



American Poetry: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Library of America #178)

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The poetry of early America is seen afresh in this groundbreaking new volume in The Library of America's acclaimed *American Poetry* anthology series, charting its flowering over a span of almost two centuries, from the first years of English settlement in the New World to the death of George Washington. Gathering the work of more than 100 poets—including many poems never previously anthologized and some published here for the first time—it is the most comprehensive collection of its kind ever assembled, a celebration of the rich, varied, and often surprising beginnings of American poetry.

The range of voices is unprecedented: broadside and newspaper satires, epitaphs, children's verse, popular songs, ballads, and Christian hymns evoke the vital currency of poetry in the daily lives of average people; exhortatory elegies for public figures and historical epics declaimed on occasions of state stand alongside intricate meditative lyrics and private epistolary verses. The dramatic unfolding of American history is made immediate and vivid in the words of the participants: William Bradford reflects on the growth of New England's first colonies; Roger Wolcott recounts the incidents of the Pequot War; Thomas Paine hails the victories of the American Revolution; Ann Eliza Bleecker describes her flight from General Burgoyne's invading army; loyalist Jonathan Odell bitterly mocks the new Continental Congress.

The first comprehensive anthology of early American poetry in more than a generation, this volume incorporates recent scholarly discoveries that have altered our understanding of the early American literary landscape. Alongside generous selections from long-admired New England poets such as Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, and Michael Wigglesworth are poets from the Middle Colonies and the South, newly emerged from the archives. Along with familiar favorites by Phillis Wheatley, celebrated pioneer of the African-American tradition in poetry, are little-known verses by Benjamin Banneker, known as "the Sable Astronomer," and African-American Minuteman Lemuel Haynes. The anthology includes hymns recently attributed to Mohegan preacher Samson Occom and the earliest known translation of a traditional Native American chant,

Henry Timberlake's Cherokee "War-Song." The unpublished poems of Henry Brooke, Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, Joseph Green, Hannah Griffitts, Margaret Lowther Page, and Annis Boudinot Stockton, among others, reflect the rediscovered vitality and importance of manuscript exchange as a form of publication in an era when it was sometimes considered indecorous, especially for women, to appear in print.

Unprecedented in its textual authority and unrivaled in its scope, the anthology includes newly researched biographical sketches of each poet and extensive notes.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

DAVID S. SHIELDS is McClintock Professor of Southern Letters at the University of South Carolina, editor of *Early American Literature*, and author of *Oracles of Empire: Poetry, Politics, and Commerce in British America, 1690-1750* (1990), and *Civil Tongues & Polite Letters in British America* (1997).

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