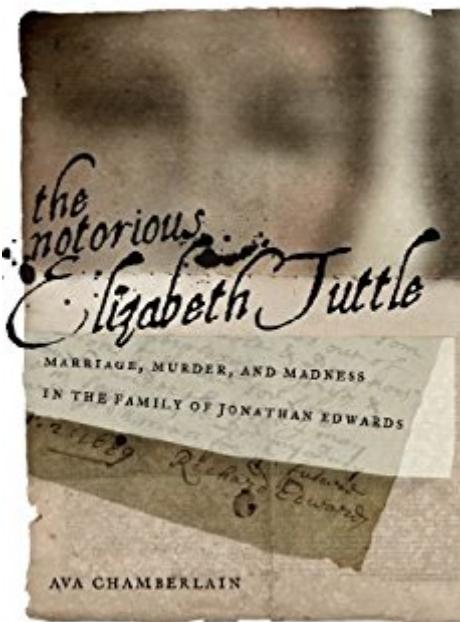


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The Notorious Elizabeth Tuttle: Marriage, Murder, And Madness In The Family Of Jonathan Edwards (North American Religions)



Synopsis

Who was Elizabeth Tuttle? In most histories, she is a footnote, a blip. At best, she is a minor villain in the story of Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the greatest American theologian of the colonial era. Many historians consider Jonathan Edwards a theological genius, wildly ahead of his time, a Puritan hero. Elizabeth Tuttle was Edwards' "crazy grandmother," the one whose madness and adultery drove his despairing grandfather to divorce. In this compelling and meticulously researched work of micro-history, Ava Chamberlain unearths a fuller history of Elizabeth Tuttle. It is a violent and tragic story in which anxious patriarchs struggle to govern their households, unruly women disobey their husbands, mental illness tears families apart, and loved ones die sudden deaths. Through the lens of Elizabeth Tuttle, Chamberlain re-examines the common narrative of Jonathan Edwards' ancestry, giving his long-ignored paternal grandmother a voice. Tracing this story into the 19th century, she creates a new way of looking at both ordinary families of colonial New England and how Jonathan Edwards' family has been remembered by his descendants, contemporary historians, and, significantly, eugenicists. For as Chamberlain uncovers, it was during the eugenics movement, which employed the Edwards family as an ideal, that the crazy grandmother story took shape. The Notorious Elizabeth Tuttle not only brings to light the tragic story of an ordinary woman living in early New England, it also explores the deeper tension between the ideal of Puritan family life and its messy reality, complicating the way America has thought about its Puritan past.

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Customer Reviews

I am a Tuttle descendant from Nathaniel, the youngest brother, so I found this book fascinating. I have been researching this family a quite a lot there is a large amount of alcoholism, depression, and bipolar disorder in the descendants, as well as genius and accomplishment. It is fascinating to read a roster of Tuttle descendants, from Winston Churchill and his "black dog" of chronic depression to Ernest Hemingway in his alcoholism and suicide. My line is also afflicted with mood disorders and alcoholism; I can trace them back to my great-great-great grandfather. In Elizabeth's case, like many of the people in her immediate family, she may have been a bit "distracted," which is what psychotic symptoms were called at the time. However, her husband Timothy was what I would call an evil man who victimized and shamed her publicly from the beginning of their marriage. Like most women of the time, Elizabeth was not allowed to tell her story, which was a tragedy. And because of the notorious family history, even if Elizabeth had been heard, she would never have been believed.

Interesting book. The "notorious" Elizabeth is my 6th Great Aunt. She was an older sister to my 6th Great Grandfather. The Tuttle's certainly had temper problems. Brief mention is made of court records citing my 6th GG, Nathaniel Tuttle's, temper. He didn't kill anyone, though! Just told a few people off which didn't bode well in their Puritan Colonial society. Extremely good resource material for genealogy research. I gave the first book to a family member. I ordered a second book for myself. Colorful ancestors. Ava Chamberlain has the best resource references I've seen in a very long time and am beginning to use them for ancestors other than the Tuttle's.

I loved this book. It was and is very important to my own past-time...the creation of a family genealogy with stories of as many of the generations as I can find. It is also important to the understanding of the colonial era and how deeply the norms of the times affected the colonists of all

ages and stature...and still influence our lives today. Chamberlain builds a compelling case for who Elizabeth was on scraps of information that would have normally been passed by with little regard for discerning the truth of her life by those interested in more sensationalist faire. An important tribute to a maligned and misunderstood woman and her tragic family.

The famous "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" Minister Jonathan Edwards had a mad grandmother, a fratricidal Uncle and an Aunt who killed her teenage son. But there is more to the story than the strain of violence and depression, there is a portrait of "self-made" American men who easily blamed the victims and moved on to prosperity once the inconvenient women were left behind. From early English settlers in Hartford and New Haven to budding American revolutionaries at Princeton University and Litchfield, CT, including Edwards' infamous descendant Aaron Burr, Ava Chamberlain has uncovered a complicated American past.

The Tuttle family of old New Haven seems to find its way into many later stories. I have been reading about this family for a number of years. This book is a refreshing look at the family and the trials the children of William Tuttle in Colonial Connecticut.. All other accounts I have read of this family suggest a genetic stain on the family, one that led to insanity among some of the members. This account takes a new approach by looking at the family both before and after the fateful day that Benjamin Tuttle killed his sister Sarah. Upon understanding the effect of this event upon their siblings, it is possible to view future family events in a new light. I would highly recommend this book. It was enjoyable to read and gave another perspective on the early history of the Connecticut Colony.

I'm a direct descendant of William Tuttle and was very interested in this history. I knew bits and pieces of it but Ms. Chamberlain has tied it all together and woven a compelling narrative. Very interesting discussion of filicide and Puritan customs.

I loved this book and ordered another copy so I have one for both daughters. As a number of other reviewers have indicated themselves, I am a descendant of one of the notorious Elizabeth's brothers. The first part of the book deals with her parents and family so that was especially interesting to me. I also enjoyed reading about a Puritan family in general, and this one in particular with all the scandals, murders, etc. It appears that the research is solid (and saves me a ton of library time). If you are a William Tuttle descendant you will want to own this book.

I was familiar with prior versions of this story, but utterly astonished at how worshippers of the Edwards family who turned this woman scorned for refusal to sleep with her awful husband into a slut. This book is masterful.

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