



Prudence Punderson, *The First, Second, and Last Scenes of Mortality*

Courtesy, The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT

Preston, CT ca. 1783

Silk needlework on linen

Prudence Punderson (1758-1784) was born in Preston, CT, the eldest of eight children. Her needlework, done before her marriage, is titled "The First, Second and Last Scenes of Mortality," and represents three stages of life: infancy, womanhood, and death. The scene features a rare representation of the furnishings of a well-appointed, early Connecticut drawing room, and an even rarer depiction of an African American "servant" as an integral member of the domestic scene. The slave, who attends the infant, may have been the "wench Jenny" who was included as property in Prudence's father's will. It is likely that this embroidery was done while Prudence and her family were in exile on Long Island, due to her father's Loyalist sympathies during the Revolutionary War.

(based on Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Furniture as Social History: Gender, Property, and Memory in the Decorative Arts" *American Furniture*1995)