

The Mothers

By Taylor Franson Thiel – Springfield, Virginia

Of whom we know nothing.¹
Of whom we do not even know the birthplace.²
Of whom we know almost nothing. 56 years, one town.³
Of whom we know almost nothing. Outlived her husband.⁴
Of whom we know very little. Outlived her daughter.⁵
Of whom we know very little. Witnessed two centuries from one town.⁶
Of whom we know even less. Daughter of Peder. Strong Dane Kvinde.⁷
All we know of her: shaved headed mohawk woman. Lost her baby on the boat to America.⁸
A midwife against the dangers of long dresses. Tripping hazard. Harder to run.⁹
A way her obituary betrayed her: a name like Birdie, yet they called her Mrs. John.¹⁰
Hair like her beehive state. Honey-stunning. The first time I've ever loved my nose.¹¹
Called abuser, called angel. Called, most importantly quiltmaker. Steady hands regardless.¹²
A teacher, seeking pianohands in every crowd. Refused to hit her children. Cyclestopper.¹³
She wants only for you to know she loves me.¹⁴

¹ Inger (1610-1664)

² Maren (1634-1700)

³ Ane (1674-1720)

⁴ Anna (1710-1788)

⁵ Marie (1740-1831)

⁶ Johanne (1770-1830)

⁷ Marie (1793-1866)

⁸ Karen Johanne (1831-1853)

⁹ Ane Cecilie (1858-1955)

¹⁰ Carrie Birdie (1884-1958)

¹¹ Laura (1908-1992)

¹² Emma VerNae (1931-2021)

¹³ Susan (1952-)

¹⁴ Jenny (1975-)