starve, and accordingly marched off everyone to his own Home without doing much mischief—they are now about petitioning the General Court for a Reconciliation—

Agreeable to your desire and Uncle Boardman's request I went there on

Thanksgiving Evening, but I never saw a duller one. The walking was so very bad that there was scarce anybody there besides the Family—It happened to be the Ancient and Honorable Company's turn to watch that night over the Prisoners—This, added to their not having their Wives with them and Andrew Oliver's having the Tooth-Ache, spoilt their sport so that we did not play *Pawns* as usual, nor was there any Romping and Kissing carried on—which I was very glad of—nor have I Kissed or Fondled with any Female whatever in any respect since your Absence. I do not wish you to be any more true to me than I have been to you since your Absence. Be assured that I still remain and ever wish to be yours alone and nobody's else but truly and sincerely thine.

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[14] [Boston, Jan. 5, 1787]
To Miss MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

By Capt. Knowles
My Pretty Dear,

The man who told you I had become a Soldier was mistaken. I do not wish to be praised for exploits done by others—but although I had rather live in peace and quietness if it might be, yet when government is insulted in so audacious a manner by the very Individuals who formed it themselves, I think it the duty of every one to do their utmost to support it. This opinion it was that gave me an inclination to join the Light-Horse that went out in quest of the Insurgents.

My Brother has got appointed Inspector of Flaxseed by our joint endeavors, and I am going to enter into Partnership with him equally in the Branch of Business—it is pretty profitable while its lasts, which is only in the Autumn—But I have one or two other Schemes in my Head,

which if they succeed, I am in good hopes that I shall, by my Industry and Assiduity, be able to maintain you genteely.

I have engaged two sets of andirons of the same make and kind that you wished for.

Mr. Bright, who is an old Friend and Acquaintance of my Father's is to make all the Mehogany Furniture—and he tells me that he has the best of Wood, and will, as he comes across good pieces, lay them by a seasoning for this purpose, that we may have the very best he has. He professes a great deal of Friendship for my Father—and this, added to his being reckoned a very honest Man, and an extraordinary good Workman, is much in our favor, and I doubt not but that we shall have very good Furniture from him—the Chairs are different from any you ever saw, but they are very pretty, of the newest Taste, he tells me he can finish the whole in about 3 weeks after he begins.

In addition to mine, your Honored Parents, and you have the good Wishes of my Parents, my Brother and Sister, and all your Friends here—But *mine* you will take more principally to your dear Self, being most truly and sincerely yours.

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[15] [Boston, January 10, 1787]
To Miss MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham
Dear Marcy,

Only one side of a Quarto Sheet contains your Whole Letter—and even what you have wrote doth not contain any particulars that are in the least degree essential, excepting that you *was very well and in good Spirits*, which, however, by the way, I was extremely glad to hear—as it is the first time I have heard even this, since you went from hence, and this *Mighty Letter* of yours

has been 24 days coming about 30 Leagues. Nor can I conceive what you have been doing since you got Home. But I hope, my Dear, you have been as Chaste as I have, though I do not wish to make my Brags, yet my Dear I can say with safety that my inclinations have not led me astray, which makes me the more solicitous to know if you have been equally so—for I observe that you write in high Spirits, are very Concise, perhaps you have seen somebody at meeting the Day before, who might possible please you so well as might admit of your condescensions in granting him the favor of Gallanting you home, and perhaps this said person may have passed the Evening with you, which may possibly have been the Occasion of your Sleeping so late the next Morning—and this prevented your writing me so long a letter as you would otherwise have probably done. If this be the case it is inexcusable in you my Dear. I am not jealous of you, indeed I am not.— As I find you have need of a Dictator—you must grant me the honor of taking this upon myself, in this respect at least, that I may Lesson to you what I wish you to give me full information upon as a means of making you the more Careful and Considerate in the future. You may rest assured that I yet remain devotedly yours etc.

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[16] [Boston, Feb. 1st. 1787]
To MARCY HIGGINS [Eastham]

By Capt. Hopkins
My Dear Marcy

I can now give you a pretty good account of the Insurgents. General Lincoln went up among them with an Army and routed them, and from the last account was still pursuing them. I hope this will make an end of the Matter, but as they are very numerous, I rather think it will

be a considerable deal of time. The enclosed Hand-Bill contains the particulars.

It gives me great pleasure to find that what has been done and is doing to the House meets with your approbation in all respects. I find that tiles are very scarce, as yet I have not been able to get any, but I am in hopes that the Vessels which are expected from Europe in the Spring will bring some. Looking Glasses are also very scarce. I have not seen any as yet that will answer for the Lower Room, but for the Chamber I have got two which we had before in the House. The Carpet cannot be painted in the Winter Season, but in the Spring I hope to have it done.

I wish you to inform me what kind of Copperplate Furniture you prefer to cover the Lolling-Chairs, if you recollect, my Dear, you mentioned purple, but Scarlet is the most fashionable and airy; let me know which you will have, and it shall be procured agreeable to your Lik-ing.

I could wish that the time was not so far distant and that we could be joined in Hymen's sacred Bonds, if it might be, at an earlier period, for I must own to you that I am already quite tired out, and my patience is almost exhausted at being so long without you.

Believe me as ever sincere, and your Affectionate,

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[17] [Boston, March 3, 1787]
To MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

By the Hon'ble Solomon Freeman Esq.
My Lovely Dear,

I have received your most agreeable Epistle by Squire' Freeman which gave me the highest satisfaction. I am now my Dear fully informed of your Mind, as to our Marriage, and highly approve your plan, and I mean, God willing, to conduct accordingly. I cannot as yet inform

you the exact time I shall set out for Eastham. I am well pleased with your plan for having a private Wedding. I think the same with you my Dear that if we ask a few and not all your Friends, those we neglect will be affronted. I think it best not to ask any of them, excepting Brothers and Sisters, though I do not think they would go, the distance being so great.

Our Sentiments are perfectly Coincident; you well know my Dear that I have a great aversion to parade, and more especially in such trying times as these are —let everyone move in their own Sphere, and be contented with what they can get by their own Industry—Frugality and Oeconomy joined with this, are in my opinion, highly requisite as the most certain method of attaining to a merited possession of Wealth.

But, notwithstanding these are my Sentiments, I would not be thought niggardly, and therefore am desirous of knowing from you in what manner you would wish to appear as to Cloathing, and I now send you some patterns of the kinds of Silk most suitable for a Gown and Coat so that your Cloathes may be made up immediately after you get here, as it will be requisite for me to introduce you to my Friends as soon as I can with Convenience. Let me know which suits you best, by the First Vessel which comes here after the Spring opens, and I will endeavor to have you suited.

There will be no necessity of your having anything more provided before you come here, but a Cap and Ribbands etc—

And now, my Dear, as I have paid you a Compliment in first mentioning about your Cloathes, I now mean to pay you another by asking your advice with respect to my own. As I already know your wishes for me to have a Scarlet Coat, I

have already determined upon this, and mean also to have a Jacket of the Same, and Black Florentine Sattin *Breeches* or in other words as they are sometimes called *small Cloathes*, which my Father will give me. But I had some thoughts of getting myself a suit of white Kersymere besides. I wish to know your opinion of this, and whether it will be best for me to go gaily dressed or not when I go for you in the Spring. Perhaps your Parents and the other people will think me a Fop if I wear such nice Cloathing, and on the other hand, if I dress plain, they may think me a person of no Taste.

Perhaps the Light-Coat I already have, and my Blue Silk Jacket, Black Sattin Breeches and White Silk Stockings etc may answer as well as any.

It gives me great Pleasure my Dear to find that your Parents approve of my Conduct to you, but was any other person excepting your dear-self to set it forth in so glaring a Manner, I should certainly think they did it for the sole View to deceive me by soothing Flattery.

I beg leave to subscribe myself faithfully—Yours

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[18] [Boston, March 19th 1787]
To Miss MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

For'd by Capt Eli Nickerson

My Amiable Dear,

I am anxious to know about our Publishment. I am now told there will be occasion of our being Published here likewise. As it is not customary for the persons to do it themselves, Mr. Boardman has, with his usual Goodness offered to get a Certificate for me, which will add to the obligations I already owe him.

It is my present Intention to set out from here, the 30th day of April by Land,

and I shall wish to have our Nuptials consummated the 3rd Evening in May. I do not think there will be anybody to go with me but my Brother Jo, who intends coming back by water so that we shall have the pleasure of Riding alone, which will be very agreeable to me, provided it is to you. Pray my dear, had I better carry a little Wine, Lemons, and Loaf Sugar with me?

You tell me that Parson Bascom has been sick almost all this Winter, but I hope he will get well by the time we shall have need of him.

Believe me to be Affectionately yours
DAVID SPEAR JR.

[19] [Boston, April 14, 1787]
To Miss MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham

Honored by Mrs. Hayden
My Dear Love,

I hope before you receive this that our Publication will be complete, and that your Father will have obtained a Certificate from your Town-Clerk. I should be glad of one more Letter from you, if it be only to let me know this.

Supposing that there will be more Females than Males at the celebration of your Nuptials, and they have generally a Sweet-Tooth in their Head, I thought it would be more palatable to them to procure a Sweet Wine. I have therefore sent it in this Vessel, and I wish you would let it be put in some place in your House where there will be no danger of breaking the Bottles. There is a Gallon and a Half of it. The kind I have procured is a French Wine called *Frontinac*, and is very pleasant tasted—It is contained in nine Bottles, and packed in a rough square Box with a card upon the top marked D. S. I would not have you tell anybody what it contains, not even your Sister. I wish you

would not open it until I arrive with you. The Box of Wine you had better have set in as cool a place as possible, as the Nature of the Wine is such, that, if it is kept very warm it is apt to ferment, and may burst the Bottles.

Pray, My Dear, do inform me by Capt. Hopkins if it will be necessary for me to carry with me some West India Rum, and how much will be enough. Mr. Boardman tells me he sent three gallons upon the like occasion.

I am very glad to hear the people are so peaceable in your County. I could wish they were equally so this way. I rather suppose it is because they have more Sense than to endeavor by violent means to overturn a form of Government which every Individual has an interested claim in. They must, I think laugh at the folly of those who have gone so rashly to work to obtain, as they term it "Redress of Grievances"—There are several of their principal Leaders who will not be allowed the Privilege of taking the Oath of Allegiance. They have asked for it repeatedly, and have been denied, and have, in consequence, been obliged to Flee out of the State.

General Lincoln is still in pursuit of them, and it is very probable that the major part of them will be caught, as the General Court seems determined to make use of the most vigorous measures in order to reestablish Peace and Tranquility throughout the State.

They have declared them Rebels, and are about raising another Army to suppress the Rebellion, which has taken much deeper root than was at first imagined: it is therefore supposed that it will take considerable time before they can be brought entirely to a due subjection to the laws established by the Constitution.

You had no occasion to make an apology for the simplicity of your writing. Be assured my Dear Charmer this is the very thing that I admire in the dictation of your Epistles. It is a blessing you have derived from Nature—all your expressions seem to flow so easy that it is very plain to discover that they are entirely natural—and this it is, my Lovely Dear, that makes them the more Enchanting. They are in general preferred to elaborate expressions. Mine is too apt to be of this latter Stamp, and therefore cannot surely please the Ear so agreeably as yours. I see no other fault in yours but in the *Spelling*, which by the way, I wish you would be a little more careful to correct.

* * *

I saw Bill Taylor T'other Day, but did not speak to him; to tell you the truth I can not bear to see any Body that I know has offered to take any freedoms with you.

The Carpenters' Work in the Room and Chamber is now completed, and as soon as ever the weather will permit the Masons are to plaster the Walls and then it will be fitted for Papering. I have seen a House that has in one of its Rooms a plain Green Paper and in the other a plain Blue, with a very wide Border at the Bottom representing Curtains etc. There are a great variety of Fashions; I am totally at a loss what Kind to get. As this principally depends upon Fancy, I wish to have your opinion. The Room and Chamber I propose to have painted very light Colours if this is agreeable to you. Every person who has seen our new contrivances in the Room approves of them—they are certainly very convenient—There has not been the least fault found with any part of the work, but on the contrary it has been highly approved. I should therefore be loth to injure the looks of it, by having ordinary Tiles in it,

or in short to have any kind of ordinary Furniture in it.

I hope my Dear that the method I have taken will meet your approbation, but if it does not, I beg you will not be backward in letting me know it, but speak your mind freely, and be assured I shall not take it amiss. And Believe me to be as long as Life Endures, always yours—

DAVID SPEAR JR.

[20] [Boston, After, April 4, 1787]
Miss MARCY HIGGINS, Eastham
My dear Charmer

Perhaps this may be the last Letter you may have before we have the pleasure of seeing each other. As you have set the time and wish to have me go for you, I have everything that is necessary prepared all ready for your Reception. But my dear Charmer, notwithstanding all the preparations that are making for our intended Union, the great Governor of the Universe, who has power to conduct all things agreeable to his divine will and pleasure, has an undoubted right to disappoint us in our undertaking whenever he sees fit, as he knows what is best for us, and we are so frail that we know it not ourselves. I hope, however, God willing, to pay my obeisance to you personally at the time appointed. In these Hopes and expectations give me leave again to Subscribe myself fervently Your Lover

David Spear and Marcy Higgins were finally married May 3, 1787. They returned by coach to Boston, and after a decent interval no doubt Marcy was presented to David's friends in the "gown and coat" she had earlier selected by mail. As the years passed, there is every evidence David was able to support her in style. Probably she never became much of a speller, but by 1805 she had borne her twelfth child.