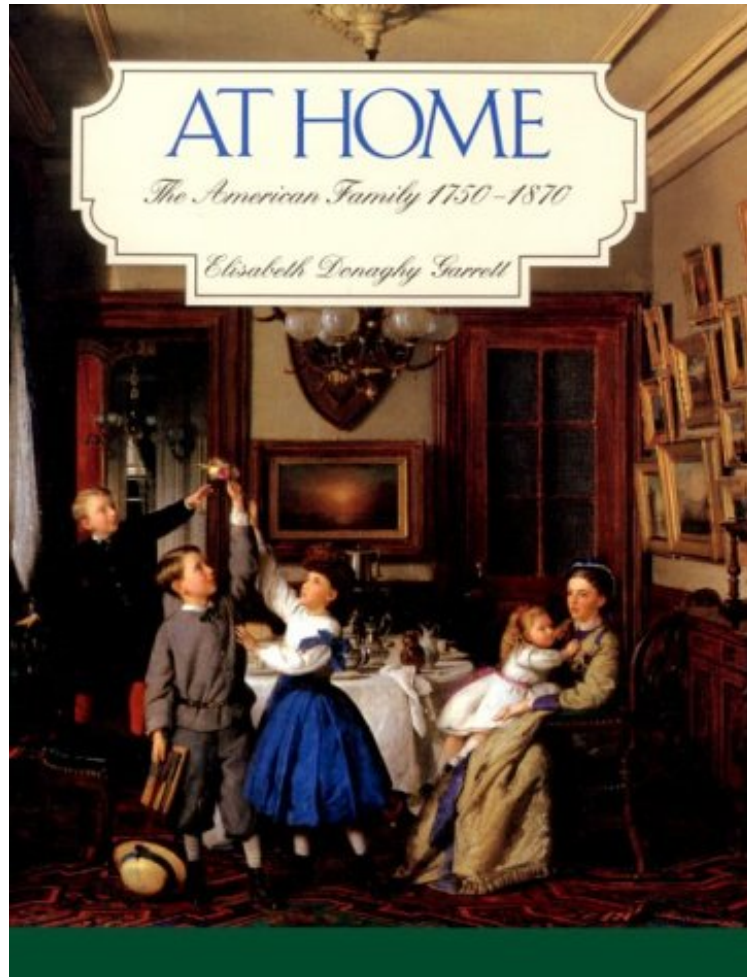


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## At Home: The American Family 1750-1870

*Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett*

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**Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett : At Home: The American Family 1750-1870** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At Home: The American Family 1750-1870:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Winner, All the WayBy GoybabeI'm an historian, a writer and a researcher. Apart from books with a specific, narrow topic, I own acres of books on more general history, and they run the gamut in quality. This is one of the best I've ever read. It's not a coffee table picture book, though the artwork is terrific. She's dug up paintings by unknown artists and ordinary dabblers showing aspects of daily life to illustrate her brilliant text. I knew a lot about Salem in 1800, but since I know more about England and France in this period, I wanted a wider lens, and got it. It does, somewhat, concentrate on New England, but the information is so general to America, I don't think this hurts it, and of course, Virginia is quite often visited. Though men aren't left out, it focuses on home, and so it focuses on women and their children. No fiery feminist screeds, that can blind an author to how

people felt about their own lives. Instead, she uses their own words as often as possible to illuminate the world she understands so thoroughly, and reveal it to us. And it's through the minutia of life, carpets and bedding, cooking and child-rearing, that she tells their story. In studying the tremendous wealth of the great captains of Salem in this period, I was confused about the vast differences in lifestyle between them and the English aristocrats in their great country houses. I understand so much better now. Assumptions I'd drawn from my own readings were backed-up. It wasn't just New England frugality and a horror of getting above yourself. It was in their nature. For example, as a rule, even wealthy women of this period in America just didn't have the army of servants their British counterparts did. They were expected to be in charge themselves and smoothly run this usually large household, rather than a housekeeper. Even so, the more marginal lives of the less fortunate aren't left out. One chapter in particular, *A Very Great Trial to the Temper*, will stay with me, concerning the problems of life and how they handled them, such as caring for elderly relations, dealing with in-laws, illness, etc. The second half, regarding the number of children women had, and the number they buried, as well as their fears of childbearing and their gentle courage, is just wonderful. Other smaller things I'd wondered for years were explained, like the incessant line, "Bring in the tea table." Huh? No one ever really spelled out what was happening. They assumed you knew. All in all, a real winner. I'll be dipping into it again and again over the course of time.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Cultural History  
By David Arbogast  
This is a cultural history of household life in America from the mid-eighteenth century through the immediate years following the Civil War. It is extremely well-illustrated, usually in color, and extremely well-researched with many citations from primary sources such as letters and diaries. It brings one into the life of the period in an extremely intimate way. I highly recommend this for those interested in this period of American history.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Great Enjoyable Book!  
By Bookworm  
Fascinating book, it gives you all the background details that most books leave out. Day to day life presented with lovely images and great information! I totally enjoyed this book!

Book by Donaghy Garrett, Elisabeth

From Publishers Weekly  
The tranquil expressions of the women in the period portraits illustrating Garrett's opus belie the deep domestic drudgery of colonial housekeeping. In her scrupulously researched book, the vice-president of Sotheby's Manhattan analyzes early American family life chamber by chamber, studying paintings, personal writings, even poetry. A housewife, judged by her linen closet, exerted herculean efforts maintaining it: countless hours of laundering, repairing and ironing tablecloths and the elaborate bed hangings that kept out the cold. There was the endless polishing of floors and windows, pewter and mirrors, and the equally humble chore of banishing ubiquitous dust, mud and candle drippings. Two final chapters give such toil a human, comprehensible dimension, suggesting that a well-run home was a woman's way of battling, physically and symbolically, the disease and death of her day. So seen, domestic details of floor and wall coverings and furniture style and placement accumulate and resonate.

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From Library Journal  
The vice-president at Sotheby's and associate director of its American Arts Course examines letters, diaries, travel accounts, novels, poetry, household inventories, newspaper advertisements, and housekeeping manuals as well as paintings, prints, and drawings for this study. Garrett's clear, easy style, coupled with nearly 200 illustrations (more than 100 in color), make this book accessible to the general reader. However, because of the thorough research and substantial bibliography, it is more than mere pictorial history and allows comparison with such scholarly works as Stephanie Coontz's *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (LJ 2/1/89) and *America's Families: A Documentary History*, edited by Donald M. Scott and Bernard Wishy (LJ 1/15/82). Recommended for academic and large public libraries.

-Cindy Faries, Pennsylvania State Univ., University Park  
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