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THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD IN AMERICA:
1670-1870

BY
Karin Lee Fishbeck Calvert

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

June, 1979
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THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD IN AMERICA:
1670-1870

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INTRODUCTION

The children of early America have always been an especially difficult group for historians to study. Like many other minorities, children lacked the opportunity to document important aspects of their lives for themselves, and only infrequently appeared in the writings of their elders. Since children were frequently illiterate and normally minors under the law, they have left few personal or official documents behind them. Even their personal belongings rarely survived them, due to the common practice of passing such items from child to child until totally consumed. Adults have occasionally written to or about children in letters, sermons, children's books and childrearing manuals, but comparatively little space was given to a subject deemed inconsequential compared to more pressing political, religious and economic concerns. Indeed, as Michael Zuckerman pointed out in "Amusement in this Silent Country: The Family Life of William Byrd," it can be the very omission of reference to one's children that becomes significant. Most of the attention given to children in contemporary literature was of a normative nature - detailing the accepted behavior and moral character that a child should display. The evol-
ution of the perception of childhood as reflected in such normative writings has been admirably detailed by Peter Gregg Slater in Children in the New England Mind, in Death and in Life, but the very nature of the source material requires that Dr. Slater must deal with the perception of the child's spiritual nature rather than any consideration of his position as a member of a given society.

One relatively untapped source of documentary evidence concerning children and society's perception of children is the work of early American portrait painters. Hundreds of portraits of children are extant and offer a broader base for a quantitative study of children than any other surviving source. Individually, such portraits frequently can tell us very little; alone each is little more than potential illustrative material. However, when a large number of them are examined quantitatively, trends begin to emerge that suggest the pattern of the evolution of childhood as it was perceived in early American society.

Any portrait painter faced the problem of interpreting the physical features, personal history and social position of his subject in a two-dimensional medium. In theory, the spectrum of possible solutions to the problem were virtually endless. In reality, however, the artist adopted a schema of accepted conventions as a shorthand that could be understood by others in his society. This short-
hand of artistic conventions included a range of poses, costumes, settings and props deemed appropriate for the sex, age and social position of any particular sitter. Artists learned the techniques from other artists, their work or prints based on their work. Therefore, most artists would work in the mutually accepted manner of their time, or in one of the two or more accepted 'styles' that might be popular simultaneously. Gradually, as the society underwent change, the shorthand of artistic convention also changed to reflect new perceptions, new interests or new groups of clients for the painter. Portraiture thus represented a continuum of expression across time that was slowly evolving and redefining itself to meet the external pressures of an evolving society. A study, then, of the metamorphoses within the elements of portraiture may reveal the evolution of the perceptions of the society at large.

An historian's perspective permits him to see patterns where contemporaries of the events could not. Yet a twentieth-century historian cannot see objects with the eyes of the object's contemporaries. Nuances and shades of meaning have been lost. A detail that originally loudly broadcast social position, occupation or state of origin is now mute. The modern historian's sight is further clouded by the common associations of his own century. What in the eighteenth century was utilitarian may now be seen as quaint, what was was once labor-intensive and so precious, is now
common. Therefore, when studying portraiture, the historian must paradoxically struggle to see objects as their contemporaries would have seen them, without losing the valuable perspective afforded him by time and distance.

Another major difficulty in the interpretation of portraiture is the complexity of the network of symbols employed within the artistic conventions of a society. A symbol might continue to appear consistently in portraits spanning a considerable period of time, and yet the meaning of that symbol can change significantly within the same period. For example, a flower in the hand is a common convention extending from the seventeenth well into the nineteenth century. Yet in the seventeenth century the flower represented the cultivated, artificial and gracious - a garden in the wilderness, while by the nineteenth century it represented the wild, simple, wholesome product of nature. Thus the continuation of a symbol over time did not necessarily ensure the continuation of any one idea, and conversely, the continuation of an idea was not dependant upon one vehicle to represent it. Reading portraits, therefore, is not a matter of translation from symbol to word, but of monitoring trends over time and interpreting changing patterns in relationship to each other and the society at large. Occasionally an object in a portrait can be interpreted as having an absolute meaning. A society that portrays a young boy with a sword in his hand sees boyhood quite differently from one that
places a ball in his hand. More frequently the actual object itself is only significant in its relationship to other objects. The shape of a boy's collar in and of itself is insignificant, but the degree with which that shape mirrors or diverges from the shape of an adult man's collar can be telling. The accumulation of such small bits of information can point to a general trend of evolving relationships in a society.

While a great deal of information can be gleaned from a study of portraiture, there are limits to its usefulness. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, commissioning a portrait was an indulgence limited to members of the upper and perhaps upper middle classes. The ability to afford portraits of one's children was probably even more limited. In fact, of a sample of three hundred portraits from the eighteenth century, 50% were of women, 34% of men and only 16% contained children. A portrait of one's children was a rare luxury indeed. By the nineteenth century the proliferation of itinerant and amateur artists placed the opportunity of sitting for a portrait (even if only one done in crayon or charcoal) within the reach of the middle class. The commissioning of a portrait in the eighteenth century, then, was a statement of actuality - a clear announcement that one was of the better sort. By the nineteenth century, such a commission was frequently a statement of aspiration, a middle class attempt to imitate the wealthy. Interestingly
enough, portraiture has again reverted to a statement of actuality in the twentieth century when only the wealthy indulge in oil portraits of themselves and the vast majority of the population is content with a photograph.

Not only is portraiture limited to specific classes within the society, but it often tells us very little about the actual life of a specific child. Frequently the child was decked out in his best or borrowed finery, arranged in a conventional pose, holding a prop suggested or even supplied by the artist, all against a background of drapery, columns or distant vistas that in no way resembled the child's own home surroundings. Originality of design or technique was neither prized nor sought by artists or their clients before the last decades of the nineteenth century. Artists, therefore, commonly borrowed settings, props, poses and costumes from available prints based on English portraits. One such example of borrowed inspiration began with a mezzotint based on a portrait of young Lord Buckhurst and Lady Mary Sackville (Figure 1). The little dog in Lady Mary's arms was copied in 1705 in a portrait of Catherine of Braganza (Figure 2). Both the dog and the pose of Queen Catherine were then copied by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his portrait of Lady Caroline Russell of 1759 (Figure 3) and John Singleton Copley, in turn, working from a mezzotint of Reynolds' painting, copied the dog, the pose and the dress
of Lady Caroline in his portrait of Mrs. Jerathmael Bowers of 1763 (Figure 4). Either the portrait of Lady Caroline or Mrs. Bowers was the model some ten years later for the portrait of an unknown little girl and her pet dog (Figure 5). By that time the little dog was close to eighty years old. Similar chains of linked source material could be constructed for other American portraits as well. In fact, the print first mentioned of Lord Buckhurst (figure 1) spawned a host of portraits in America in the 1730's and 1740's of young boys posing with pet deer on baroque terraces (Figures 6, 7 and 8).

The practice of freely embellishing or altering the subject to be painted was not confined to the eighteenth century. Figure 9 is a portrait of Arabella Sparrow painted in 1848. On the back of the portrait an adult Arabella wrote:

Portrait of Arabella 'Lois' Sparrow Southworth. At 3 years of age - Painted by Mr. David Ryder of Rochester, Mass. my father's old home. I was sitting in the front room on a cricket - with strawberries in my hands to keep me quiet - at the Sparrow home on Wareham St. - 1848.

Arabella may have sat for the artist in the front room of her home, but the finished portrait depicts her in a lush garden with a landscape in the distance. Whether the setting is copied from a print, is of the artist's own imagination or is an accurate outdoor view of Arabella's home, it does not represent the actual scene that met the
artist's eyes when he faced his young subject. The historian who wishes to use portraits as a tool of social history would be unwise, therefore, to accept too literally what was before him on canvas. A portrait was not a photograph and was not conceived as a tool of documentation, but of representation. Objects within portraits do reflect the tastes and interests of the society, but not with the literalness, perhaps, of objects within photographs. To return to an earlier example, a small dog may not necessarily be on little girl's actual pet, but part of a convention that assumes pets to be properly linked with children. The fact that the dog was borrowed from a fashionable London print might indicate that the desire was stronger for provincial parents and artists to emulate the fashions of a cultural center, than to accurately record a moment of childhood. Nevertheless, the end product, the portrait, satisfied the artist's, the parent's and the larger society's expectations of a proper representation of a child. Since artistic conventions mirror social perceptions, the significant changes within portraiture indicate alterations within society's perception of childhood.
CHILDREN IN FAMILY GROUPS

For the purpose of this study, 900 portraits of children from earliest infancy to fourteen years of age were collected, ranging in date from 1670 to 1870. Only portraits of children by artists resident in America were included. As could be expected, the portraits from the early period of this study were woefully few in number, and thus any conclusions on childhood in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are extremely tentative. The portraits included a total of 1,344 children, of whom there were 639 boys, 532 girls, 159 children whose sex could not be determined and an additional 14 black children who will be discussed separately. The children represent portraits from 26 states, and have been divided into regional studies for New England, the Mid-States and the South. Unfortunately, there was no easy, obvious divisions between the three regions and a borderline across a gradient is always arbitrary. The method employed in selecting the divisions was to group together states influenced by a major cultural center. Thus Maryland was placed among the Mid-States, although some could argue for its inclusion in the South, because
Baltimore artists looked to Philadelphia as the regional center and many actually divided their time between the two cities. Of the children, 30% figured in New England portraits, 34% in portraits of the Mid-States, 22% in Southern portraits and 14% could not be regionally identified. The full geographic breakdown is presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Unfortunately, the age of the sitter was available for only about one-quarter of the children. Therefore, in order to divide children into groups above and below the age of seven for comparison frequently required a subjective decision based on appearance, dress or size in relation to adults or objects. This is a dubious method at best, since untrained artists did distort the size and shape of their young sitters. However, a test with the portraits of forty children whose ages were known resulted in 85% accuracy in assigning them to an age category, so it is reasonable to believe that the distortion rate for the entire sample population is similar. As there was no recognized age at which all children passed from infancy into childhood, the choice of seven years of age as a dividing line is, in itself, a somewhat arbitrary decision, and conclusions should not be too seriously affected should a few six-year-olds slip across the line to be counted with their elders. To be consistent with what seemed to have been an accepted convention of the
period, the term 'infant' will be used here for any child under the age of seven and 'child' for one between seven and fourteen.

Of the 1,330 children, 684 or 52% appeared in some form of family portrait, suggesting a fairly strong identification with the nuclear family group. The four basic types of family portraits were the portrait of the nuclear family of parents and children with or without additional relatives and servants, the sibling group, and the groups of mother and children and father and children. As indicated on Table 4, two of these types, the sibling group and the group of mother and children appeared in American portraits as early as 1670 and remained common throughout the two hundred years of this study. The sibling group was by far the most common form of family portrait and 25% of all children studied appeared in such one-generational group portraits. The portrait of mother and children, which included 11% of the children in the sample population, almost invariably consisted of a mother and a single infant. As individual baby portraits were not particularly popular, it is questionable whether the portrait of mother and child is indeed the portrait of a new baby being shown off by a proud parent or the portrait of a woman holding an appropriate prop, analagous to holding needlework or a book. The prop chosen by the artist was meant to comment
Portraits of complete nuclear families do not begin to appear until 1730 and do not appear in significant numbers until 1770, when the nuclear family seems to have suddenly become far more self-conscious. As Table 4 indicates, 21% of all children from the Mid-States were portrayed in a portrait of a complete nuclear family (that is, complete in its essential elements of parents and at least some of the offspring). In comparison, 10% of the children from New England and only 5% of the children from the South were part of a nuclear family portrait. These figures, however, do not reflect with total accuracy the sense of family identity apparent in portraits, since it was not uncommon, if the family could afford it, to commission separate portraits of family members, that would then be displayed together as a unit. The South, in particular, where portraits remained predominately the prerogative of the wealthy throughout both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seemed to prefer several individual portraits to one of a family group. Unfortunately, such individual portraits have been widely dispersed over the years making it impractical to attempt reconstitution for this study. Because of this,
however, it would be inaccurate to conclude from the evidence presented in Table 4 that a sense of Southern family identity differed quite so significantly from that of other regions in anything but method of self-presentation. Nonetheless, it does seem that the Mid-States, more than any other area, enjoyed perceiving of itself in familial terms.

In nuclear family portraits, the youngest child invariably was in close physical contact with the mother, usually either by sitting on her lap or leaning against her knee. In about half of the family portraits, the father did not make physical contact with any other family member (Figure 10), while in the other half he was in close proximity to or touching a young son (Figures 11, 20 and 24). Very rarely did a father hold a little daughter as occurs in Charles Wilson Peale's portrait of the Edward Lloyd Family. However, it was usually not the eldest but the youngest boy who was favored with his father's attention (unless the youngest was the baby the mother held), suggesting that men did wish to present themselves in an adjunct nurturing role. The conventional pattern of family portraiture, therefore, was that the youngest child was associated with the mother, the prime nurturer, the youngest (or second youngest) son with the father, and all other children arranged themselves more or less by sex (Figure 11).
The rarest form of family portrait was that of father and child. Only 2% of the children studied appeared solely with their fathers. Of those, 70% were boys ranging in age from about four to fourteen. All of the handful of girls posed with their fathers, however, were over the age of ten. Men simply did not present themselves to the world accompanied with little daughters, unless a woman was present in the portrait to assume the primary nurturing role. If anything, this group of father-and-child portraits is probably deceptively large, since several of the paintings could well be one of a pair of portraits, each containing a parent and child, and meant to be viewed together as a family unit. At any rate, it is quite evident that children were not a significant part of a man's public face. While by 1770 the adult male frequently chose to present himself as head of a family, children still remained part of the woman's world.

The fact that mothers did not beam fondly at their infants or husbands in portraits is not evidence of a lack of intrafamilial affection as has been suggested. Sitting for a portrait was an important occasion, not to be trivialized by levity. Sitters commonly wanted to appear dignified and respectable, and a broad grin would have seemed very much out of place. Not until the advent of the home snapshot in the twentieth century would smiling for a picture become
conventional. Before 1850, therefore, family members rarely smiled or looked at each other, but instead maintained the formal poses and expressions appropriate to a formal occasion. The one major exception to this tradition occurred in the families of artists. There, having one's portrait painted was almost as common as having a photograph taken is now. The event thus lost much of its momentousness and artists and their families could relax and convert a bit on canvas. On the other hand, among middle class portraits of the nineteenth century, interaction between family members was not necessarily a show of affection (versus the 'cold' academic portraits of the wealthy), but a desire on the part of the untutored artist to make the relationship between the sitters explicit, analagous to his desire to present the graining in the furniture and every detail in the pattern of the carpet (Figure 12). The degree of affection among family members cannot be ascertained from portraits, since a portrait is a presentation of the public self and not a showcase for private emotions.

Quite surprisingly, the average number of children found in sibling group and nuclear family portraits, as can be seen on Table 5, was only two in New England and the South and three in the Mid-States. The average number of children in group portraits for the last half of the eighteenth century was three and just two for the previous and succeeding
periods. This, of course, does not indicate family size in early America, since portraits were frequently painted before the family was completed or after one or more children had left home. However, it does indicate that this society neither saw nor presented itself as one of large families. Only a few families with five or six children appear and only one portrait out of the nine hundred in the sample portrayed a family with as many as seven children (Figure 10). The fact that the nuclear family portrait was particularly popular in the Mid-States and that they averaged slightly more children per group could be the result of the fact that a significant portion of the population of the Mid-States was of non-English origin. Unfortunately, by 1750 all segments of the population had adopted the common English conventions of portrait painting, making it impossible to determine the ethnic origins of a figure in a given portrait.
One of the most important studies of childhood, to date, is Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* which traces the gradual emergence of the modern concept of childhood from the end of the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. M. Aries argues that throughout the Middle Ages the child was regarded as a small adult who worked and played as a member of the adult community. Through the use of paintings and diaries he traces the evolution of the modern concept of childhood as a distinct phase of life. He notes the expansion of schools for boys, the separation of games for adults from games for boys and the appearance of a distinctive costume for very young boys as aspects of a growing awareness of the unique qualities of childhood. Unfortunately, M. Aries equates boyhood and childhood and has overlooked the fact that the trends he studied concerned only one half of the children of France, and that for the other half, the young girls, no major shift in the conception of childhood would occur for another two hundred years. Therefore, while M. Aries argues that the seventeenth century witnessed the full emergence of a modern perception of childhood, it might better be argued that it was, instead,
an important stage in the evolution.

The study of childhood in America must begin with the date 1670 with the painting of the earliest surviving portraits of children. This date roughly coincides with the final period studied by M. Aries, but that does not mean that an American study begins where the French one left off. In respect to the prevailing conceptions of childhood, America of the seventeenth century was less modern than the France of M. Aries' study. M. Aries has noted that a perception of childhood as inherently distinct from adulthood is a double-sided coin, for children are then seen as both more innocent and more weak or foolish than adults. They are both delightful and bothersome. Protestant America of the seventeenth century, however, accepted only half of the coin. Children were indeed weak, but they were not innocent. There was little delight, therefore, taken in what was viewed as the child's infirmity of reason that made him vulnerable to both physical and spiritual disaster. Childhood, as perceived in seventeenth century America, was an imperfect estate to be bridged as quickly as possible.

While group portraits present the child as a member of a family, individual children within portraits convey a considerable amount of information about society's perception of children. Both period costume and conventional props
can give significant information regarding the sex, age and social status of a particular child. Because of clothing's visibility, complexity and expense, the costume of a subject was most likely to carry the most important cultural information, while secondary messages were conveyed through the choice of prop, pose or subtle details of costume.

Before the industrial revolution made cloth and clothing abundant and inexpensive, the expense and infrequency of the purchase of a new suit of clothes made it an event of considerable importance. Clothing was valuable enough to be listed in inventories, willed to heirs and discussed with considerable detail in diaries and letters. The importance attached to clothing made it an obvious vehicle by which to announce status, age or occupation, and the outward symbols of rank were taken seriously as the adoption of sumptuary laws in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century indicate. Citizens of that period could read a person's position in society by the cut of a coat, the fabric of a waistcoat or the width of a lace cuff as easily as we now judge an individual's wealth by the year and model of automobile he owns. It is not surprising, then, that a child's position in such a society would be reflected in the type of costume he wore. Thus the number of stages recognized in the development of a child, his relationship in regard to his own and the opposite sex and his social status can, to a
significant degree, be read in the styles of children's costume.

Because the concept of childhood has evolved at a different pace for each sex, it is necessary to consider the history of that evolution as two parallel chronologies of events and changing attitudes. Therefore, it has seemed appropriate to present the material here as two alternate histories of one subject, discussing first the concepts of boyhood and girlhood separately before making any generalizations on the perception of childhood per se for any given period in American history.

From 1670 to 1750, very young boys were short-coated as soon as they began to walk; that is, they were put into ankle-length petticoats very similar in style to those of their mothers and sisters (Figure 13). A common explanation by costume historians for the use of skirts on all little children was the convenience it offered mothers faced with the task of changing diapers or clouts. Actually convenience had never been a prominent consideration for clothing styles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and there is some evidence from Dutch painting that toddlers of this period were not diapered at all. Petticoats, however, did immediately announce that the child was still in his infancy. They were, in short, a mark of age. Young Robert Gibbs at age four in coat and pinafore

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was an age away from the already breeched David Mason (Figures 13 and 14). Robert Gibbs was dressed as an infant. The fact that he was also male was far less emphasized, indicated only by such secondary signals as his male hairstyle, square collar, hand-on-hip pose and the gloves he carries. David Mason, however, was identified primarily as a member of the male community; that he was also a child was indicated only by his size. Thus the infant's costume was basically undifferentiated by sex, while that of the child was fully differentiated. The emphasis was on the distinction between the unbreeched and the breeched, between a chrysalis and an emerging adult.

During the first period of this study (1670 to 1750) nearly half of the boys under the age of seven were pictured wearing long dark robes, as is indicated on Table 6. This was the costume that Philippe Aries suggests was a retardataire vestige of medieval costume long since abandoned by adults. It was retained for boys between the ages of four and seven because it served a useful function; it fulfilled the need to demonstrate that while this child was still an infant, he was also a son. As Figure 15 of James Badger illustrates, the signals for age and sex were almost equally strong. The button-down robe, the cuffs, the hairstyle, the pose all signify that this child is male, while the skirt, the low neckline and the bird indicate that
this male is very much a child. Six-year-old James Badger was literally halfway between four-year-old Robert Gibbs in petticoats and eight-year-old David Mason in breeches.

Between 1670 and 1750, as Table 7 indicates, all boys over the age of seven were dressed exactly as adult males in every detail of their clothing. Such adult costumes permitted emphasis to be given to the boy's entry into the male community. However, while a society may well recognize both distinctions of age between adult and child and distinctions of sex between male and female, it frequently choses to emphasize, by special costume, only the distinction it considers most important. Thus in the present century, the identical mother-daughter dresses of the 1950's deliberately emphasized the bond of sex and ignored or de-emphasized the well recognized differences between adults and children. A lack of distinctive attire is not proof positive that a society necessarily failed to distinguish between people on the basis of sex or age, only that they did not chose to express the distinction in terms of costume. In the case of seventeenth-century America, the fact that some distinctions between adults and breeched children were indeed recognized were indicated not by costume, but by other artistic conventions within the portrait. Artistic conventions other than costume employed in the period clearly signaled that the subject of a child's portrait was not an adult male. Nearly 25%
of the breeched boys between 1670 and 1750 held fruit or flowers in their hands and 50% of the same group were accompanied by some sort of pet (Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11). Fruits, flowers and animals were frequently found in the portraits of women of the period, but virtually never in portraits of grown men. In addition, a few portraits of boys included excess drapery fluttering about the shoulders, which was a common baroque device in women's portraits (Figure 16). At the same time, few props commonly carried by adult males appeared in boys' portraits. In fact, the only exceptions were one lad with walking stick and gloves, and another wearing a sword. No boy before 1750 appeared with books or the implements of any trade. Thus the addition of feminine props and the omission of adult masculine ones from the portraits of boys between the ages of seven and fourteen indicated that while this was indeed the portrait of a male, he was not yet a full member of the adult community. Significantly, a boy's progress to manhood was symbolized by divesting himself of more feminine artifacts at each stage, starting with the petticoats of infancy through the feminine props of adolescence, as though full maleness was only achieved with full maturity.

This does not mean to imply that artists were consciously attempting to distinguish boys from men by their choice of props. Sitting for a portrait was the process of
presenting a carefully contrived front to the public, analogous to a theatrical personae, and so an artist sought a suitable piece of stage business in which his subject could be engaged; and those categories of stage business that were seen as appropriate for adult men were considered inappropriate for children. The artist knew his subject was a child and his audience knew it was a child. He merely organized his composition in a way considered appropriate to the age of his sitter.

As important as what was included in the portraits of boys from 1670 to 1750 is what was not. None of the boys before 1750 were portrayed with any form of game or toy or any other distinctly childish artifact - not even a rattle with a tiny baby. No piece of children's furniture, such as a small chair, high chair or cradle appeared before 1750, even though surviving artifacts clearly indicate that such objects were indeed in use in the first half of the eighteenth century. In these early years of American history, childhood as portrayed in period portraits had no distinct emblem of its own, but represented itself by borrowing feminine or antique artifacts.

The lack of any childish games or toys in portraits of young boys comments significantly on the adult community of the period. Portraits, including those of children, were painted by adults for adults and therefore included only
those things in which adults would take vicarious pleasure. Vicarious pleasure, in turn, is based on some association with actual pleasures. Sixteenth century European artists, such as Paolo Veronese and Pieter Bruegel, for example, were able to portray successfully the games and antics of children because they were similar to the games and antics of adults. Quite different was America before 1750, where adult pleasures were very different from childish ones. This is not just a reflection of New England puritanism's dislike for frivolity, for the distinction between adult and childish pleasures was just as acute among the pleasure-loving gentry of the South as it was in Boston. Even personal memories of past pleasures can be affected by the general society's attitude if such pleasures are regarded as frivolities for a child and demeaning for an adult. Not until adults again adopted pleasures similar to children's in the last years of the eighteenth century could they obtain vicarious pleasure from references to children's play in portraiture (and concomitantly, the number and variety of actual toys available for children surged suddenly at the same time). Thus the presence or lack of children's toys in portraits tells us more about the changing trends in adult pastimes than about real changes in children's patterns of play, for children, not adults, teach children to play and their games remain virtually unchanged over centuries - an unbroken line of tradition. Artifacts, and pictures of artifacts, of play are available only at the
whim of adults and so their popularity and decline reflect adult attitudes rather than childish preferences.

Before 1750, then, boyhood was not identified by any positive characteristics or attributes of its own. Rather, it was viewed negatively as a lack of maturity, an incompleteness. During this period, the distinction was not best described as between boys and men, but between immature or incipient males and mature males.

Before 1750, age was far less clearly emphasized for girls than it was for their brothers. Like the boys, they were short-coated as soon as they could walk, but unlike little boys, these first petticoats were not unlike what they would be wearing the rest of their lives (Figures 14, 17 and 18). (Table 12) Only the shedding of a pinafore marked the passage of a girl from infancy to maturity. The hairstyles and poses of young girls exactly copied those of adult women of the period, and girls held in their laps the flowers, fruit and small pets popular in women's portraits, as is indicated on Tables 13, 14 and 15. Girls did not borrow details of costume or props from the opposite sex to distinguish themselves from their elders as small boys had done. Only their size and the occasional pinafore distinguished them from their mothers.

Since there was no feminine counterparts to the
age-specific costumes of petticoats and robe, the development of girls was far less carefully delineated than that of boys, and thus must have been viewed as of less significance by the community. Seemingly, a girl was born fully female, but a male child needed to evolve from a fundamentally sexless infant into a boy before attaining acceptance as a man; and these stages in the life of a male were important enough to to be noted in portraiture by distinctions of dress and artifacts.

As in the portraits of boys, no childish attribute, with the exception of one baby's rattle, appeared in the portraits of girls of this period. There was thus no evidence from portraiture that childhood as a distinctive state with its own characteristics was recognized for either sex before 1750. Rather it appeared to have been viewed as a part of an evolutionary process - a stage in becoming adult, and was defined negatively as the lack of attainment of full adulthood.
The second phase in the evolution of childhood in America as depicted in children's portraits extended from 1750 to 1830. As was mentioned earlier, this was the period when portraits of the nuclear family became popular, suggesting a new self-awareness of the family unit in America. There was also additional proliferation in age-specific costumes for boys during this period, suggesting an even greater significance attached to the development of male children. As Table 7 indicates, after 1750 boys between the ages of 6 and 10 frequently adopted a modified adult male costume, identical in every way to that of grown men except for the collar which was a white ruff instead of the traditional soft white cravat (Figure 19). The ruff seems to have been less a revival of those popular in the sixteenth century than an adoption of the ruffs that edged women's dresses in the 1750's and 1760's. This interpretation is supported by the fact that when the ruff went out of fashion for women in the 1770's and was replaced by a large kerchief around the neck, ruffs disappeared from the costumes of boys to be replaced with kerchiefs very similar to those of their
mothers (Figures 20 and 21). Boys, therefore, now went through an additional stage in their evolution from infants to men, one in which their male costumes diverged slightly from those of adult men in order to announce to the world that these were boys not yet of the adult estate. Significantly, the modification that set apart the costume of young boys was again borrowed from feminine attire.

By the 1770's another stage in the costuming of boys under seven appeared - the first outfit in America that could genuinely be called a boys' costume, and which consisted of trousers and a waist-length jacket that frequently buttoned to the trousers (Figures 22, 24 and 26). The skeleton suit, while undergoing modifications in style with changing fashions, remained popular for young boys from its introduction about 1770 through to the end of this study in 1870. The significant feature of the new costume was the sudden adoption of long trousers. Adult men still wore breeches and would scorn long trousers until about the turn of the century. Trousers, as the common garb of sailors, peasants and backwoodsmen in the eighteenth century, were the mark of a laborer, a social inferior. The costume of sailors of the period came closest to the innovative skeleton suit and might well have been the source of inspiration. Early in the nineteenth century both boys and girls would adopt sailor hats, and in the last decades of the nineteenth century sailor suits became popular for both sexes. Since sailors were held in such disrepute
throughout this period, it seems strange that their costumes would serve as models for the young sons of the upper class, but such seems to have been the first example of a new trend of borrowing from laboring groups for children's costumes. The long trousers adopted by the revolutionaries in France after 1789 might have given impetus to the new style, but certainly could not have been the original inspiration. Regardless of its origin, the significance of the adoption of the skeleton suit was that it was a style of clothing quite different from anything upper class adult men or women had ever worn. It, therefore, signals a shifting perception of young males from incipient men to boys, that is, a new recognition that a boy was in a stage of development quite distinct from the adult male or the infant.

This is not to say that skeleton suits were totally devoid of feminine influence, for the suits tended to follow the changes in women's fashions. During the Empire period, for example, when high-waisted dresses were fashionable, the waists on skeleton suits went up to just under the arms. Children were part of the realm of women and that influence remained apparent.

By the 1770's, then, it was possible that a boy would have been short-coated until about the age of three, donned a long robe for a year or two, then a skeleton suit for another two or three years, followed by a modified adult
costume, before finally attaining full adult attire at about the age of ten. Whether the majority of boys went through every stage of dress is impossible to say (and it is my speculation that the skeleton suit was seen as an alternative to the long robe), but group portraits of this period frequently show two or three brothers in different stages of male attire. The dichotomy of the earlier period before 1750 between the breeched and unbreeched male had, by 1770, become a tripartite system consisting of the short-coated infant, the trousered boy and the breeched young man. Boyhood was emerging as a recognized state.

Since male costume had now developed a wide spectrum of age-specific characteristics, an artist did not feel the need to add a prop that would signal the sitter's age, and the number of boys holding fruit or flowers dropped to about 10% throughout this period. The percentage of older boys portrayed with pets also dropped by half from the period before 1750.

During the period 1750 to 1830, toys began to appear with about 20% of the boys portrayed. While a flower in the hand had signaled that this was the portrait of a child, it was an arbitrary symbol with no really significant connection to the life of the sitter. A toy, on the other hand, also symbolized youth, but it was an artifact that was actually associated with that period in life. Throughout
the eighteenth century, adults had appeared in portraits with props representing their actual activities in society. A merchant would pose with open ledgers, a sea captain with map and sextant and a matron with her braid loom or needlework. The appearance of toys in children's portraits indicated a changing perception of childhood. It was no longer just a period of incomplete maturity, but a stage of life, a position in society with its own characteristics and its own activities and artifacts.

During the period 1770 to 1810, as Tables 17 to 20 indicate, over 60% of all children in the sample population wore their hair long on the shoulder with bangs cut across the forehead. Two points are significant about the new style. First, for the first time in America children were not wearing the same hairstyles as their elders. Hairstyle had become another badge emphasizing the difference between adults and children. Secondly, and also for the first time, boys and girls were wearing basically the same hairstyle. Hairstyle in this period was no longer sex-specific, but had become age-specific; it pointed not to the sexual divisions but the chronological similarity within the group.

By the 1770's modifications became evident in girls' costumes, but without the assistance of details borrowed from the lower social classes or the opposite sex, as had been the case with the clothing of boys (Table 12).
Girls of this period wore simple white muslin dresses gathered at the neck and sleeve and caught with a colored sash at the waist (Figure 23). Essentially this was merely a continuation of the traditional baby dress throughout girlhood. No longer was a young girl dressed as a smaller replica of adult women, but the distinction between girls and women was achieved by keeping the girl in her infant's costume until she was nine or ten. No tripartite system of dress similar to that distinguishing infants from boys from young men was established for girls. Instead the traditional division between neophyte and young woman was simply moved forward a few years. Thus in Figure 24 of the Samels family, while the costume of the eldest son distinguished him from his younger siblings, that of the eldest daughter did not. This does not mean to imply that adults did not have different perceptions of a girl of two and a girl of eight, merely that the development of a young girl was not significant enough to the society to be made evident in her clothing. About the age of ten, girls adopted a modified adult costume analogous to that of boys of the same age. Throughout this second period, the stages of development in the life of a young girl were still regarded as less complex or less important than the stages in the life of a boy.

Girls in portraits of this period continued to hold the childish or feminine symbols of fruit, flowers and pets, though somewhat less frequently than they had done before 1750.
(Table 13) And, like their brothers, about 15% of the girls under seven were pictured with a toy (Table 21). While boys were shown with a wide variety of toys such as whips, hobby horses, pull toys and drums, and the implements of such games as battledore and shuttlecock, marbles, trap ball, hoops and skittles, 80% of the little girls holding a toy were holding a doll. The few exceptions were either doll-oriented (doll furniture or doll clothes) or were animal pull toys. The only toy depicted with children of both sexes was the battledore. That children's toys were recognized as differentiated by sex, is evident in one section of a little poem The Memoirs of a Peg Top published in 1788. When a boy finds his sister playing with his top, he tells her:

A top my dear girl is ill chosen for you,
Go take up your doll, to your baby house go,
And there your attentions much better bestow!
Leave the Pegtop behind and behave like a miss,
And I'll give you this picture, these nuts and a kiss.
And should I sit on a stool with needle and thread,
And dress up Miss Dolly and put her to bed?
Or do you not think 'twould be pleasant to see,
Master Neddy turned fribble, and pouring out tea?

It is interesting to note that while the transgression was the girl's, it was Master Neddy who was expressly linked with ridicule should he abandon the stereotype. Girls' toys, therefore, tended to be domestically oriented and of the sort that encouraged quiet play. Boys' toys, on the other hand, encouraged active, even noisy play, and the games depicted
suggest a high degree of group play. Toys, then, in the period 1750 to 1830, suggest that girls played quietly indoors, alone, while boys indulged in active, outdoor, group activities.

This interpretation is further born out by the fact that 30% of the boys under seven were engaged in some form of playful gesture toward a toy, pet, sibling or parent (Figure 22), while about 20% of the girls under seven were playfully depicted (Tables 22 and 23). Before 1750, playful poses of any sort were not a part of children's portraiture, and the change suggests a new perception of childhood in the second half of the eighteenth century in which play was accepted as appropriate to that stage of life.

Books begin appearing in portraits of older girls as early as 1710, but do not appear with any frequency until the second half of the eighteenth century. As Tables 8, 9 and 13 indicate, from 1750 to 1830 15% of the girls and 38% of the boys over seven were portrayed holding books. Books do not appear with children younger than seven until the 1770's and then only 6% of the little girls and 12% of the boys held them in portraits. The book, then, first appeared as a symbol of education and accomplishment, associated with older children, especially boys. After 1770, there was the suggestion that it had become fashionable for children under seven to boast of their ability to read, or that some books
were available as amusements of childhood. That books were included in portraits because they symbolized the refinements reserved to the upper classes was reflected in a sampler verse, fairly common in the eighteenth century:

Next unto God, dear Parents, I address Myself to you, in humble Thankfulness. For all your Care and Charge on me bestowed, The means of learning unto me allowed. Go on! I pray, and let me still Pursue Such golden Arts the Vulgar never knew. 16

However, that reading was also recognized as an amusement of childhood was most emphatically expressed by a young Maryland girl who, in 1800, cross stitched into her sampler, "Patty Polk did this and she hated every stitch she did in it. She loves to read much more." 17

Soon after the turn of the century men adopted the long trousers that young boys had worn for thirty years and adult women assumed the simple white Empire dresses of their daughters. This was the first time that children had set the fashion and adults had followed. Before 1800, in an age that had prized the third and fourth decades of life as the golden age of ability and power, there would have been no desire to emulate the fashions of callow youth. By 1800, however, adults were willing to extend to themselves liberties of dress that had previously been reserved for the young. This by no means represented a general worshipping of youth, but rather suggests that the stigma of the perception of youths as unfinished, imperfect adults had lifted enough that adults
could borrow from them without feeling 'fribble'.
CHILDREN: 1830 to 1870

The final stage under investigation is the forty years from 1830 to 1870, a time of several abrupt and pervasive changes. 1870 was selected as a cut-off date because after that date portraits waned dramatically before the growing popularity of photography. It became simpler, faster and cheaper to take a child to one of the newly established photography studios, than to hire the services of a painter. The forty years before 1870, however, were the acme of portrait painting in America. Itinerant artists and amateur painters brought watercolor, charcoal and crayon portraits to middle class homes, and children sat for portraits in states as remote as Texas and California.

During this period, boys' and girls' clothing became more similar than it had ever been before in this country. Over half of the boys under seven returned to wearing dresses, but these were short dresses reaching to the knee, with the child's legs encased in white muslin pantaloons (Figure 25). As Table 6 indicates, 32% of the younger boys were still portrayed in skeleton suits, but there no longer seemed to be a generally recognized age distinction between
the two styles of dress. Some very little toddlers were depicted in skeleton suits, while a few boys who were obviously beyond their seventh birthdays were still dressed in skirts. A few portraits of two little brothers do indicate that dresses were worn by the younger of the two and trousers by the elder (Figure 26). However, there is enough variety among portraits of this period to suggest that there was no longer one right way to dress a little boy.

Some of the dresses worn by young boys were styled as short tunics. These were sometimes plaid, buttoned straight or diagonally down the front, and tied about the waist with a tassled rope, all features that did not appear on girls' dresses (Figure 27). These could have been shorter versions of the robe that was totally abandoned in the 1790's, but it seems more likely that they were adopted from the European smock frock. There was a fascination during this period, more prevalent in Europe than America, with dressing children as little peasants, sailors or soldiers. In America this tendancy revealed itself in tunics, smocks and peasant and sailor caps for boys, and in braided hair and laced bodices for girls.

More significant than the tunic-styled dresses of the period were the dresses worn by two-thirds of the young boys that were indistinguishable from those of their sisters. No distinctive characteristics of the costume revealed the sex of the wearer.
By 1830 both adult men and boys had begun cropping their hair short in the fashionable Brutus cut (Table 17). Only 15% of the boys under seven continued to wear their hair long, but they wore it in the large curls and ringlets popular with little girls as well (Figures 28, 29 and 35). While most boys parted their hair on the side, and girls parted theirs in the center, there were enough exceptions to make it a most uncertain rule. Any unidentified moppet in frock and curls might easily be of either sex. Age identification had taken virtually total precedence over sex identification.

More startling than the young boys' reversion to dresses, was the change in the costumes of their sisters. As Table 12 indicates, 67% of the young girls under seven and 50% of those over that age were pictured wearing a short dress and pantaloons. This was the first time that girls' clothing had diverged significantly from the fashions of adult women. Equally important, the pantaloons adopted, a form of trousers, were male attire. To twentieth-century eyes, the white, laced-trimmed pants may look demurely feminine, but no one in the nineteenth century was so deceived. Lace had always been worn by both sexes, but trousers were a masculine garment. Young girls who dressed like boys met with disapproval when the style was first introduced. In 1824 Sara Hutchinson wrote of the new practice, "I am sorry to hear that dear little Good-Good has been breeched - for
for some of the faculty opine that it is much better that females should not." And from the comfortable perspective of 1856, the editors of Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book commented on the early days of the new fashion:

We know of nothing so revolting to the sense of grave people of both sexes as was the first use among us of ladies' pantalettes, which came into use slowly and cautiously about 1830. We well remember the first female who had the hardihood to appear abroad in their display; she was a tall girl in her minority, always accompanied by her mother, the wife of a British officer. Her pantalettes were courageously displayed, with a half-length peplum. Often we heard the remark in serious circles, that it was an abomination unto the Lord to wear men's apparel. The fashion, however, went first to children till it got familiar to the eyes, and then ladies followed after.

While European women had begun wearing pantaloons under sheer dresses during the Empire period, such extremes of fashion found little favor in America until the popularity of the hoop skirt in the 1850's made pantaloons essential for modesty. By that date, little girls had already been wearing them for twenty years.

Besides the white trousers under their shortened skirts, little girls began wearing broad-brimmed straw hats modeled on the sailor's hat. Eventually ribbons were attached above the brim and tied under the chin, pulling the brim down along the sides of the face and leading to the shape of the poke bonnet that became recognized as strictly feminine attire. In the 1830's, however, little girls were wearing a sailor's hat that, like their trousers, in style and fabric,
were identical to those worn by their brothers. For the first time, little girls had borrowed elements of clothing from the opposite sex and lower social classes to create a costume distinct from that of adult women. In 1830 their fashions entered a phase which had been apparent in boys' costumes in 1670.

Until 1810, all little girls had worn shoulder-length hair, unless they were too young to have had time to let it grow so long (Tables 19 and 20). From that date on, however, over 40% of the young girls were shown with their hair cropped short and straight (Figures 30, 31 and 32). The cropped style, known as the Titus cut, was briefly fashionable for adult women about 1810, when the Empire style was in vogue, but it quickly died out. However, it remained almost as popular with their small daughters as with their sons over the next fifty years. A small figure with cropped hair in dress, trousers and sailor hat could be a child of either sex. The majority of girls over the age of seven still wore their hair long during this period, but 10% of them were beginning to wear braids, a hairstyle seen only on men and peasant women before this time.

Thus, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, young children of both sexes wore the same dresses, pantaloons and straw hats, and both either bobbed their hair short or wore long curls (Figures 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35).
The situation had nearly reversed itself from that of the first period (1670-1750) when children announced their sex but blurred their ages by wearing adult fashions. In 1830, on the other hand, children wore costumes that were distinct from those of their elders, but blurred any identification of sex. The costume was designed to announce that the wearer was a child; the message of sex was left to secondary means.

As the role of costume in portraiture became age-specific, props took on the function of identifying sex. From 1830 to 1870, 80% of the boys under seven and 10% of the older boys were pictured with toys. A total of 55 types of toys were illustrated with boys, and they have been listed in Table 28. 20% of the young boys of the period carried toy whips, 17% carried military toys, 10% held onto pull toys, 8% rode hobby horses, 8% carried equipment for games and an additional 17% carried miscellaneous toys. By contrast, only one-third as many girls (27% under and 3% over seven) were pictured with toys, and only half as many types of toys were shown (Tables 21 and 29). Of those, 60% were dolls or doll-oriented items. Only 15 of the 67 types of toys depicted were carried by both boys and girls, so the vast majority of toys were sex-specific. In addition, nearly half of all girls carried fruit or f wers, while only 5% of the boys did so (Tables 8, 9 and 13). Flowers, as an artistic convention, had reversed their role from the first period of this study. Now flowers indicated that a child was female,
where they had once been used to indicate a male was a child. Musical instruments were shown with children over the age of seven. In every case, the boys held flutes and the girls sat before a piano. While both young girls and young boys were accompanied by pets, girls were three times as likely to have cats as dogs, while boys almost invariably were shown with dogs; and girls over seven favored birds (Tables 10, 11, 14 and 15). Props, then, frequently served the function of identifying the sex of the child during this last period, since the costume and hairstyle no longer did so.

A little whip in the hands of a moppet in lacey dress and long curls was meant to be emphatic notice that this was indeed a young son, and a doll or flower held by a short-haired child in frock and trousers announced that here stood a young lady (Figures 25 and 30). So pervasive was this convention that for the portrait of his wife and infant twins, the artist Augustus Fuller placed an oversized whip in his tiny son's hands as the distinguishing feature between the otherwise identical babies (Figure 33). Childhood had become a recognized age with its own uniform, but boys and girls were viewed as two distinct types within that age.

Fifteen types of toys were found with both boys and girls. Of the eleven that could be identified as to region, five were found in portraits of both sexes in New England, six in the Mid-States and none in the South. The
Southern portraits, in fact, differed markedly from the others in their depiction of toys. Far fewer children were shown with any toys at all, and those children posed with far fewer types of toys. Girls were shown only with dolls and boys with only fifteen of the fifty-five types discovered. Toys in portraits did not become a popular convention in the South, and when they did appear were rigidly differentiated by sex.

An interesting pattern emerged from a study of the eleven types of toys shared by boys and girls and regionally identifiable. As Table 31 demonstrates, the eleven shared toys can be divided into three groups—the girls' toys found in occasional portraits of boys, the boys' toys found with girls and the toys that truly seemed to belong equally to both sexes. All but one of the sexually-linked toys occasionally found with a child of the opposite sex were portrayed in portraits from the Mid-States and all undifferentiated toys were in New England portraits. From this we can conclude that toys in the South were rigidly differentiated by sex and little or no overlapping occurred. In the Mid-States toys were as equally rigidly differentiated, but there was occasional traffic between camps. In New England most toys were sexually differentiated and the division fairly rigidly observed, but there was also a small category of toys seen as equally appropriate for either sex.
The various regions of the country displayed different perceptions of play as an attribute of childhood, and New England was far from held back by any residual puritanism as has been alleged.

While the immediate impression conveyed by children's portraits of the period is one of the similarities between boys and girls, there were some differences worthy of note. As has already been mentioned, proportionately three times as many boys as girls were portrayed with twice as many types of toys. Even in portraits of brother and sister together, frequently the boy would have a toy, while his sister would not (Figures 32, 33, 34 and 35). Genre paintings of the nineteenth century occasionally pictured a girl working while her brother played, but never to my knowledge the reverse (Figure 36). As would be expected, the poses assumed by children in the nineteenth century were more relaxed and informal than they had been in the portraits of previous generations. However, while over half of the young boys were depicted in some playful gesture, only one-quarter of the girls were playfully posed (Tables 22 and 23). The elements of prop and pose taken together suggest a residual conservative element in the concept of play and childhood when these concepts related to girls. Perhaps it is not by chance that the cliche 'boys will be boys' has no feminine counterpart. Gradually boys had been permitted to be boys,
while girls were still encouraged to behave like little women.

This argument is further born out by the fact that 80% of the toys pictured with girls were vocationally, that is domestically, oriented, while virtually none of the boys' toys were direct preparation for future careers. About the only vocation suggested for boys was that of soldier and it is doubtful that many parents seriously intended this as a future career for their sons. More likely, the sudden popularity of military toys in the 1850's and 1860's had to do with a heightened interest in all things military just before and during the Civil War. Parents tended to encourage the play and adventuresomeness of their sons and deliberately circumscribed their daughters' activities. Boys' toys tended to be large enough to climb in or on, to make noise, to require physical exertion and team effort, to be meant for outdoor play and to encourage competition. On the other hand, girls' toys tended to be small, handheld objects that encouraged quiet, indoor, solitary play. Toys in portraits, therefore, operated on several levels - as an artistic device to indicate the sex of the sitter, as an appropriate artifact for the age of the sitter and as a means of suggesting the normative character of the sex of the sitter. On all of these levels, props and pose tended to point up the different perceptions commonly held by the society regarding boys and girls of the period.
Since sitting for a portrait was an important, perhaps once-in-a-lifetime event, children were naturally carefully groomed and dressed. Similarly, any toys depicted would be their finest (if not something even better from the imagination of the artist). By the 1860's, however, portraiture had been fairly strongly influenced by genre painting, particularly in the Mid-States. As a result a few portraits began to appear of children dressed in everyday clothes and playing with simple toys. Children were depicted building stockades with corncobs, wearing a sailor's hat made of folded newspaper and beating a saucepan 'drum' (Figure 37). The paintings are obviously contrived scenes and some smack of Victorian sentimentality and preciousness, but such portraits are the first that attempt to depict the child's world and invite the viewer to share in the pleasure. In that they are the forerunner of the informal snapshot of the twentieth century.

Considering the popularity of toys in children's portraits of this period, it is surprising that the other major category of children's artifacts - childsize furniture - was so rarely depicted (Table 24). Only 10% of the children of the sample were posed with any type of children's furniture, and only four types of furniture were shown at all. The most common form was the chair, or its variants, the high chair, settle and rocking chair. While 5% of the children sat in some sort of special chair, an additional 4% sat
on little stools. Today any museum would classify such an artifact as an adult footstool, but apparently in the nineteenth century it had at least two recognized functions, one of which was as children's seating furniture. The remaining 1% of the children posed with cradles or wagons (the forerunner of the baby carriage). Although baby carriages were rapidly gaining popularity by mid-century and do appear in daguerreotypes of that period, none were included in portraits to my knowledge. With the exception of one boy of about seven or eight, all examples of furniture appeared with children under seven, and little girls were far more likely to appear with their own furniture than were boys (Figure 23). For example, while 13% of the young girls sat in child-size chairs, only 4% of the young boys did so. By 1870, therefore, children were associated with pets, playthings and books, but rarely with furniture of their own. Children gained the privilege of being permitted their own amusements well before they gained an environment scaled to their needs.

Despite the popularity of such well-known portraits as that of Charles Calvert by John Hesselius (Figure 38), only 10 of 1,330 children across two hundred years were accompanied by a servant. (Table 25). Of the ten servants, seven were black children and three were adult women - one black, one mulatto and one white. Six of the ten servants were in portraits from the Mid-States and the remaining four in Southern portraits. None appeared in portraits in New

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England. Therefore, less than 1% of the children from the sample were attended by servants in their portraits. The motive here could have been philosophic inclination or simply economic considerations, since not many families were willing to pay extra for the inclusion of non-family members in a portrait.
CONCLUSION

The study of portraits of American children suggests that there were three major periods between 1670 and 1870 in the changing perception of children and childhood in America. During the first eighty years, until 1750, the emphasis was to breech and assimilate the young boy into male society. Therefore, the paramount distinction emphasized in portraits was not between childhood and maturity, but between an infant chrysalis and an incipient adult. The process of growth for the young boy was symbolized by laying aside feminine things - first the dress, then the robe, then the feminine props of flowers and fruit - as though the boy had to grow into both maturity and total maleness. The little girl, on the other hand, stepped from the cradle into the world of adult women. Little in the portraits of young girls other than their size marked them as only initiates into the adult community, as though the quality of being female was accepted as innate while the quality of being male had to be achieved. The development of the little girl seems not to have been deemed important enough to be underscored by different costumes for different age groups, as was the case for the young boy. At any rate,
nothing appeared in the portraits of either sex that was peculiar to childhood alone. No childhood artifacts, no childish pose or special setting was employed in portraits of this period. It appears, then, that childhood, itself, as portrayed in these earliest paintings, could be defined only as incomplete maturity.

The second period in the evolution of the perception of childhood as reflected through portraits, occurred between 1750 and 1830. Childhood for both sexes was no longer merely a stage anticipatory of full adult estate, but had gained some recognition as a separate state of development with unique properties and characteristics of its own. Only a small minority of children under fourteen continued to dress exactly like adults. Far more wore modified or simplified adult attire that announced their immaturity and separateness from the adult community. A large number of little boys wore the long-trousered skeleton suit that, for the first time, was a costume devised solely for children and not the previous possession of upperclass adults. The more complicated succession of costumes adopted for boys in specific age groups suggests that boyhood was viewed as a distinct stage in a tripartite evolution from infancy to boyhood to adult estate. Girls, on the other hand, emphasized their immaturity by retaining the simple white infant's dress until the age of ten or more. Thus for girls, there was no marked division between infancy and childhood. In addition,
toys as artifacts peculiar to childhood, appeared for the first time in portraits, thus explicitly recognizing childhood as a time for play. Books, another prop of this period, and sex-oriented toys further imply that childhood was seen as a time for molding and educating the future adult. The simple dresses of the girls, the informal hairstyles of both sexes, the modelling of boys' costumes on those of lower class males, all indicate that this was a period that perceived children as simpler, less complicated and more malleable than adults, and therefore was willing to bend or relax social conventions when children were concerned.

The final period under consideration extended from 1830 to 1870. The new unisexual costume of straw hat, dress and pantaloons borrowed elements from both sexes and several classes to create a costume that was able to increase its distinctiveness from adult attire only by blurring the traditional distinctions between the sexes. It was not so much that little boys were dressed like little girls, as has commonly been assumed, but that both sexes wore a combination of elements borrowed from both sexes. It was only later in the nineteenth century, when boys replaced skirts and pantaloons with knickers, that pantaloons would come to be seen as a strictly feminine garment - and so cloud our perception of the significance of their introduction in the 1830's. Indeed, in 1830 it was less amazing that boys wore dresses and pantaloons (for little boys had worn skirts in America for 160
years), than that girls were wearing trousers under their dresses. This meant the female child was not as strongly perceived as a little woman, but rather as a member of a distinct age group, in much the manner that boys had been perceived since the 1770's. The sudden increase in the presence of toys, fanciful clothing and playful poses suggest that the playfulness of children was not only recognized but now vicariously enjoyed by adults. Thus, through the three periods, childhood had evolved from an unfulfilled potential for maturity, to an accepted period of growth, to an idyllized state of sexless innocence.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


3 The chain of events leading from the print of Lord Buckhurst through to the portrait of Mrs. Bowers by Copley was first unraveled by Waldron Pheonix Belknap and was detailed in American Colonial Painting: Materials for a Study (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959).

4 Inscription on the reverse of the painting of Arabella Sparrow (Southworth) painted by David Ryder in 1848. The painting is now owned by the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection.

6 Among the artists that painted their own families in an informal composition were Charles Wilson Peale, John Singleton Copley, Frederick Bush, Augustus Fuller, William Sidney Mount and Lilly Martin Spencer.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


8 Aries, 130.

9 Slater, *Children in the New England Mind*.

10 For example, Estelle Ansley Worrell, *Early American Costume* (Harrisburg: Stacpole Books, 1975), 21 & 32.

11 For example, Rembrandt's "Rape of Ganymede" and Jordaen's "The King Drinks" both indicate that toddlers wore nothing under their petticoats.

12 Aries, 55.

13 One exception to this rule, however, can be seen in John Smibert's painting of "Bishop George Berkeley and His Entourage" in which one of the adult men has a piece of drapery flowing from shoulder to lap.

14 Jacques Stella, *Games & Pastimes of Childhood* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969). This is an unabridged reprint of the 1657 publication of *Les Juex et Plaisirs de l'enfance* which described and illustrated 52 children's games, most of which are still common today.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

15. Memoirs of a Pegtop (Massachusetts, 1788).


17. Ethel S. Bottome and Eva J. Coe, American Samplers (Boston: Massachusetts Society of Colonial Dames of America, 1921), 96.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

18
That such smocks had also been worn by laboring men in America is illustrated in Benjamin West's painting "The Treaty of William Penn" where three men are wearing smocks rather than breeches.

19
Kathleen Coburn, editor, The Letters of Sara Hutchinson from 1800 to 1835 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 270.

20
Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book (July, 1856), 32.

21
As was suggested by such authors as Rosamond Olmsted Humm, Children in America - A Study of Images and Attitudes, 16.

22
The study of early photographs of nurseries indicates that the majority of pieces of furniture in a child's room were adult size well into the first decades of the twentieth century.
Figure 1: Lord Buckhurst and Lady Mary Sackville. Mezzotint by Smith after the portrait by Kneller, 1695. Research Library of American Painting.
Figure 2. Catherine of Braganza.  
Mezzotint by Smith, c. 1705.  
British Museum.
Figure 3. Lady Caroline Russell. Mezzotint by McArdell after portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. c. 1759
New York Public Library.
Figure 4. Mrs. Jerathnael Bowers.
John Singleton Copley, 1763.
Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Figure 5. Little Girl with Dog
Artist unknown, c. 1770.
Knoedler Galleries, New York City.
Figure 6. DePeyster Boy with Deer.
Artist Unknown, 1738.
New-York Historical Society.
Figure 7. John Van Cortlandt
Artist Unknown, 1731.
Brooklyn Museum.
Figure 8. Two Children with a Deer  
Artist Unknown, c. 1720.  
Collection of Mrs. Charles S. Bird.
Figure 9. Arabella Sparrow (Southworth)
David Ryder, 1848.
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection.
Figure 10. 'Nathan Hawley and Family.
William Wilkie, 1801.
Albany Institute of History and Art.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Figure 11. Angus Nickelson Family. Attributed to Ralph Earl, c. 1795. Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass.
Figure 12. The Talcott Family.
Deborah Goldsmith, 1832.
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection.
Figure 13. Robert Gibbs.
Freake Limner, 1670.
Collection of Theron J. Damon.
Figure 14. David, Joanna and Abigail Mason. Mason Limner, 1670. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd.
Figure 15. James Badger.
Joseph Badger, c.1760.
Collection of descendants of the subject.
Figure 17. Eleanor Darnall, four years of age. Justus Engelhardt Kuhn, 1710. Maryland Historical Society.
Figure 18. Sarah White, three years of age. Jeremiah Theus, 1753. Collection of Mrs. John Campbell White.
Figure 19. Robert Ray.  
John Durand, c. 1765.  
Museum of the City of New York.
Figure 20. Family Portrait.
Ralph Earl, 1804.
Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch.
Figure 21. William Carpenter. Ralph Earl, 1779. Worcester Art Museum.
Figure 22. Mrs. William Moseley and Her Son Charles. Ralph Earl, 1799. Yale University Art Collection.
Figure 23. Elizabeth and Mary Daggett. Attributed to Reuben Moulthrop, 1794. Collection of Mary Allis.
Figure 24. The Samels Family.
John Eckstein, c. 1788.
Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
Figure 25. Children with Toys.
Prior-Hamblen School, c.1846.
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Art Collection.
Figure 26. Albert and Charles Wilson, ages three and five. Artist Unknown, c.1846. Collection of Miss Flora Gaillard.
Figure 27. Elisha Wales.
Joseph Whiting Stock, 1843.
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Katz.
Figure 28. Charles Frederick Stedman. Jared B. Flagg, c.1845. Collection of Mr. Augustin Lopez-Martinez.
Figure 29. Griffin Alexander Stedman, Jr. Jared B. Flagg, c.1845. Collection of Mr. Augustin Lopez-Martinez.
Figure 30. Mary Abba Woodworth, Joseph Whiting Stock, 1837. Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass.
Figure 31. Joseph and Anna Raymond. Artist Unknown, c.1840. Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch.
Figure 32. The Hobby Horse.
Artist Unknown, c.1840.
Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garnisch.
Figure 33. Mrs. Fanny Negus Fuller and Twins. Augustus Fuller, c.1840. Collection of Mrs. A.V. Tack.
Figure 34. Mary Emma and Harry Woodward.  
George Morrison, c. 1850.  
Shelburne Museum.
Figure 35. George and Jane Bigelow.
Artist Unknown, c.1840.
Collection of Mrs. Dwight Hughes.
Figure 36. Whitling a Boat.
Henry Bacon, 1867.
Kennedy Galleries, New York.
Figure 37. Corn Shelling.
Eastman Johnson, 1864.
Toledo Museum of Art.
Figure 38. Charles Calvert and His Slave.
John Hesselius, 1761.
Baltimore Museum of Art.
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--- American Drawing, Pastels & Watercolors, Part Two: Nineteenth Century, 1825-1890.


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Memoirs of a Pegtop. Massachusetts, 1788.


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Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book
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Mager, Alison. *Children of the Past in Photographic Portraits - An Album with 163 Prints*. New York:


### TABLE 1a
**TOTAL NUMBER OF WHITE CHILDREN**
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### TABLE 7

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**TABLE 15**

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS UNDER SEVEN PORTRAYED WITH ANIMALS

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</table>

*Note: Miscellaneous animals include squirrels, lambs, rabbits, chipmunk, etc.*
**TABLE 16**

PERCENTAGE OF BOYS UNDER SEVEN
PORTRAYED WITH TOYS

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<tr>
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<th>MILITARY TOYS</th>
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Note: Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
TABLE 17
PERCENTAGE OF BOYS UNDER SEVEN
DEPICTED WITH A GIVEN HAIRSTYLE

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<th>LONG - STYLED IN ADULT MALE FASHION</th>
<th>LONG WITH BANGS</th>
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*The category 'short' includes children too young to have grown hair long enough for other styles. It does not necessarily mean that the hair has been cut.
TABLE 18
PERCENTAGE OF BOYS OVER SEVEN
DEPICTED WITH A GIVEN HAIRSTYLE

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Note: By 1810 short hair is also the style favored by adult men.
### TABLE 19
PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS UNDER SEVEN  
PORTRAYED WITH A GIVEN HAIRSTYLE

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<th>LONG CHILDISH</th>
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</table>

*The category short includes children too young to have grown hair long enough for other styles. It does not necessarily mean that the hair has been cut.

Note: The percentages are based on girls not wearing hats.
**TABLE 20.**
PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS OVER SEVEN
PORTRAYED WITH A GIVEN HAIRSTYLE

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### TABLE 23
PERCENTAGE OF ALL GIRLS
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Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
TABLE 26
SUMMARY OF TYPES OF POSE.
FOR ALL CHILDREN
1830-1870

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<th>ALL GIRLS</th>
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**Con.**

Un7 - Under 7 years of age
Ov7 - Over 7 years of age
NE - New England
MS - Mid-States
So - South
Un - Region of Origin unknown

144

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
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146 Con.
TABLE 28 con:

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<th>NE</th>
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<th>So</th>
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TABLE 29
TYPES OF TOYS
THAT APPEAR WITH GIRLS

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Con.

148
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF TOY</th>
<th>NE</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>So</th>
<th>Un</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toy Rabbit</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dog Squeak Toy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toy Mortar &amp; Pestle</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Grace Hoops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toy Village</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ball</td>
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# TABLE 31a
TYPES OF TOYS THAT APPEAR WITH BOTH SEXES

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<th>TYPE OF TOY</th>
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<th>So</th>
<th>Un</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Doll</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toy House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Jump Rope</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rattle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Soldier's Cap</td>
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<tr>
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### TABLE 31b
TYPES OF TOYS
PICTURED WITH BOTH SEXES

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<th>BOYS WITH GIRLS' TOYS</th>
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<td>Wagon</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Toy House</td>
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