

The Paston Papers

Life on a 15th-century English manor

Purpose: Explore fifteenth-century English life on a manor in Norfolk and in London during the Wars of the Roses through the hundreds of letters that remain from three generations of one family, the Pastons.

Moderator:	Linda Honan
Date and Time:	Wednesday afternoon, 2:00-4:00 10 weeks, starting September 26
Format:	Seminar
Location:	Loomis Village, South Hadley

Description: These letters offer an extraordinary opportunity to delve into fifteenth-century manorial life in minute detail. We explore the lives of middle-class men and, very rarely, women, in a way unknown from any other source. Because they owned property in several manors, the Pastons were often separated and wrote frequently to one another - hence, the trove of letters. We see the housewife, Margaret, running her farms, staving off an armed posse, and overseeing every detail of her sons' education and well-being. The Pastons were coming up in the world, always working to acquire more land and property, but subject to attacks from more powerful neighbors. One Paston was knighted, and one became a courtier. The boys studied at Cambridge, and then law at the Inns of Court. Marriages were arranged to further the family financially and socially. One rebellious daughter defied the family by choosing her own husband - the family bailiff! "Lock her up!" (They did).

Role of participants: Participants will each make a 20 to 30-minute presentation on a topic to be chosen from a list created by the moderator. This will be followed by general discussion. Topics include the Wars of the Roses, changing role of women, the court and the manor, individual family members, chivalry and knighthood.

Resources: Norman Davis, *The Paston Letters: A Selection in Modern Spelling*, and H.S. Bennett, *The Pastons and Their England*.

About the Moderator: Linda Honan is a retired Museum Educator and UMass Program Coordinator with degrees in Medieval Studies and English. She previously moderated seminars on "Hamilton the Musical and History," and "Vacations."

Maximum number of participants: 14

Auditors accepted: yes, up to 2

Course # 18FPP