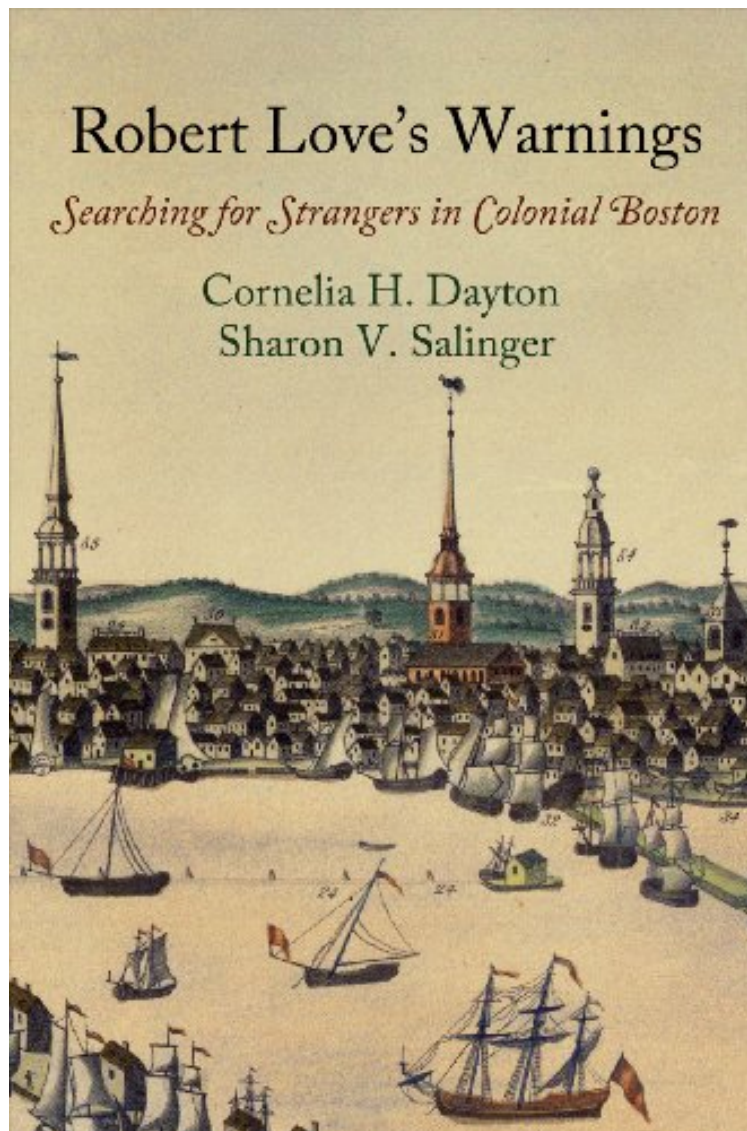


[Library ebook] Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston (Early American Studies)

## Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston (Early American Studies)

*Cornelia H. Dayton, Sharon V. Salinger*  
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**Cornelia H. Dayton, Sharon V. Salinger : Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston (Early American Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston (Early American Studies):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. transients and respectable sojourners in late colonial BostonBy

hmf22 Contrary to what one might expect, this is not a book about poverty and the treatment of the poor in colonial Boston, but rather a book about the transient: the numerous men, women, and children, white, black, and Indian, Irish, French Canadian, and other, who passed through Boston in the 1760s and were duly warned by one of the town officials, Robert Love, appointed to monitor transients. Dayton and Salinger argue that "warning out" was a bureaucratic practice designed to assign responsibility for poor relief, but not necessarily to discourage strangers from visiting or residing in Boston--and indeed, the overwhelming majority of those who were warned were "respectable" people who had come to Boston to work, pursue apprenticeships, or stay with relatives. The authors devote one chapter to transients in the conventional sense--beggars, alms seekers, the physically and mentally infirm, and the drunk and disorderly--but the main focus of the book is on "sojourners of the respectable sort." There are some excellent illustrations, notably a pair of maps showing the places of origin of those who were warned (pp. 77-78). Love, himself an Irish immigrant who succeeded in putting down roots in Boston, cuts an engaging figure with his obsessive note taking and extraordinary memory for faces. Excellent insights into the texture of eighteenth-century Boston society.

In colonial America, the system of "warning out" was distinctive to New England, a way for a community to regulate those to whom it would extend welfare. Robert Love's *Warnings* animates this nearly forgotten aspect of colonial life, richly detailing the moral and legal basis of the practice and the religious and humanistic vision of those who enforced it. Historians Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger follow one otherwise obscure town clerk, Robert Love, as he walked through Boston's streets to tell sojourners, "in His Majesty's Name," that they were warned to depart the town in fourteen days. This declaration meant not that newcomers literally had to leave, but that they could not claim legal settlement or rely on town poor relief. Warned youths and adults could reside, work, marry, or buy a house in the city. If they became needy, their relief was paid for by the province treasurer. Warning thus functioned as a registration system, encouraging the flow of labor and protecting town coffers. Between 1765 and 1774, Robert Love warned four thousand itinerants, including youthful migrant workers, demobilized British soldiers, recently exiled Acadians, and women following the redcoats who occupied Boston in 1768. Appointed warner at age sixty-eight owing to his unusual capacity for remembering faces, Love kept meticulous records of the sojourners he spoke to, including where they lodged and whether they were lame, ragged, drunk, impudent, homeless, or begging. Through these documents, Dayton and Salinger reconstruct the biographies of travelers, exploring why so many people were on the move throughout the British Atlantic and why they came to Boston. With a fresh interpretation of the role that warning played in Boston's civic structure and street life, Robert Love's *Warnings* reveals the complex legal, social, and political landscape of New England in the decade before the Revolution.

"Dayton and Salinger, two very distinguished historians, challenge much of the conventional scholarly understanding. . . . This marvelous book deepens and broadens historians' knowledge in significant ways. It is also beautifully written. It reshapes our conceptions and makes us ask new questions about Boston, New England, and early America in general. It is hard to ask much more of any book." *William and Mary Quarterly* "The extent and depth of research found in Dayton and Salinger's book is impressive and the work itself engaging. . . . Robert Love's *Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* is an insightful examination of the New England practice of warning and offers a rich social history of mid-eighteenth-century Boston." *American Historical* "My admiration for what the authors have done in Robert Love's *Warnings* grew with each chapter. They have made the streets of colonial Boston come alive in ways no other scholar has done. And their achievement in research is simply amazing. . . . What a book!" Alfred F. Young, author of *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* About the Author Cornelia H. Dayton is Professor of History at the University of Connecticut and author of *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*. Sharon V. Salinger is Dean of the Division of Undergraduate Education and Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author of "To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800 and *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Prologue A Walking Day Late in the morning of Wednesday, July 9, 1766, Robert Love pushed his chair back from his mahogany desk; tucked notepaper, quill, and inkwell into the pouch attached to his belt; and stuck his head outside to assess when the approaching thunderstorm might arrive. Deciding to delay no longer, he put on his hat; alerted his wife, Rachel, that he was heading out on his rounds; and stepped out of his house into the shadow of the Hollis Street Church. For the past eighteen months, Love had walked the streets of Boston a few days each week to warn strangers. Now in his sixties, he had recently been hired by the town to visit "all such Houses Families as he apprehends Entertains Inmates or Strangers." On this particular summer day, Love intended to call first on housewright Joseph Scott, who lived a few blocks to the south. He knew that Scott often boarded apprentices and employees. As Love rounded the corner onto Orange Street, he nearly collided with Patrick Bonner, a lame and almost blind stranger. Bonner was plodding slowly north, begging as he went, with a written brief hung around his neck explaining his circumstances. Love called to Bonner to approach so that he might ask a series of questions. The stranger reported that he had arrived the previous day, having come all the way on foot from Londonderry in New

Hampshire, and that he had no regular place of residence. Love wrote down the information and then verbally warned Bonner, in his Majesty's name, to depart the town in fourteen days. Love continued south, covering the two short blocks from Hollis to Pleasant Street and turned right toward the commodious house owned by Scott. Eighteen months earlier, the man had gone bankrupt, but now his affairs were in order. Love rapped loudly on the door and was greeted by Ann Scott, Joseph's wife. Love was a frequent caller and did not need to explain his errand. Ushered into the parlor, he waited until the household's new lodger, David Hunt, appeared. The young man answered Love's queries readily; he had been in Boston since early May, had come directly from his hometown of Tewksbury, and was learning the housewright trade with Mr. Scott. After his training, he intended to return home to his family. Love recorded the information and pronounced the verbal warning. By the time Love left the Scotts', it was approaching noon, and the day had become unbearably hot. He had developed a powerful thirst and appetite. Because his perambulations through Boston on this day would include a visit to the almshouse, located west of the town center, he set his sights on the Horseshoe Tavern, at the corner of Common and School Streets. He headed north on Clough Street, crossed Frog Lane onto Common Street, and followed the east edge of the town common northward. The most remarkable features on the landscape were the three hills that rose to the west. Love took a right turn on School Street, passed a few storefronts, and entered the Horseshoe. He nodded at acquaintances, ate a bit of bread and cheese washed down with a pint of ale, and, before leaving, consulted with the tavern keeper and patrons about whether they knew of any recent arrivals to town. At the tavern doorstep, he turned left, crossed Long Acre, and continued on to Beacon Street, pausing momentarily at Johonnot's distillery to establish a delivery date for his liquor supply. The selectmen had recently granted Love a retailer's license that allowed him to sell small quantities of liquor from his house. From the distillery, it was a few steps to the northeast corner of the Common, which housed the almshouse, workhouse, bridewell (house of correction), and public granary. Love passed through the gate in the fence that surrounded the almshouse and knocked on the door of the main building to enquire of the keeper, Samuel Proctor, if strangers had recently been admitted who had not yet been warned. Proctor reassured Love that no stranger had been taken in since his last visit. Skirting the Trimountain area, Love continued north on Tremont Street and bore right on Hanover Street, which took him into the North End, where he planned to call on Sarah King. King's husband, a boat builder, had died in 1757, leaving behind a minimum of household possessions. Since then, widow King had earned income by taking in lodgers. For Love, the visit was productive. He warned two parties. George Beatty, a silversmith, and his wife, Nancy, had arrived four days earlier with Captain James Scott in the brigantine Lydia from London. Love knew Beatty. He had warned him the previous year, when the man was visiting for a few months to scout out his prospects for settling in Boston. Love also interviewed Peter Rose, a shoemaker, who had arrived on the same brig with the Beattys. With warnings delivered and notes written, Love bid good day, donned his hat, and continued his perambulation. Love headed southward into the town center, through Dock Square, and down Marlborough Street, poking his nose into doorways and alleys in search of strangers. And because it was Wednesday, he turned south on Newbury Street to pause at the White Horse Tavern. He ordered a pint and enquired of the keeper, Joseph Morton, about the Providence wagon, since the White Horse was its only Boston stop. Morton informed Love that Dixey Brown, the wagon driver, had delivered the mail but had carried no passengers. The wagon would return the next week. A breeze refreshed Love as he covered the last few blocks to his lodgings. He passed the Liberty Tree, where the scene was quiet during the summer heat. As was his wont when walking this narrow stretch, he strolled down the short streets to his left, which led to Walker's, Kneeland's, Harvard's, Bennet's, and Allen's wharves. There was always the chance of spying a newcomer among the dockworkers. But on this afternoon, his tour was to no avail. With the first clap of thunder, Love made the final turn onto Hollis Street and headed for home.