

Gatekeepers and Guardians: Changes in Women's Status in the Era of the American
Revolution.

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

History

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2016

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ABSTRACT

The American Revolution had a profound effect on the practical behaviors of women.

Women acted economically, socially, and politically to survive the war. The most notable expression of their behavior is through legal divorce, which increased exponentially immediately after the War for Independence. This surge showed that women had not only the economic means to leave a marriage, but also that they had the legal right to do so with less social stigma.

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Introduction and Historiography

The economic, social, and civil life of the middle to upper class Revolutionary woman has been an interest to historians since the 1970s. Scholars of this period agree that the American Revolution had a profound effect on the practical experiences of women, in contradiction to the perceived contraction of their legal rights. This analysis will look at the economic, social, and civic life of women from the beginning of the American War for Independence to the conclusion in Annapolis and Philadelphia. The use of period newspapers as the primary source material provides insight to their practical experiences.

Deciphering the role of women as economic actors is the most concrete example of their agency in newspapers from 1770 and 1790. Analyzing their appearance in the newspapers as executrixes, shopkeepers, and purveyors of goods can reveal a great deal about what life was like for middling class American women in the Revolutionary era. Divorce was also a powerful way women sought economic freedom from their husbands during this period.

The way women defined their roles as social actors defined how they interacted with not only other women, but also with men and the wider world. The advertisements and editorials can provide much information about the social lives of women. Women advertised as both consumers and sellers; they advertised to both hire labor and to sell their own, as well as for the purchase of goods. The back of the front page frequently reported social gossip, marriages, engagements, and other similar activities.

Women also acted in the political and civic sphere, though this is harder to define. In addition to the newspapers, an analysis of the personal papers of Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren and Grace Growden Galloway with regards to how their thoughts about politics affected the influential men in their lives will serve as part of the source material for chapter three. Civic and political engagement on the part of women is harder to see unless they were elite. These women were in a better position than most to have their thoughts on important matters of the day be taken with due consideration. The newspapers contained some references to women acting politically, even if indirectly. Women were the gatekeepers of not only the social and economic realm, but of the political realm as well. An aspiring politician had to pass the test of the matrons of the city before he was allowed to interact with their far more influential husbands. Thus these women became a critical checkpoint in politics, as well as economics and social engagements.

The major primary sources used for this thesis are Revolutionary-era newspapers. There are many differences between these newspapers and newspapers today. In the Revolutionary era, there was no perception of journalistic integrity, or of attempting to report the truth.¹ The printers of newspapers were merely attempting to make a living, and if you were a patron of the newspaper, the editor printed favorable stories. If you decried the paper in any way, unfavorable stories appeared. To these men, they were not doing a disservice to the public, because they made their biases very clear.

Running a newspaper in the eighteenth century was incredibly hard, backbreaking work, for little recompense. The punishing labor of the printing presses also informed

¹ Eric Burns, *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 12.

how the papers themselves were structured. Ink and paper were expensive, so there was little room for blank space and headlines, and most papers were only four to six pages long. Very few images appeared in these papers; when they did it was as a stamp of a plain filled-in black shape. There were no divisions in the sections; each part ran directly into the next with no mark of the transition. Want advertisements were next to death announcements which were next to the news from France. These printers were not publishers in the modern sense, nor were they exactly editors. They collected stories and reprinted them verbatim, with only some editing done with regards to the particular slant of the newspaper itself. Post-revolutionary Philadelphia papers also printed the minutes from the congressional meetings, again with no delineation to the advertisements in the papers, if the advertisements ran that week.

The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 meant a higher tax on paper goods, including newsprint paper. Many editors wrote scathing editorials against this tax in their papers, riling up the people against what they saw as an unfair tax. These editors mainly wrote for their own self-interest, to make a little more money.

Many of the people who read a newspaper did not subscribe to it, as the newspapers were just passed around after one reader had finished it. While not all newspapers offered subscriptions, those that did frequently had a wider readership. Taverns, coffee shops, boarding houses, and inns generally had a subscription to the local newspaper, which heightened their attraction to locals and visitors alike. A huge percentage of the colonists were literate and frequently read the newspapers, including women. The editor did not get paid each time it was read, but only the first time it was bought, as it was with books. This meant that even though some papers enjoyed a wide

circulation, the lack of funds coming in from those readers meant that the papers themselves were not viable operations.

In order to get more people to buy their own copies of the newspaper, many editors would print sensational stories that may or may not be true. These stories, regardless of their accuracy, are still incredibly important, because it shows the popular perception of the characters which they portrayed.² This is especially true when it comes to women and other marginalized groups. The stereotypes that appeared show an exaggerated perception of women during this time period, which can provide inferences about their general treatment, and how that treatment influenced their behavior.

These newspapers are essentially the equivalent of modern day tabloids. They enhanced sensationalistic stories, had a lack of journalistic integrity, and printed gossip columns. They were, however, the only source for news, besides letters from those closer to the action. Despite this, the newspapers as a source provide a rich context of the time period. The men who ran them did make an effort to report some legitimate news, albeit with a partisan agenda. In this case, they are not unlike many modern news organizations.

While much of the written record of a woman's opinion or thoughts on the ideals of the Revolution were not saved, much can be inferred from their behaviors. The source that will have the most definitive information on women's behavior is the colonial newspaper. From the advertisements for servants and domestic help, and other advertisements for services, as well as the social columns, much can be gleaned about women acting as their own economic and political agents.

² Ibid.

This is not to say that some papers from the most famous women were not saved. It is in these documents that their thoughts on liberty, freedom, and independence are recorded. The papers of Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, and Grace Growden Galloway will function as a large part of the source material for the thoughts on politics and civic life in the third chapter.

Contemporary scholars have made only tangential use of the newspapers to edify the lives of Revolutionary women. Much of the discussion has revolved around their contributions as wives and mothers. In this interpretation, their most important actions involved finding a husband, sustaining the family, the potential of finding a second or third spouse or finding suitable matches for their children. Women's main contribution to private and public life in the Revolutionary era was through their actions as mothers. To this end, many women sought to educate themselves in order to better educate their children. Linda K. Kerber's idea of "Republican Motherhood" holds quite true in the economic, social, and political lives of Revolutionary women.³

Popularized by post-Revolutionary thinkers such as Judith Sargent Murray, Susannah Rowson, and Benjamin Rush, the idea of the "Republican Mother" blends the private domestic sphere with the public political sphere. The "Republican Mother" is an educator; she raises her sons as good citizens and her daughters to be good future "Republican Mothers." The "Republican Mother" had a political voice, through her sons. If, as the Enlightenment intellectuals posited, the republic was only as strong as its

³ Linda K. Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment- An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* Vol. 28 No. 2. (Spring 1976): 202.

virtuous citizens and learning begins at home, then women, as mothers, had a crucial role in the education of the next generation of leaders.⁴

The “Republican Mother” had to educate her children and husband in matters of manners and virtue. To that end, women had some degree of power within the family structure. While this device did not give them overt political or legal rights, it did provide them with influence in the political sphere, through their husbands and sons. In order to raise their sons as proper citizens and their daughters as good wives, these women needed to have some degree of education themselves. Therefore, they attended lectures, went to day schools, or sent their children to those schools. By educating herself, she could educate her children, and thus create a better society. The most important aspect of this small measure of political power is that the women only had any type of power if she was a mother.

Women anticipated a change in their legal status after the American War for Independence. They led the economic boycott of British goods, and some acted as subversives during the war. Women who fought with the Rebels also believed they earned that right. This was, unfortunately, not the case. Women actually experienced a legal contraction of civil rights after the war. The laws of the individual states governed the rights of women after the war, rather than the burgeoning and as yet ineffectual federal government. Thus a woman’s rights depended more on where she lived than her economic status alone. In general terms, it was easier to obtain a divorce in the northern states than in the southern states after the war. In the immediate aftermath of the war, some states, like New Jersey, allowed women to vote though the state disenfranchised

⁴ Ibid

them in 1807.⁵ Single women retained the right to have some measure of wealth, called personalty, which was portable, i.e. not land.⁶ Married women also retained the right to own property, but this property transferred to their husband to manage as he saw fit.

The laws regarding women did not see a major change until 1800. The shifts during the Revolutionary period foreshadow the attitudes that led to the more restrictive laws regarding divorce, property management, and inheritance. A possible motivation for this contraction is how jealously the newly enfranchised men guarded their rights from women and other minorities. These men, in their minds, fought a war to win their right to representation, and women did not fight in the same way, thus did not win their right to representation. The history of American enfranchisement necessarily starts with how those in power disenfranchised others.

Women of the Revolutionary era had an interesting legal duality. They exercised their own right in supporting the war, but if they remained loyal to the British Crown, in many cases they were not seen as traitors themselves. Each state government dealt with how much free will a woman had in her own marriage in their own way. If a woman was married to a Loyalist, but remained in the States after her spouse fled, she was seen simultaneously as disobeying her husband and was incapable of making a political decision.⁷ The state recognized that a woman was a *femme covert*, literally, a “woman covered,” her property and all her ideas, thoughts, and feelings belonged to him. A woman as individual ceased to exist after she married. If, however a woman was married

⁵Marylynn Salmon, “The Legal Status of Women, 1776-1830,” *History Now* 7 (Summer 2006), The Journal of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/essays/legal-status-women-1776%E2%80%931830>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1969), 90.

to a Loyalist and disobeyed her husband by siding with revolutionaries, she was not seen as a traitor to her husband under the eyes of the law, but as a heroine who did not let her husband stop her from being a patriot.⁸

The existence of this duality in the legal record shows that women had their own ideas and thoughts about liberty, freedom, and independence. While the men who made the laws sought to delineate them into the two groups of *femme covert* and *femme sole*, there was much more to these women than just their marital status. These women also acted as economic agents in other ways. When they hired servants, of any race or ethnicity, they acted within the established acceptable economic and domestic system, by providing other women of a different economic status with legitimate work.

Mistresses of slave owning households were economic agents as well, although more indirectly. The day to day management of the house slaves, if it were a large plantation, fell to the women. Daily household management forced them to interact one-on-one with people of a different race, and at least learn their names, if not get to know them at all. However, large plantations such as this were the exception rather than the rule, and far more women worked the fields with their husbands and their one or two slaves.

It is important to understand that both *femme covert* and *femme sole* existed between 1770-1790 in Philadelphia and Annapolis. Philadelphia and Annapolis in every other sense other than slavery were much the same. Both were trading ports, and of a similar size, with multiple newspapers and rabble-rousers of both the Loyalist and Rebel persuasion.

⁸ Ibid

In terms of slavery, Pennsylvania drafted the first resolution to gradually abolish slavery in 1780. This resolution stated that any child born after July 1, 1780 would be free after a period of indentured servitude of twenty eight years. While some slaveholders found ways around this, by taking their pregnant slaves to other slave states, like Maryland, until the child was born legally in bondage, the Gradual Abolition Act was the first of its kind to allow for any kind of legal abolition in the United States. In 1790, ten years after it was enacted, the federal census recorded that only 36 percent of African Americans in Pennsylvania lived in bondage.⁹

Philadelphia and Annapolis are also quite different from England. England was one of the countries that participated in the Enlightenment, and created a different society than the one in the Americas. Cultural achievement is one way to analyze the prosperity of a country, and may be a better predictor of societal values than gross domestic product or economic output. England had only two universities at the time of the war, while the American colonies proudly boasted nine.¹⁰ This elevated the overall literacy rate to surpass England, and the conclusion drawn from the plethora of universities is that “education at all levels was good and rather more widespread and democratic than in England.”¹¹

The colonies also contributed to the fields of science and philosophy, with writers such as Increase Mather, Benjamin Franklin, and John Winthrop Jr, the first American member of the Royal Society. Many of these American intellectuals took English ideals and improved upon them, but many other scientists also contributed greatly to their

⁹ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 276-278.

¹⁰ Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1969), 10

¹¹ Ibid

respective fields, like medicine, botany, and education.¹² Because these fields were highly valued in colonial American society, it stands to reason that the education of future intellectuals was prominent in the minds of these great men.

The cultural and educational life was better in the colonies prior to the Revolution, and for all intents and purposes, they lived in a land of plenty. Therefore it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that life in the eighteenth century was, overall, better in the colonies than in the mother country, for those that had the means to come here. This sentiment held true for middling class women as well. Even though they were still incredibly limited in their rights legally, there was more opportunity brought on by necessity. A woman could help her husband build a business and run it after his death, make better matches for her children so they would be able to live a more comfortable life, marry a second or third time for more financial security, etc. While all of these opportunities also existed in England, it was more attainable for the average woman in American colonies than for the average English woman.

Historians generally ignored the lives of Revolutionary women, particularly of the middling sort, until the 1960s when the emerging feminist movement caused renewed interest in the history of women. The exceptions to women's history prior to the 1960s are showcased in an array of biographies of First Ladies, such as Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, and Dolley Madison. Barbara Welter's article "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1966) was one of the first of its kind to reveal, through extensive research, the experiences of an everyday woman. Other articles and books expanded upon her

¹² *ibid*, 8

original research and more research has been done in this area to edify the subject since then.

With the burgeoning feminist movement, a desire to understand and disseminate the history of women emerged. The larger Civil Rights Movement created a similar interest among African Americans, Native Americans and gay and lesbian Americans. In the 1970s, Mary Beth Norton, Linda Kerber and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich researched at the same time and sometimes in the same places. All of these scholars were known to the other, and in the preface to the reprinted edition of *Liberty's Daughters*, Norton mentions that she and Kerber had crossed paths at various libraries and discussed that they had the same topic and had even reached similar conclusions, except that Norton was more optimistic about the situation of women in the colonial era.¹³

In 1980, Mary Beth Norton and Linda Kerber published, respectively, *Liberty's Daughters* and *Women of the Republic*. The historiographical tradition that they follow is in Welter's footsteps, by studying the primary source materials of average, middle to upper class women in order to ascertain the life and livelihoods of women during the Revolutionary time period. Both historians were fortunate enough to be writing at a time when there was a renewed interest in the founding of America; this was due to the Bicentennial celebration in the 1970s. This renewed interest, coupled with the recent feminist movement, no doubt, served as a sturdy platform on which to consider these Revolutionary women. The historiographical approach prior to the 1970s emphasized how men oppressed women. As a result, the books about women in the colonial era discussed women in the third person, rather than the new approach which allowed the

¹³ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), xii.

colonial woman to speak for herself. This was an important step in not judging history through a present lens. Prior to these books, historians only looked for what they, being the historians, considered important, not what the women of that era considered important.

Both Mary Beth Norton and Linda Kerber were pioneers in this type of analytical research, rather than what Laurel Thatcher Ulrich sardonically called, “pots-and-pans history.”¹⁴ Norton and Kerber were also on the forefront of new studies which looked at the effect of the Revolutionary War on women.

Both of these scholars also are representative of two different emerging schools of thought. They are described by Joan Hoff Wilson in her dual review as the “equalizer” represented by Norton and the “analyzer” represented by Kerber. There are many differences between analyzers and equalizers, but the core of the argument comes down to whether or not men and women experience historical events similarly. These schools of thought are only given the names “equalizer” and “analyzer” in Hoff Wilson’s review, but the distinct ideas of these genres are recognizable in other works.

Those of the equalizer school tend to view gender history as “linear progress in the lives of American women from the colonial period to the present.”¹⁵ They are also more likely to say that men and women experienced the War in similar ways.¹⁶ The analyzer school sees the history of women “as an uneven progression in which gender is but one factor in a complex interaction of economic, political, legal, and cultural

¹⁴ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Images and Reality of Women in Northern New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), xiii.

¹⁵ Joan Hoff-Wilson, “Review of *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* by Mary Beth Norton; *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* by Linda K. Kerber,” *Signs*, 7, No. 4 (Summer, 1982): 881. Accessed: November 7, 2014.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173645>

¹⁶ Ibid

considerations.”¹⁷ The women who will have similar reactions to the war are those that are in the same social class, ethnicity, religion, and economic status; all other things being equal, men and women will also experience these major historical events similarly.

The next historiographic approach that comes into play is represented by *Goodwives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, published in 1982. Ulrich also focused on the common colonial woman, but her methodology was to apply sociological context - the different roles that women occupy - to them. Her defining approach analyzed roles in the household, community, and religious life. By specifying these roles, and placing these women in different contexts, she is able to use scholarly evidence not normally prevalent in historical research, such as psychological publications.¹⁸

This interdisciplinary approach was well-received, with many reviewers commenting on her admirably eclectic evidence.¹⁹ Her use of role analysis unveiled the anonymity that traditionally surrounded colonial women. Defining what womanly tasks were and what a woman typically did allowed a glimpse inside the private sphere of women, versus the public sphere of men. Describing women’s roles as housewife, deputy husband, consort, mother, mistress, neighbor, Christian, and heroine, Ulrich neatly divided colonial women based upon their primary tasks. However, none of these roles actually existed in isolation, thus Ulrich lumps similar groups together under “‘Bathsheba’ focus[ing] upon economic life, ‘Eve’ upon sex and reproduction, ‘Jael’

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ulrich, 278.

¹⁹ Anne C. Rose, “Review of Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750,” *Journal of Social History*, 17, No. 2 (Winter, 1983): 357. Accessed: November 7, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3786913>

upon the intersection of religion and aggression.”²⁰ This technique of categorization had not been applied to women’s history, but it is something that other scholars in other disciplines, mostly the hard sciences, had been doing for centuries - for example, the classification of minerals.

Cynthia Kerner is another author who can be called an “analyzer.” In her 1998 work *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South 1700-1835*, she described the changing role of southern women, and asserted that these women lost their independence and their visibility in the public sphere from 1700-1835. She speculated that this changed because of evolving social constraints. She was keenly aware of the image of a southern belle, what she calls the “moonlight-and-magnolia myths of the Civil War era,” and questions whether this image is based on any factual evidence.²¹ Kerner also challenged the typical portrayal of southern women as being ineffective and frail; rather, she asserted that their influence shifted to what she referred to as a “public-private sphere,” where women were involved and influential in the public goings-on, but behind the scenes.²²

Kerner’s research is reminiscent of earlier historian, Julia Cherry Spruill. Spruill was arguably one of the founders of women’s history, writing in 1938 when women’s lives were not deemed worthy of study. In her work *Women’s Life and Work in the Southern Colonies*, she “argued that southern colonial women were much more successful than their nineteenth century granddaughters at venturing outside the domestic

²⁰ Ulrich, 10.

²¹ Cynthia Kerner, *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), xi.

²² *Ibid*, 3-6.

sphere.”²³ Kierner also attempted to prove this point and thus, drew on earlier research and reformatted it through a sociological lens.

In *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, Kathleen Brown drew upon other authors of the analyzer school, such as Lois Green Carr and Paul G.E. Clemens.²⁴ She used her work on women to also study the history of gender, looking into masculinity and femininity in this definitive work on southern colonialism. Brown used the idea of race as a social construct to explore how gender aided in the creation of racial slavery. She “conceptualized race, class and gender as overlapping and related social categories, not as variables competing for analytical supremacy.”²⁵

Her book challenged prominent historians of the equalizer school, such as Edmund Morgan and Rhys Isaac, because she “aimed [sic] at nothing less than upsetting traditional explanations of slavery’s development in Virginia, patriarchal relations in the Chesapeake, and conventional roles and work available to colonial women.”²⁶ This book, while ostensibly a work on women, can also be interpreted as a work on colonialism, race, and gender. Brown took an interdisciplinary approach on purpose, to show that the interconnectedness of these social relationships cannot be severed, and cannot be studied in isolation. These definitive works represent two schools of thought, and various methodologies that have become indispensable to women’s history, and perhaps to the

²³ Woody Holton, “Review of *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* by Cynthia A. Kierner,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 108, No. 4 (2000): 440, Accessed: November 7, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249876>.

²⁴ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

²⁶ Salley E. Hadden “Review of *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs* by Kathleen M. Brown,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 77, No. 3 (Winter 1999): 369, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30147591>, Accessed November 7, 2014.

larger understanding of Revolutionary America as well. Without these dissenting views, the historical tradition would be poorer.

Postmodernism also influenced these historians. The focus shifted from gender history, the study of the different genders in their historical context, to gendered history, which analyzed the definitions of femininity and masculinity in their own time, and their evolution.²⁷ The works of Norton and Hughes-Drayton fall squarely into the realm of gender history while Thatcher-Ulrich and Brown's analysis of a women's changing role in society, and how these roles were forced upon them is gendered history. Kerber also writes of gendered history, by analyzing a mother's role in the new society.

Since the late 1980s, the area of women's history in general has shifted to gendered history. New publications focused on the roles of masculinity and femininity and how gender roles influence historical events. While an inclusive discipline, gender history focuses more on the whole rather than the individual, and loses singular identities in the process. At the same time, a shift to the study of sexuality also occurred, with more research taking place into the history of sex in conjunction with masculinity and femininity.

Defining the role of women, and what it meant to be feminine in the eighteenth century is key to understanding the practical behaviors of women. This gendered history of women during a critical time of America's founding will inform the definition of femininity to include more practical applications. The period newspapers that inform the majority of the primary source material also function as an ideal basis for how Revolutionary women actually acted as agents of change in their world.

²⁷ Caroline Hoefflerle, *The Essential Historiography Reader* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2011), 220-221.

The easiest way to define the role of woman is to analyze how the economics of these Revolutionary women allowed them to interact within their world. First in Annapolis, then in Philadelphia different categories of women advertised and used the newspapers to their advantage. From these advertisements, death announcements, and abandonment announcements the evolution of their everyday life from before the war to its conclusion can be examined.

Chapter One: “with the Same Care and Dispatch:” Women as Economic Actors in the
Revolutionary Era

Annapolis was the center of political life in late eighteenth-century Maryland. The *Maryland Gazette* was the voice of this political discourse. Jonas Green, a cousin of Benjamin Franklin and one of his protégés, married Anne Catherine Hoof in 1738. Later that same year, they moved to Annapolis. Green began to publish the *Maryland Gazette* in 1745 and allowed various opinions in his newspaper. He did, however, begin to practice some editorial restraint as early as 1766, an anomaly for the time.¹ He continued this until his death in 1767, when his wife, Anne Catherine Green took up the mantle as printer.² She even earned the title of public printer to the province, which formerly belonged to her husband. This title put the paper in much better financial condition than other competing Maryland newspapers.³ Anne Catherine continued to print the *Maryland Gazette*, first with the help of her son William, and then after his death in 1770, her other son Frederick.⁴ Anne Catharine is perhaps best known as one of the first woman printers in the colonies as well as for her innovative use of copper engraving in the printing of *The Deputy's Commissary Guide*.

After Jonas' death, the *Maryland Gazette's* masthead read “Anne Catherine Green & Son” until her death in 1775. While Anne Catherine Green devoted the majority of her life to motherhood -- she birthed fourteen children but only six survived to adulthood -- it

¹ David Skaggs, “Editorial Policies of the Maryland Gazette 1765-1783,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. LIX, (1994): 341.

² Ibid, 342.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Anne Catherine and Frederick Green, “Masthead,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), 1767-1775.

is clear that her contribution to the printing industry was significant. The fact that Jonas left the print shop to her after his death, instead of one of the sons is indicative of the great trust that he had in her business acumen and ability to run the newspaper. Her name is listed first for eight years of the paper's life, which means that she was synonymous with the *Maryland Gazette*.

In many ways Anne Green's experiences typifies that of women during this time period. She acted as the executrix of her husband's estate, common during that time, but expanded her role by replacing him in his business. She took agency for herself, and also gave it to others. Her position afforded her a unique opportunity to give women more advertising space. This was the primary way that a woman of some means appeared in the newspaper record, besides acting as an executrix for the estate of her husband or other relative. Compared to the newspapers in Philadelphia, which were owned and operated by men, more women were represented in Green's paper in the cases of bequests and rewards. Overall, only slightly more women were represented in 1790 than in 1770, when the paper was under the control of her son. This is mostly due to the increase in advertisements for slaves and the increase in population.

While economics are the most concrete example of women creating their own agency, it is the least studied. Only Cornelia Hughes Drayton and Karin Wulf mention women's business practices, in debt litigation and unmarried women, respectively. This analysis will define femininity in regards to economics, business practices, and the specific ways in which women participated in the economy.

Other historians commented on the appearance of women as economic actors in this era. The interpretation of their lives in the context of their business practices is

missing. In *Liberty's Daughters*, Mary Beth Norton mainly discussed how women were ignorant of their husband's business dealings, to their own detriment. Evidence suggests that this neglected area of study can greatly increase the understanding of Revolutionary woman's agency.

Women greatly contributed to the economic reality of life in colonial America. In analyzing the colonial newspapers of Philadelphia and Annapolis, seven categories were economically driven by women. Women advertised in these newspapers to offer a reward for missing property, acting as the executrix of an estate, selling property, bequeathing property after their death, owning property, and initiating divorce by leaving the husband.

These previous categories -- analyzed in both Annapolis and Philadelphia, before and after the War for Independence -- are important in establishing how women's economic freedom translated to the changing notions of liberty and personal independence. Newspapers establish a baseline of female behavior and an accurate description of what they can and cannot do. While not obvious, there are some changes in practical behaviors by 1790. Historians have frequently asserted that women experienced a contraction of legal rights after the Revolutionary War. Their practical actions, however, represented an expansion of civic rights.

Advertising is an effective way to reach a larger portion of the population. Despite the cost of paper and ink, travel was more expensive. Traveling from town to town and direct selling of wares was the only other way merchants could market their goods prior to advertising in newspapers. While many of the product advertisements were directed at both men and women, but more frequently men, some of these advertisements were for

products aimed at or for women. The first advertisement that ran in Maryland in 1770 was for a lecture on the eyes that will be described in more detail later in the chapter.

Maryland in 1790 fared better, circulating two advertisements that directly marketed to women. John Rigby advertised his stay-making business, and also gave instructions for ladies to measure themselves for stays so he could make them if they could not come to him.⁵ This is also an important advertisement because it contains language explicit to the female body. The second is for a cure-all known as James' Water; Ignatius Simpson acquired the recipe from Anne James.⁶

Pennsylvania in 1770 had four advertisements for products specifically for women. The first was an advertisement for a patent medicine, known as the Prussian Ladies Patent Balsam. This product promised to clear the skin of "pimples, freckles, sunburn &c. And making the skin beautifully soft and smooth."⁷ This advertisement, marketed specifically to women, was also part of another advertisement for Baron von Swieten's Universal Never-failing Worm Destroying Sugar Plum. The second advertisement was for Hooper's Female Pills, which sought to add color to pale faces, and cure other general complaints particular to the female sex.⁸ These products reinforced the weakness of the female sex by appealing to a woman's supposed vanity.

The other two advertisements were for clothing and medicines. George Bartram placed an advertisement selling different cloths and hosiery, specifically for women.⁹

⁵ John Rigby, "Stay-Making," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), June 16, 1790.

⁶ Ignatius Simpson, "To the Public," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), May 6, 1790.

⁷ Dr. Thomas Anderton, "Baron von Swieten's Universal Never-failing Worm Destroying Sugar Plum," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 4, 1770.

⁸ "Hooper's Female Pills," *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), June 7, 1770.

⁹ George Bartram, "George Bartram," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), October 28, 1771.

Aitken's Domestic Medicine is actually a book of various home prepared cures, for the edification of mothers and others looking to learn about the medical art.¹⁰

In 1770, six women placed twenty-three advertisements in Green's paper while in 1790 only four women advertised, and three women had the notices placed for them. This is exceedingly important to note, because Anne Green's son, Frederick, owned the paper in 1790. His ownership brought down the number of women in placing advertisements, leaving bequests, and abandonment announcements in this paper. In 1770 women advertised a variety of things: Elizabeth Contee publicized the sale of her tenement building; Elizabeth Goslen sought to sell five hundred and ninety-five acres of land; Elizabeth Ferguson sold the fabric to make stays; Sarah Ramsey and Elizabeth Chelsy both advertised the selling of slaves while Jephtha Hollingsworth looked to sell her house.¹¹

All of these women were quite determined to sell their wares. Contree advertised seven separate times, Ferguson and Chesly each advertised five times, Goslen advertised four times, and Ramsey and Hollingsworth each advertised once. Hollingsworth's advertisement first appeared on December 13, the third paper from the last of the year. It is possible she continued her plea into the New Year.

Other sales that occurred in 1770 Annapolis were of slaves, indentured servants, and male and female convicts. Six separate advertisements placed a total of twenty times all advertised healthy slaves, "country-born negroes," "stout negro woman," and "parcels

¹⁰ Robert Aitken, "To the Public," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), October 28, 1771.

¹¹ Elizabeth Contee, Elizabeth Goslen, Elizabeth Ferguson, Elizabeth Chesley, Sarah Ramsey, Jephtha Hollingsworth, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD) March 1, 1770 - April 19, 1770; April 12, 1770 - May 24, 1770; October 25, 1770 - December 6, 1770; October 25, 1770 - November 22, 1770; October 18, 1770; December 13, 1770.

of negroes.”¹² There was only one advertisement selling the remaining labor of a female indentured woman, placed once.

In contrast, all of the twenty four advertisements related to women placed in 1790 in the *Maryland Gazette* related to the selling of slaves. Sarah Blake, Hannah West, Rachel Brooke, and Anne Leeke all either placed advertisements or had advertisements placed for them.¹³ The executors of Sarah Blake’s and Rachel Brooke’s estates placed advertisements for their slaves. A representative for Anne Leeke sold slaves on behalf of her deceased husband, possibly to pay debts. Simultaneously to her placing this particular advertisement, she acted as the executrix for her husband’s estate, and asked for his debtors to repay her.¹⁴ Given the circumstances, she was responsible for paying her husband’s debts. In all three of these cases, men acted on their behalf. Only Hannah West placed the advertisement to sell her slaves herself.

In the other thirteen advertisements in 1790, women were the subjects and not the sellers, of either their labor or themselves. For example, an advertisement selling “One Negro Woman” ran four times. This woman’s master, Mr. Walter Pye racked up quite a bit of debt, and sought to sell her, a thirty-two acre tract of land, a mare, plantation utensils and household furniture. It is not clear whether Mr. Pye died and his trustees were selling this property, or if his property was managed by his trustees because of his debts.¹⁵

¹² *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 11, 1770; June 7, 1770; March 15, 1770.

¹³ Sarah Blake, Rachel Brooke, Anne Leeke, Hannah West. *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 11, 1790 - April 1, 1790; January 14, 1790 - February 4, 1790; December 9, 1790 -December 23, 1790; December 9, 1790 - December 16, 1790.

¹⁴ Anne Leeke, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 9, 1790 - December 16-1790..

¹⁵ Walter Pye, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 16 1790.

Alexander Hamilton placed the last advertisement nine times. While not the Alexander Hamilton of founding father fame, this Hamilton was a buyer for a Scottish trading group and bought a significant amount of property in Maryland.¹⁶ Hamilton sought to sell property he acquired through a deed of trust from Mr. Gerard Blackiston Causin. This property was quite vast: two tracts of land made up of five hundred and thirty five acres and three hundred and eighty-three acres totaling nine hundred and eighteen acres. The larger tract of land came with a dwelling house, “tobacco houses, corn houses, negro quarters, a garden well paled in, and a considerable orchard of apple, peach and other fruit trees.”¹⁷ The smaller tract had another dwelling, tobacco, and corn houses, Negro quarters, and also a blacksmith shop. The advertisement offered thirty-nine Negroes for sale: men, women, and children.¹⁸ In this communication, women were only seen as chattel, something to be bought and sold.

Advertisements like Hamilton’s were the norm in selling whole properties. Only two women in 1770 had significant enough assets to make bequests. Lady Betty Geriman, from London, left £10,000 to George Sackville and her seat at Drayton; £20,000 to Lady Vere Beauclerk and a retainer to all her servants. She also left an endowment for a charitable school as well - £2,000 for 40 years. Her personal fortune was worth a substantial £700,000.¹⁹ Mary Hammond’s executors, either her sons or males from her husband’s line, sold her stock of horses, cows, hogs, utensils, and assorted slaves. They also requested that anyone holding Mary’s debts to bring legally binding documents as proof. This may be evidence of her having some sort of personal business,

¹⁶ Fergusson/Hamilton papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.
<http://digital.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/actions.DisplayEADDoc.do?source=MdU.ead.histms.0185.xml>.

¹⁷ Alexander Hamilton, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 23 1790.

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ “London,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 1, 1770.

or at least participating in the economy in some measurable way.²⁰ It is also important to recognize that these women did not bequeath any real estate; it was only personalty, personal wealth, slaves, tangible articles that could be moved. While some women did inherit property from their fathers, by far the greatest wealth a woman had was liquid property.

The *Maryland Gazette* publicized two other bequest disputes. The first warned subscribers of a dubious will involving a young wife married to an older man. The author described the anonymous woman as “infamous and artful” who, soon after marrying her elderly husband, convinced him to change his will, leaving all of his property to her, with only a small amount of his fortune left to his children. While not illegal, his children took the matter to court and won; the new will was set aside. The only names mentioned in this article are that of the local Annapolis lawyers James Tilghman and John Dickinson, both for the children.²¹

The second bequest in dispute detailed E. Tilghman’s quest to obtain a writ to sell the land of Elizabeth and William Courley. This long and involved affair begins with Colonel Vincent Lowe. He petitioned the Assembly for the right to sell the land, but died before the land sold. The Courley’s then inherited the land, and also petitioned the Assembly for the right to sell it, but William died before it sold. After his death, the Assembly granted Elizabeth rights as femme sole, to sell the land alone, but she died before it sold. Thus, E. Tilghman inherited the land and again petitioned to sell the land to cover the debts of the Courleys and keep the remainder.²² This is significant because it

²⁰ Greensbury and John Hammond, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 6, 1770.

²¹ “Annapolis,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 15, 1770.

²² “Courley Matter,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 13, 1770.

is one of the only times mentioned in the newspapers when a woman was granted legal rights over land, even though she died before it sold.

In 1790 only two women specifically left enough behind to either cover their debts or leave bequests. These two women, Aquila Edwards and Anne Sanders, are the only ones mentioned in the *Maryland Gazette* as having assets after they died.²³ There is some debate over whether Aquila Edwards was a woman or a man. There are no personal pronouns used and the name “Aquila” is both masculine and feminine. Should Aquila be a woman, it would most likely be her son, but perhaps it was another male relative in her husband’s line, William Edwards who acted as her executor to sell part of the plantation as well as the household furniture and farm animals. A husband would be less likely to sell off assets if he was still living. Anne Sanders is mentioned five times in the 1790 run of the *Maryland Gazette*. The advertisement for her estate is asking for those who may have debts or credits on the estate to come forward to Frederick Green at the printing office.²⁴ These women had personalty, and were legally allowed to bequeath it after their deaths.

Another way women demonstrated their economic independence was to offer a reward for missing or stolen property. For two women, it meant having enough money of their own to offer a reward and place the advertisement. In 1770 Ann Hammond advertised a reward for her two horses, one a gelding with a brand, for twenty shillings each.²⁵ This advertisement only ran once. Mary Chapman offered a four pound reward for the return of Punch’s Head from her puppet show. She was apparently familiar with

²³ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 1, 1790 - April 8, 1790; January 14, 1790 - February 25, 1790.

²⁴ Leona M. Hudak, *Early American Women Printers and Publishers: 1639-1820*, (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978): 265-277.

²⁵ Mary Chapman, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 19 1770.

the men who stole her puppets, as she named them -- James Gordon and Thomas Plant-- as well as gave descriptions of them. [Figure 1] She ran her advertisement three times, indicating she had sufficient funds to regain her lost property.

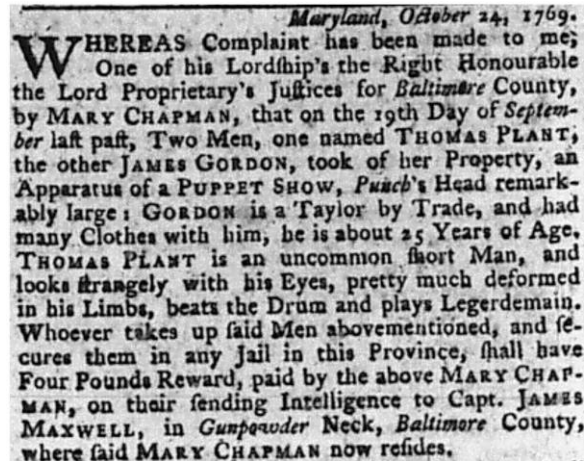


Figure 1: Mary Chapman, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 19 1770.

Three women offered a reward

for items that went missing in 1790 in the *Maryland Gazette*. Rebecca Hall placed an advertisement in search of her lost horse. The advertisement ran twice, but is also notable for another reason. This was the first case of an image in the 1790 paper -- a figure of a horse. The Greens sprinkled a few images throughout the year, but not many. Images seemed to be more common in the Philadelphia papers. Mary Venables and Sarah MacGill both placed advertisements showing that they found lost stock and sought a reward for their return. Venables found a cow and MacGill secured two horses that wandered onto her property. The practice of announcing the presence of lost animals and seeking a reward was quite common. This practice also meant two other things: they owned the property themselves, and they had substantial enough means to advertise its return.

A second way that women asserted their economic independence was by acting as the executrix for their husbands' or another relative's estate. There were no laws specifying how often an advertisement needed to be taken out after the death of a person, be they creditor or debtor. A total of twelve women acted in this capacity for their

husbands' estates. Many of these women took advertisements out more than once, calling for debtors and creditors to see them about settling debts.

Anne Middleton seemed to be quite well-off after her husband's death in 1770. She placed her advertisement twelve times, and specified that while she was selling some of the property, she intended to keep the tavern and ferry boats. In 1792, family members won a court case forcing Anne's son to sell the tavern. This property is important because it also played a role in the events leading up to the War for Independence. Under her husband, Horatio, the tavern and the ferry allegedly ran rum, one of the heavily taxed items under new British taxes, and numbered some founding fathers among its patrons. This continued under Anne and afterwards when one of her sons it over in 1774 after her death.²⁶ The structure is now on the National Register of Historic Places.²⁷ Her participation in extra-legal economic activity, even after the death of her husband, shows

a willingness to keep the family's economic condition stable, by any means necessary.

Another woman kept the family business running after her husband's death. Cave Williams kept the blacksmithing shop open. Williams also seemed quite angry that her late husband's debtors had not settled up their accounts in a timely manner. Regardless, she specified that she would keep the smithy open, under the same name, and run it with the

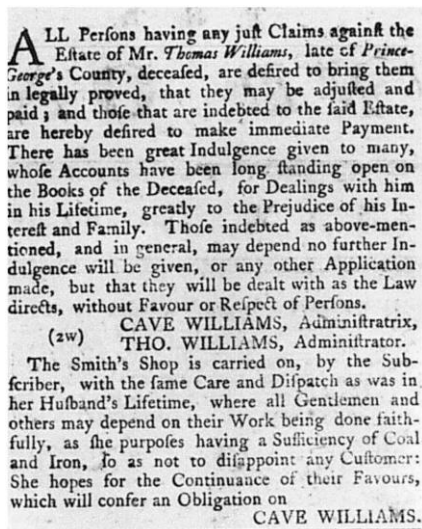


Figure 2: Cave Williams, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 25 1770- February 1, 1770.

²⁶ Russel Wright, "Capsule Summary of Middleton's Tavern," (Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Annapolis Survey, August 1983), 12.

²⁷ Shannon Horton (waitress at Annapolis Seafood Restaurant formerly Middleton's Tavern), interview with researcher, April 8, 2016

same care that her husband did.²⁸ [Figure 2] It was not unusual that a wife would continue to run a family business after her husband passed away until her son came of age. What is unusual is the type of business this was; Karin Wulf mentions numerous professions in her examination of widows and unmarried women in Revolutionary Philadelphia, and no woman acted as blacksmith herself.

The majority of the women acting as their husbands' executrices sold off most of the property, excepting the widow's thirds that the government guaranteed them. Widow's thirds are one-third the entirety of the property available at the husband's death and were considered sacrosanct. Even in the cases of sheriff's sales, the widow's thirds were exempted. Seven women sought to sell the plantation, furniture, animals, and slaves if they had any. Only five of the women seemed to be capable of maintaining their husband's business after his death. These five either specified what part of the estate they intended to keep or just asked for their husband's creditors and debtors to settle up with them in a timely fashion. These women had the right to sell the land as *femme sole*; it may have been in the will what parts they could sell, or it might have been left up to their discretion. Regardless, the Assembly granted these women the right to sell this land.

By comparison, a total of twenty-one women acted as executrices in 1790. The majority of the women seemed to better off financially. Twelve of them announced the settling of debts, without the sale of property. Another woman, Eliza Murdocks, also did not intend to sell any property when she acted as the executrix for Delia Lusby.²⁹ Four women sought to petition the assembly to sell the land that they administered after a man's death -- in three of the cases it was a father who had passed. Three of the four

²⁸ Cave Williams, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 25 1770- February 1, 1770.

²⁹ Eliza Murdocks, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 28, 1790.

women who petitioned the assembly did so with siblings. Only Elizabeth Elder petitioned the assembly alone in order to sell her husband's land.³⁰ One woman, Mary McCulloch, only looked to sell part of the property and rent the rest.³¹ Four women advertised the sale of property in their announcements, and three women sought to sell real estate, either in part or in whole. It included the land, dwelling house, and any other structures as well.

The prevalence of women acting as executrices for their spouses and then keeping the majority of the property has two implications. The first is that the families were in overall better financial shape after the war and in a position to keep more of the property rather than sell it to pay debts. Hughes Drayton supports this position; her research showed that debt litigation among women was at an all-time high in the early 1770s. Women were more likely to sue over debts pre-Revolutionary War.³² Post-war, these women may not have needed the money as desperately. The second contention is that women were better trained to understand and take over their husbands' finances after an event such as the war. A war in these port towns, with trading and importing being the major occupations, greatly impacted the flow of cash into the pockets of the merchants.

The young men coming of age in the 1770s learned a hard lesson, watching their mothers struggle with financial obligations they were ill prepared to understand. This perhaps made these men more conscious in teaching their partners the particulars of family finance before their deaths, so the survivors would not have to sell property to cover the debts, and would have made the men more cautious and conservative in their finances. The women who suffered through this dislocation of traditional gender roles

³⁰ Elizabeth Elder, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 11, 1790 - May 6, 1790.

³¹ Mary McCulloch, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 30, 1790.

³² Cornelia Hughes Drayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 99.

may have also raised their daughters with a different expectation; they were pushed out of their traditional boundaries and wanted their daughters to be better equipped to deal with whatever may come their way.

All of the women who acted as executrixes became property owners, some for the first time if they did not already hold land. Women owned roughly a fifth of the property in pre-Revolutionary America, primarily through inheritance from their husbands or fathers. If they married or remarried, the law required that the property pass into their husband possession.³³ Property ownership is also a trait shared by the women who sold slaves, land, or personalty as well as women who left bequests. In 1770, twenty women fell into this category of property ownership. There is one woman in 1770 who does not fit into the previously mentioned categories. It is unclear how Elizabeth Bordley became a property owner, but her actions illustrate her capacity as a landowner; she is not mentioned explicitly as selling her land, or as the executrix of an estate. Despite this, she took out multiple advertisements in the *Maryland Gazette* announcing:

I have good Reason to believe that there are several Persons, who make practice of sending their Servants out to get Wood, upon the Land belonging to me, lying adjacent to this City. They have no Right to act in that Manner, without my Consent, and I hereby tell them plainly 'tis disagreeable to me; and that I shall endeavor [sic] to make those suffer, who may be found trespassing for the future.³⁴

Green ran Bordley's announcement for eight weeks. From this announcement it is reasonable to assume that Elizabeth Bordley owned property, and sought to protect that property fiercely, as well as the fact that she had a reasonable amount of money to run this announcement for eight straight weeks.

³³ John G. Knolp and Terri L. Snyder, "Women and the Political Culture of Eighteenth Century Virginia: Gender, Property Law, and Voting Rights," *The Many Legalities of Early America*, ed. Christopher L. Tomlin and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 272-292

³⁴ Elizabeth Bordley, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), May 17, 1770- July 12, 1770.

Two other notable women who appeared in ways that are exceptional in 1790 were Anne Sanders and Elizabeth Dare. Frederick Green, the owner of the *Maryland Gazette*, advertised for Anne Sanders' creditors and debtors to come to the printers.³⁵ This meant that she had some sort of property. It may also be reasonable to assume that Sanders was related to Green in some way, as it was most frequently relatives that handled financial matters after the death of a loved one. Elizabeth Dare used the paper to announce that her slave, Alley, had run away, and sought her return. Dare lent Alley to a man named Isaac Kent and she ran away from him. The advertisement described Alley as:

a likely young negro woman named Alley, about eighteen years old, well grown and not very black, is very notable, has one crooked finger, a very long head, flat nose, thick lips, and large eyes; she is a very swanky awkward looking negro, has tongue enough, and never without a lie in her mouth, and will deceive almost any person; she crossed at George-town the eleventh of December, and passes for a free woman; that her mistress had married a methodist preacher and set her free, and had changed her name and likewise her [cloathes]; she is a great thief; had on a Welch cotton petticoat and jacket, and cotton petticoat, coarse shoes and stockings, and Osnabring shift; it is likely she has changed her tale and [cloathes] too before this.³⁶

Dare offered ten dollars reward for the return of Alley and ran the announcement three times, ending on February 4, 1790. About a month later, on March 11, the sheriff announced that he caught Alley and that Dare should come to collect her at the jail, after paying a fee.³⁷ Alley was owned by Dare, and Dare placed her notice alone. The response by the sheriff signifies that he recognized Dare's right to claim Alley. Despite her gender, Dare was considered a property owner and Alley, the property.

³⁵ Frederick Green, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 4, 1790 - February 25, 1790.

³⁶ Elizabeth Dare, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 21, 1790 - February 4, 1790.

³⁷ Edward Lloyd Wailes, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 11 1790.

Another way a woman affirmed her economic, and literal, independence would be to run away from a bad marriage. Typically, the spurned husbands announced the woman's departure and their subsequent refusal to pay any fees incurred on her behalf. Four women in 1770 ran away from their husbands. Another woman, Lady Grosvenor, had a particularly interesting divorce proceeding. She petitioned a judge for alimony from her husband. She already received 1600 pounds monthly from her former husband, and the judge awarded her an extra 400 pounds per month.³⁸ She is the only woman mentioned in 1770 Maryland as petitioning for a divorce.

In the 1790s far fewer women ran away from their husbands. The only individual named is Mary Boylan. Her husband ran his announcement of her departure for nine weeks.³⁹ Another interesting story is that of an Irish lady. The Irish House of Lords ruled on a case involving the fortune of a widow who remarried. An early form of prenuptial agreement stated that if the fault of the dissolution of the marriage lay with the husband, the wife would keep her whole fortune, whereas if it was the fault of the woman then the husband received two hundred pound annually. The first time a judge ruled on the case, he found in favor of the husband; the wife appealed the case, and it was found in her favor.⁴⁰ This set a precedent for other Irish ladies seeking to retain their fortune should a divorce happen.

Annapolis and Philadelphia were very similar during the Revolutionary time period. Both were port cities, economic hubs of their respective states, as well as the seats of power. Philadelphia became the seat of power for the entire burgeoning nation, and

³⁸ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 27 1770.

³⁹ Thomas Boylan, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 5 1790.

⁴⁰ "Philadelphia," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), July 22 1790.

therefore had many more newspapers to cater to the growing population and various travelers in the city. Philadelphia was also considered more cosmopolitan than Annapolis, as well as more progressive. A Quaker stronghold, by 1789 an act for the gradual abolition of slavery had already passed through the legislature.

Unlike Annapolis with its single newspaper, the *Maryland Gazette*, Philadelphia supported several papers published concurrently. The three largest from 1770-1790 were the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Pennsylvania Packet and General (Daily) Advertiser*, and the *Pennsylvania Journal*. In 1784, the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* became the first successful daily newspaper in the nation.⁴¹

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* published more advertisements by women than the *Pennsylvania Packet and General/Daily Advertiser* and *Pennsylvania Journal*. The *Pennsylvania Gazette*'s popularity is comparable to that of *The New York Times* today, making the preponderance of advertisements unsurprising.⁴² Benjamin Franklin began the *Gazette* in 1728 and continued to be involved with its publication until his death in April 1790.⁴³

Twenty-nine women advertised wares or property in the 1770 Philadelphia papers.⁴⁴ Six of those twenty-nine advertised renting property, generally a house or mansion. Three also looked to sell their slaves; these advertisements were in addition to the sale of property. Eight women advertised the selling of wares that were not specifically land or houses; these women sold cloth, leather, millinery goods and other

⁴¹ To maintain structural integrity, in the 1790 edition the Monday issue was chosen for analysis. Frequently, the daily advertisements did not change.

⁴² Eric Burns, *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2006): 86.

⁴³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 22, 1790. The paper was edged in black in memoriam.

⁴⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA), 1770-1771 - various.

accessories, a grist mill, ironmongery goods, glassware, cutlery and saddlery. A unique feature of the Pennsylvania papers is the inclusion of want advertisements. Two different papers published want advertisements from women seeking employment as a wet nurse.⁴⁵ It is possible that the same woman authorized these two advertisements, but it is also possible that they were two different women.

A sharp decline occurred in 1790 of the number of women selling property and wares. Only seventeen women advertised things to sell; this did not include their labor.⁴⁶ Of those, seven offered land and houses for sale, three promoted various patent medicines, two advertised the selling of various foods, such as sherry wine, walnuts, and pickles, one sought to sell livestock, and the remaining two offered property for rent.⁴⁷ Four additional women advertised that they wanted jobs as seamstresses, wet nurses, and housekeepers.⁴⁸

In 1770 Philadelphia, the advertisements featuring the sale of women's services differed starkly. All of the notices were for the sale of either slaves or indentures. In these earlier notices, race and ethnicity are sharply featured; three of four advertisements for female indentured servants are described as English (two) and one Dutch. The other eight advertisements described that the girls being sold were "healthy," "active," "likely,"

⁴⁵ *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 11, 1771. *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770.

⁴⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA), 1789-1790 - various.

⁴⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA), 1789-1790 - various.

⁴⁸ *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, April 27, 1790; February 5, 1790; July 22, 1790.

“sober,” and “Negro” wenches/girls/women.⁴⁹ Other than the selling of their labor, no woman in 1790 advertised the selling of another person.

In 1780 the state of Pennsylvania passed a law calling for the gradual abolition of slavery.⁵⁰ Slaves born after July 1, 1780 were enslaved until the age of 28 to their mothers’ masters, while those born before remained slaves for life. This law also included a provision for a registry of slaves to ensure that no more slaves would be imported. A 1788 amendment closed some loopholes. This amendment provided that a slave owner could not take his pregnant slave out of state so the child would be born a slave, families could not be separated and slaveholders had to register all children born to their slaves within six months.⁵¹ While important in the history of slavery, this is also significant because women were not portrayed as chattel in the newspapers any longer, at least in Philadelphia. Their labor became valuable monetarily.

As in Maryland, inheriting property or leaving a bequest was a way that women could acquire some measure of economic independence. In 1770, two women received bequests from relatives. Two attorneys advertised in papers seeking these women, Anna Margaret Winsh and Martha

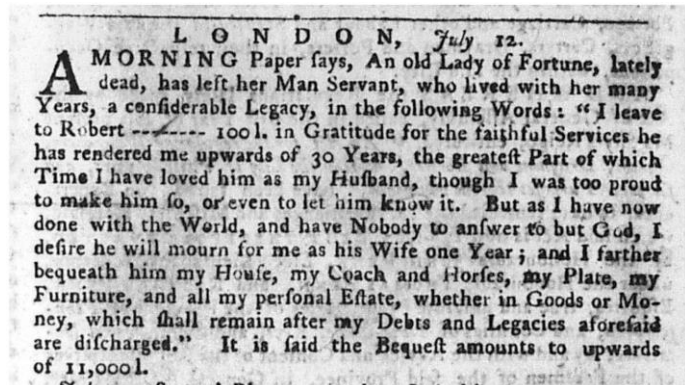


Figure 3: “London, July 12,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 11, 1770.

⁴⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), 1770-71; 1789-1790 - various.

⁵⁰ John Bayard, (Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly), *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery*, Philadelphia 1780, <<http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/gradual.htm>>

⁵¹ John Bayard, *1788 Amendment to the 1780 Gradual Abolition Act*, Philadelphia 1780, <<http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/gradual.htm>>

Richardson Plunkett, to come to their respective offices to receive their inheritances.⁵² In only one case did a woman leave a bequest -- an older woman of some considerable fortune left her personalty totaling near 11,000 to her butler.⁵³ The announcement came from London and was quite touching. [Figure 3]

The majority of death announcements for women came in two forms: a simple announcement of her death, with a touching tribute or a description of how she died, or seeking the creditors and/or debtors. These death announcements are important to note because these women were either well respected enough to merit an obituary or had enough money to leave a bequest. The newspapers in 1770 announced the deaths of thirteen women; these usually featured a list of their descendants as well as the identity of their spouses. The obituaries requested that creditors and debtors settle the debts with two women.⁵⁴ While not overt, the point of the death announcements is to show the importance of these women to their society, either economically or socially.

In 1790, the newspapers mentioned four women in bequests and eleven death announcements. Two of the announcements sought recompense for debts and credits, while one announced that Margaret Gibbons should see the printer about an inheritance from her brother.⁵⁵ Margaret Shee's property was mentioned in a sheriff's sale, but only so her widow's thirds was protected after the sale of the property. She received £8

⁵² *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 4, 1770; *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), March 1, 1770.

⁵³ "London, July 12," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 11, 1770.

⁵⁴ Lavina Greenman and Sarah Parker, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 18, 1770 - January 25, 1770; July 26, 1770.

⁵⁵ Mary Way and Hannah Rawlinson, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), September 30, 1790-October 21, 1790. Margaret Gibbons, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), September 16, 1790.

annually for the rent of the property.⁵⁶ Of the eleven death announcements, two asked for the settling of credits and debts. This exception asking for credits and debts shows that those women had some measure of economic participation, whether through a business or lending money.

Mary Chapman offered a reward for her stolen puppet show in the Pennsylvania papers in 1770, as well. She advertised in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, running the same advertisement that she ran in the *Maryland Gazette* (see fig. 1). The only difference is that in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Chapman offered four dollars reward, not four pounds.⁵⁷ Again, this shows that Chapman had a significant amount of wealth. Not only did she advertise in her own county, but also in another state, showing enough money to run both advertisements simultaneously.

The number of women offering rewards is quite slim in 1790 as well. The only woman mentioned in connection to a reward is Mrs. Syler. A gentleman by the name of William Donaldson advertised that his silver pocket watch was stolen from Mrs. Syler's residence. Donaldson does not place the blame on Mrs. Syler, but rather on a young gentleman who lodged there. He offered a reward of four dollars for the watch's return.

There were many women in 1770 that acted as the executrix for their husbands or in two cases, another woman. Forty-one women placed announcements of the deaths of their husbands or mothers.⁵⁸ Of those forty-one, twenty merely announced the death of their husband as well as asked for creditors and debtors to see them as soon as possible. These twenty women did not seek to sell land, which could either mean that they did not

⁵⁶ James Ash, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), July 29, 1789.

⁵⁷ Mary Chapman, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 25, 1770.

⁵⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA), 1770-71 - various.

have the right to sell it, or did not need to. They did, however, require debts and credits to be settled, suggesting they were not extremely wealthy, but well-off enough to avoid selling property or personalty. Twenty-two women also sought to sell land, with one woman asking for both credits and debts to be settled and seeking to sell property. The twenty-two women had the right to sell their husbands' lands. Of all of these announcements, only one also announced that the shop operated by Mary Jacob would continue to operate.⁵⁹ Her executrixes were presumably her daughters: Ann Gillingham and Mary Jacob. [Figure 4]

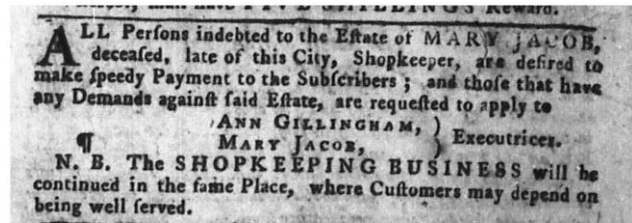


Figure 4: Ann Gillingham and Mary Jacobs, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770.

While usually the women who placed these announcements steered clear from describing the circumstances of death, one woman, Barbara Shott did no such thing. She took this opportunity to plead for the speedy settlement of debts because her husband died suddenly in some sort of dispute. Describing herself as a “disconsolate widow, who is in narrow circumstances,” Barbara may have been able to pull on the heartstrings of her husband’s debtors in order to settle those debts more quickly.⁶⁰ This vignette illustrated another important point: these women had the right to collect the debts of their husbands; they were entitled to the money of their husband’s debtors.

In 1790 a sharp decline occurred in the number of women acting as executrixes. Only eleven women used the newspapers as an outlet for the announcement of their

⁵⁹ Ann Gillingham and Mary Jacobs, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770.

⁶⁰ Barbara Shott, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 16, 1770.

husband's deaths.⁶¹ Five women took this opportunity to also sell property their husbands owned. Seven women just announced the deaths of their husbands and requested to settle debts and credits. The decline in the number of executrices in the newspapers could be because of the change in the structure of the newspapers. Again, Philadelphia became the seat of government, and the printers published the meeting minutes of Congress instead of advertisements, executrix announcements, and other standard pieces of the newspapers.

Women who acted as executrices or sold items all had one thing in common besides their gender: they were property owners. Other property owners included those who advertised for the return of their runaway slaves, including Ann Reardon and Flora Dorsey.⁶² Sarah Hopkins sought the return of her indentured Irish servant woman, Margaret Welsh.⁶³ Valentine Weaver, Widow Greer, and Mary Withy all found horses, as well as Agnes Lyon who found a cow on her property.⁶⁴ All of these women also requested that the owners of these animals pay the fees the women incurred in housing the animals. This category of property owners also includes Mary Chapman, who offered the reward for her stolen Punch Head puppet show.⁶⁵

In 1790 Philadelphia there was a marked decline in the number of women owning property. This is especially unusual, because the population in 1790 increased. Besides

⁶¹ Two of the women's names were quite similar as were their husbands' names. Because spelling had yet to be standardized, and the announcements did not run concurrently - but one right after the other - it is possible that Catharine Helfenstein and Catharine Ellphinston are the same person. The both ran in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* from June 22, 1790 - August 12, 1790.

⁶² Ann Reardon and Flora Dorsey, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), August 2, 1770 and January 18, 1770.

⁶³ Sarah Hopkins, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 19, 1770.

⁶⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*. 1770-71 - various.

⁶⁵ Mary Chapman, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 19 1770.

those that were selling property, executrixes, and those involved in sheriff's sales, only one woman does not belong in any of those categories. Robert Corkin placed an ad on behalf of Sarah Sharpe. A brown mare came onto her property and she sought recompense for the care of the animal from the owner.⁶⁶

Another way women gained economic independence was through abandonment. The 1770 Philadelphia newspapers announced that sixteen women ran away from their husbands, and two women had husbands who abandoned them.⁶⁷ The abandoned husbands placed these announcements, indicating that they would no longer pay any debts incurred by the wives. The two notable exceptions are that of Ann Bowman and Elizabeth Lawler nee Calfrey. John Kreibil called out Ann Bowman. Kreibil announced that Ann had incurred a substantial debt from him, as well as nearly "tricked" him into marrying her. She had told him that she was widowed. Ann also produced paperwork allegedly verifying her husband's death, and that should he still be alive, the bonds she incurred from him would be void. She then stole this paperwork from Kreibil, so his claim could not be verified.⁶⁸

Elizabeth Lawler nee

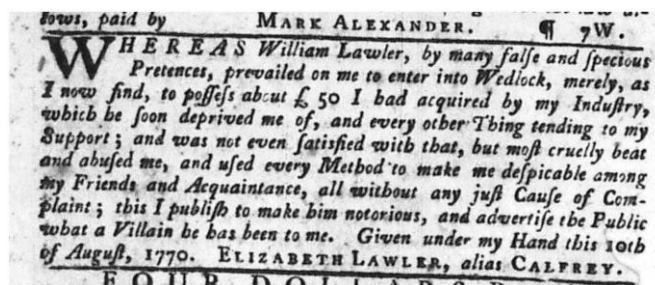


Figure 5: Elizabeth Lawler/Calfrey, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 16, 1770.

Calfrey challenged her husband, William, for seeking to marry her only for her money and then leave her. Not only did she accuse him

of stealing her money, but she also

⁶⁶ Sarah Sharpe % Robert Corkin, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1790.

⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA), 1770-71 - various.

⁶⁸ John Kreibil, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 4, 1770.

said that he beat her, and made her seem untrustworthy to her friends and acquaintances. She sought to publish this information just to inform the rest of the community of his actions against her, because at this point in time there was no legal recourse for her. [Figure 5]⁶⁹ In 1770, it was unheard of for a woman to file for divorce, or take any legal action against her husband. The societal implications for a divorced woman were astronomical. She would be ostracized from not only her friends, but also her family. Elizabeth's challenge is indicative of that treatment. She fought back against the ostracism to tell her side of the story.

Conversely, more women who gained economic independence through divorce went up by 1790. Fourteen of the nineteen husbands simply announced that they would no longer be responsible for debts incurred by their wives. There were five others who merit more examination. Mary McLaughlin left her husband, and then returned to him, but left again and he asked to no longer be responsible for her debts.⁷⁰ Abigail Howling left her husband, a mariner, when he left on a trip to the East Indies; he also announced that he would pay no debts incurred under her name.⁷¹ Ruth Garland's husband, George, took back his previous renunciation of her debts, as she had returned to his home.⁷²

There are two more special cases, because it was the wives challenging the husbands. Mary Schultz announced on July 7 that she would no longer accept her husband's debts and that she was initiating proceedings to procure a divorce from him.⁷³

The case of Lydia Mathew is even more compelling. First, her husband announced

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Lawler/Calfrey, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 16, 1770.

⁷⁰ Bryan McLaughlin, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 25, 1770.

⁷¹ Patrick Howling, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), June 1, 1770.

⁷² Mary Schultz, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1770.

⁷³ Lydia and Thomas Mathew, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1790 - December 23, 1790.

simply that he would not be responsible for any debts incurred in her name, as she had left him. In the next issue, however, and in fact right underneath her husband's contention, Lydia fires back, that she abandoned him because of his cruelty and that he "acted more like a savage than a husband." She also claimed that he had dragged her outside their home and told her to leave, after which she ran to her mother's house. While Lydia did not immediately announce that she would take legal action, she only sought to try him in the court of public opinion.⁷⁴ As in the case of Elizabeth Lawler, Lydia Mathew's only recourse was the newspaper. This was her option, to tell her story with the hope that she could have a semblance of normal life after.

A new inclusion in the 1790 Philadelphia newspapers was the divorce announcements. Different from the challenges and abandonment announcements mentioned earlier, these are actual legal instances of divorce. The sheriff placed the five advertisements and called both parties to answer to the charges of divorce. In four of the cases, both parties are named at the beginning of the advertisement. In only one case, that of Mary Boor, is she named first.⁷⁵ This indicates that her husband had filed for divorce, while the others show that they had filed jointly.

Another notable difference between the Maryland newspapers and the Pennsylvania newspapers are the addition of sheriff's sales.⁷⁶ These are properties that either did not have executors/trixes, or there was a significant amount of debt, so much so that the sheriff of the county was named the executor. While only four women in 1770 had their property go to the sheriff's sale, it is notable because the property was entirely

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ James Ash, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 2, 1790 - December 30, 1790.

⁷⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), 1770-71 and 1789-1790, various.

their own.⁷⁷ Either their husbands had passed some time before or they had never married, so the property was entirely in their name.

In 1790, there was a dramatic increase in the number of properties going to sheriff's sale. Twenty-five properties listing women ended up being sold at public auction by the sheriff.⁷⁸ Of these twenty-five, fifteen listed both the husband and wife. This could be because the spouses died soon after one another, or the woman had enough property of her own to warrant the inclusion of her own name, although this is the more unlikely scenario. Two of these sheriff's sales also mentioned the protection of the widow's third of the surviving wife. This is notable because even though the husband had debt, the protection of his wife was still important to the community. It is also notable because she was still alive, yet was not named the executrix of her husband's estate.

Annapolis and Philadelphia were only a little bit different in 1770, but the differences between them became starker in 1790. Women were more thoroughly represented in Annapolis than they were in Philadelphia, especially pre-Revolution, possibly due to the involvement of Anne Catharine Green as printer. Philadelphia has a unique reason for not running as many advertisements as did Annapolis. As the first seat of government of the United States, the various newspapers frequently ran the entirety of the minutes of the proceedings of Congress in the papers.⁷⁹ This left little room for any advertisements, with many weeks having very few to none at all. This was especially true

⁷⁷ James Ash, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), February 8, 1770; June 28, 1770; September 13, 1770; September 20, 1770.

⁷⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), 1789-90 - various.

⁷⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), 1789-90 - various.

in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which, prior to the Revolution, ran a fair amount of advertisements by and about women.

The abandonment announcements, in addition to divorce, increased in Philadelphia, but decreased in Annapolis. This could possibly be explained by the cultural differences in these two cities. As mentioned before, Philadelphia was more cosmopolitan, and slightly more tolerant of women acting with agency. This tolerance led to women, who were more economically secure, leaving their husbands, and even filing for divorce. Annapolis still had greater ties to Britain, which led to a greater reliance on British mannerisms and societal pressures. These women, even though they may have had the means and motive to flee, did not. The examples of Elizabeth Calfrey and Lydia Mathew in Philadelphia show the desperate ways that these women sought some semblance of sympathy in the public eye.

The final numbers show that the representation of women acting economically was greatest in Philadelphia pre-War for Independence, at one hundred and twenty-one instances. After the war, there were only ninety five instances. Five of those instances are of legal divorce, something unseen before the war. The five hundred percent increase in the divorce rate shows that women were perhaps more likely to leave their husbands after the war. The family was no longer in immediate danger from attack and women felt more secure in leaving their husbands. The evidence also shows that women tended to be better off economically after the war, and this no doubt influenced their decision.

Women were economic actors in other ways, especially in the social sphere. By hosting parties for their husbands, new businessmen had to obtain an invitation from the hostess. This man would have to pass an unwritten test of manners and business acumen

in order to have access to their husbands' attention and subsequently their business. Husbands also relied on their wives to perform this crucial function, which lends credence to the theory that women had to have some knowledge of their husband's business. These women performed economic functions in the social sphere, one of the only spheres that allowed them unique power.

Chapter Two: “Advice to the Ladies:” Women as Social Actors in the Revolutionary Era

Historians have well-documented the actions of Revolutionary women in the social realm. Researches such as Mary Beth Norton, Kathleen Brown, Linda K. Kerber and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich all examined the social responsibilities of women in their own realms. Kerber defended the idea of “Republican Motherhood” in *Women of the Republic* and asserted that it was not men and women united in fighting Great Britain during the War for Independence but instead the men fighting the men, while the women worked behind the scenes in subversive ways. Brown and Ulrich, in *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* and *Goodwives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* respectively, examine the more personal domestic sphere, with regards to marriage and divorce, and how women could affect social change in their private roles. The two historians believed that changes came through influencing the husbands. Colonial newspapers in Philadelphia and Annapolis reveal that they had a secondary role. Women acted as gatekeepers to the economic, social, and political realm. This function has been largely overlooked in the literature.

During the Revolutionary Era, women typically appeared in the newspapers three times in their lives: birth, marriage, and death. It was wealthy women or women who stepped outside the normal traditional roles who get noticed more often. The printers generally limited birth announcements to either foreign royalty or cases with unusual circumstances. They also limited marriage announcements to a sentence or two, and described the bride as virtuous and beautiful. Printers only printed death announcements

for the most notable or the exceptionally old. While adult women engaged socially through marriage, birth and death, they drove social change through circumstances involving abandonment and divorce. This upset the status quo of the time. While these situations were uncommon, they resulted in the redefinition of women's roles during the Revolutionary period.

While scholars have examined the roles of women in marriage, abandonment, and divorce, they have generally neglected newspapers as a source of information. Ulrich and Brown primarily relied on court records and personal papers to inform their works. Ulrich in particular focused on women's role in marriage during the period leading up to the Revolutionary war. She categorized women into three broad groups: Bathsheba, Eve and Jael. Bathsheba represented women as deputy-husbands, gentlewomen, and good wives. The section on Eve discussed a women's sexual life, mostly focusing on fornication charges, as well as women as consorts and mothers. Jael represented women as religious figures, how their religion deeply impacted their lives and how their families memorialized them after death. This is the only section in which Ulrich used newspapers to inform her study, but only in how women were remembered and perceived.

The *Maryland Gazette* did a great job of announcing marriages, even if some of the stories presented in the newspaper are fictional. Five different stories ran in 1770 discussing various aspects of proposals and the announcement of a marriage. One was a conventional announcement, declaring that Mr. Robert Christie married Miss Polly Lawson. The printer, Anne Green, described Miss Lawson as "a young lady possessed of every qualification to render the married state happy."¹

¹ *Maryland Gazette*, (Annapolis, MD), April 19, 1770.

Green included other anecdotes whose value may have resided in their entertainment factor. Three stories recounted various anecdotes of proposals, and one of lawsuit about the breach of promise of an engagement. These stories included a man who tried to propose marriage to a woman before his pipe went out, a clergyman who ran away to marry an heiress, and man whose girlfriend's brother threatened him with physical abuse if he did not propose marriage.² These stories accurately fit into Ulrich's analysis of the roles of women as the various characters of Bathsheba and Eve.

By 1790, the *Maryland Gazette* announced far fewer marriages; only two ran in the newspapers that year. The first described a woman "turned the wrong side of forty" who ran away with a young man in the navy. The woman was quite wealthy, but snuck out of her house through the second story window at midnight in order to meet this man and run away to marry him in Scotland.³ This story specifies that the woman was quite well off alone and was "at her own disposal." She acted as a *femme sole* to conduct her own marriage, likely because she had no man to whom she had to defer. Despite this she still sought to conduct her marriage in secret, possibly to avoid social and familial scrutiny in so late a marriage. In the second announcement, a woman got cold feet as she was about to walk down the aisle; her intended groom eased her anxieties and after they got to the altar, he bowed to her and left.⁴ While a terribly sad story, this also shows a woman beginning to take control over her own future. The story is structured to imply that she had anxieties about her marriage, and her fiancé placated her, only to leave her again. This may not be the case. This woman had no legal grounds to break her

² Ibid January 4, 1770; March 22, 1770; August 9, 1770; October 25, 1770.

³ Ibid, October 14, 1790.

⁴ Ibid, May 6, 1790.

engagement, but the fiancé could, without recourse. It is possible that the fiancé, seeing her anxiety over the impending marriage, agreed to leave her so she could socially save face, and still remain without a stain on her character.

While the *Maryland Gazette* had far more personally interesting stories, Pennsylvania had a greater number of factual announcements about actual people. The Philadelphia newspapers in 1770 had three announcements such as this with named individuals, one of which was for English nobility, with Miss Wilkes marrying the Duke of Devonshire.⁵ In 1790, the newspapers had far more announcements, two naming specific couples, with seventeen in total. The *Pennsylvania Journal* published announcements as lists of couples recently married, which contributed to the great increase.⁶ These included not only the women getting married in Philadelphia but also elite women from other large cities, like Boston and Charleston. The inclusion of these marriage announcements show women participating in larger social networks than those of just their local communities.

The *Maryland Gazette* in 1770 published the most birth announcements, mostly of important people. Three stories circulated about various royalty or nobility having children. The Royal Highness consort of Prince Ferdinand delivered a Prince, the Queen of England delivered a Princess, and the Honorable Mrs. Eden, Lady of his Excellency, also delivered a daughter⁷. These birth announcements show that prior to the War for Independence, colonists were much more closely tied to Europe. They were interested in the lives of royalty, and wanted to know when a queen gave birth. A separate story also

⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 26, 1770.

⁶ *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), August 25, 1770; November 17, 1770; December 29, 1770.

⁷ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 18, 1770; June 7, 1770.

discussed an heiress who went to a workhouse to give birth to a little boy. She was only fifteen years old, and quite poorly dressed. This scandalous story illustrates deeper societal issues. The heiress clearly was not married, and escaped to a workhouse to give birth rather than shame her family with the knowledge of her misdeeds. Her name was not published, so the identity of the family remained anonymous. Maryland in 1790 issued no birth announcements. Pennsylvania in 1770 only supplied the announcement of the birth of Prince Ferdinand's heir, and no announcements in 1790.⁸ It is important to notice the sharp decrease of royal birth announcements in 1790. American citizens no longer had the desire for foreign gossip, as the formation of their own country took up the majority of the news they consumed.

While getting married and having children was the societal norm for women, divorce upset the social order. While not many women actually filed for divorce, women frequently left their husbands. The husbands then took action and placed an announcement stating they would no longer be responsible for debts incurred on behalf of their estranged wives. By abandoning their husbands, and possibly children, these women upset the social order described by Linda K. Kerber as a "Republican Mother." While not technically *femme sole*, these women acted of their own accord to leave the family and sometimes the community. Occasionally, these abandonment announcements contained more information about the state of the marriage. The ones placed by women were more revealing, they sought to justify why they left their husbands.

Abandonment announcements are an underutilized resource for examining female agency. Their frequency and the information they provide, though oftentimes scant,

⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), 1790.

provides a glimpse into the lives of Revolutionary women. By leaving their husbands, they removed themselves, but rarely their children, from a house they no longer considered a home. Women did not have a legal right to keep their children with them; that right belonged to the father. Because legal cases of divorce were so rare, running away was one of the only actions a woman could employ to escape a bad marriage.

The *Maryland Gazette* did not publish many of these announcements. Four abandonment announcements ran in 1770; three are fairly generic, just announcing that the husbands were no longer responsible for debt, and two mention that the women took things of great value with them. The announcement of George Livingston gives a greater insight into the inner workings of their marriage. Livingston asserted that his wife Susannah left with their two daughters, a “mulatto” slave girl named Rachel, beds and other household furnishings to visit her parents.⁹ She was gone quite a long time; he sent for her three times and she refused to return. Her father said that she would send the girls back to Livingston – as she had no legal right to them -- but not the furniture or the slave girl, Rachel. He intended to sell those chattels to cover unspecified “charges.” Livingston implored that no one buy the slave or furniture from his father-in-law or wife, and he stated that anyone harboring his wife and/or daughters would be prosecuted.¹⁰ This unusual case shows that husbands were not above maligning their wives’ characters in order to get what they want. It also shows an unusual amount of forethought and independence in Susannah Livingston. However, it also shows that despite these characteristics, Susannah Livingston still had to be protected by her father; she could not exist as *femme sole* while her husband still lived.

⁹ George Livingston, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 30, 1770.

¹⁰ Ibid.

In 1790, the *Maryland Gazette* reported only one named divorce announcement. Mary Boylan declared her intention to petition the general assembly to initiate divorce proceedings against her husband. She ran her announcement for nine weeks.¹¹ While divorce becomes more commonplace after the War for Independence, Mary Boylan's actions illustrated that it was possible for a woman to legally file for a divorce, something that was unthinkable prior to the war. The state of Maryland granted its first divorce in 1790, making it the first southern state to do so.¹²

The Philadelphia papers in 1770 ran seventeen of these abandonment announcements. Twelve are generic announcements. Two of the women had run away multiple times, and one, Hannah Hand, ran away with two men, presumably relations of her husband, Daniel Hand, as they shared the same last name.¹³ Martha Laird was also a repeat offender, and her husband James Laird sought to incur no more debts in her name and warned subscribers of the paper to not accept her debts in his name.¹⁴ Catherine Blaker ran away from her husband, Samuel Blaker, but also took bonds in his name and cashed them in. She then refused to give him the money and he warned people to not take these bonds on her account.¹⁵ John Lafle did not wait for his wife, Mary Lafle, to leave him and left her, then announced his own abandonment because of her indecent and ungrateful behavior.¹⁶ One of these women took out the announcement, Elizabeth Lawler

¹¹ Mary Boylan, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 15, 1790.

¹² Robert E. Emery, ed. *Cultural Sociology of Divorce: An Encyclopedia*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Reference, 2013), <https://books.google.com/books?id=wzJdSIfeeTQC&pg=PA1241&dq=maryland+divorce+laws+1790&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi3zoHFvoLOAhXD44MKHUcNDQEQ6AEIQjAC#v=onepage&q=maryland%20divorce%20laws%201790&f=false>

¹³ Daniel Hand, *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), October 4, 1770.

¹⁴ James Laird, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), July 26, 1770.

¹⁵ Samuel Blaker, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), September 20, 1770.

¹⁶ John Lafle, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 9, 1771.

nee Calfrey, herself. In addition to attempting to taking back economic control by reporting her husband, William Lawler's, theft of her money, she also took back social control by publicly shaming him. This announcement shows a woman publicly fighting back against societal norms.

After the war, cases of legal divorce became more commonplace. While nineteen men announced that their wives had left them, there are five announcements of actual divorce proceedings. Two are in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and are repeated in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*. In all of the cases, the sheriff placed the announcement and called for the defendants to appear before the State Supreme Court to answer to the charges of libel because the plaintiffs filed for divorce. Out of the six divorce cases in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, women initiated five of them.¹⁷ This staggering increase is indicative of the fact that after the War for Independence, it became more socially acceptable for a woman to file for divorce without leaving her community. These women also felt that they had the right to file for divorce after the war, a right which they clearly did not feel they had before the war.

In order for a Revolutionary era plaintiff, man or woman to obtain a divorce in Pennsylvania they had to submit a petition, with a corresponding affidavit, to the justices of the state Supreme Court during their session. The justices heard the plaintiff and their witnesses, and issued a subpoena for the defendant to answer the charges. If the defendant did not answer the charges in fifteen days prior to the start of the next session, the sheriff placed a notice in the newspaper. Once the defendant answered the charges, the court began the hearing process. If the defendant did not answer the charges, the

¹⁷ James Ash, *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1790, September 9, 1790.

proceedings began six weeks after the sheriff placed the first newspaper notice. The plaintiff or defendant could request a trial by jury or by a judge. If either party remarried on rumor of the death of the other, first spouse had rights over the second, because a legal divorce had not been obtained in the case of the first. Once the trial is complete, the judge or jury handed down the ruling.¹⁸ Women were not allowed to file for divorce alone in Pennsylvania until 1815. The process in Maryland was much the same. In the cases of divorce, women could obtain one and not have to leave their communities to do so.

While the particulars of these cases are not uncommon, they give a greater understanding of women's role in the realm of marriage. Husbands saw their wives as property, something that belonged to them and when wives upset this "natural order" of things it upset the status quo of the relationship. There was a significant increase in the rate of divorce from 1770 to 1790, especially in the new seat of the federal government in Philadelphia. It is possible that these women took the ideals of liberty, freedom, and independence to heart as women requested divorce more often than men.¹⁹ Kerber theorized that divorce became a Revolutionary issue because the British Crown could very easily void separations.²⁰ They internalized these ideas and acted on them in the only way they could, by leaving husbands that for one reason or another were unsatisfactory.

¹⁸ *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: From the fourteenth day of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred, to the twentieth day of March, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ten, Vol. II*, (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1810),

https://books.google.com/books?id=7towAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA349&lpg=PA349&dq=pennsylvania+divorce+laws+1790&source=bl&ots=zG6umhJGzf&sig=KrOX_M8_XduErlcNh9jVOnuVfpl&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7zJyJu4LOAhWF6IMKHa0pDIIQ6AEISjAH#v=snippet&q=divorce&f=false

¹⁹ Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press (1980), 160.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Like abandonment announcements and divorce which had both economic and social ramifications, the death of women in Revolutionary America had economic and social impacts. In addition to occasional bequests, they left holes in the fabric of their families and communities. Death notices, obituaries, and honoraria recognize these women's societal importance. The *Maryland Gazette* in 1770 announced the death of three women. When Mrs. Christian George died after a long illness, her family memorialized her as "an Ornament to her Sex and to human Nature; a notable and obedient Wife; a most tender parent; a kind Mistress; a cordial and sincere Friend; charitable to the Poor; beloved by everyone and sincerely regretted."²¹ Mary Hepburn's family remembered her in much the same way.²² Lady Hamilton and her husband Mr. Hamilton, both of Annapolis, were swept out to sea and perished off the shore of Naples.²³

In 1790 the *Maryland Gazette* published three obituaries. Eliza Murdocks, the executrix for Delia Lusby, placed the more factual obituary.²⁴ The second was more sentimental; Dorothy Brent, the thirty two year old wife of Mr. Robert Brent, perished after a short illness and her family memorialized her with kind words about her conduct as a wife, mother, and mistress.²⁵ The case of Miss Visscher and Miss Renesslear was quite sad. Both ladies rode in a sled with the latter's brother, when they went over a patch of thin ice and the sled sunk. A neighbor, Mr. Volker Douw, heard the cries, and went with his slaves to attempt a rescue. They rescued Mr. Renesslear and Miss Renesslear,

²¹ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 25, 1770.

²² *Ibid*, August 16, 1770.

²³ *Ibid*, June 28, 1770.

²⁴ Eliza Murdocks, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 28, 1790.

²⁵ *Ibid*, November 11, 1790.

but when Miss Renesslear went to help Miss Visscher out of the ice, the ice broke and swept them both under. The rescue crew found the body of Miss Visscher, but not that of Miss Renesslear. The girls were twenty-one and sixteen respectively. The report of their deaths ended with a plea to the subscribers to cherish life and its fleetingness.²⁶ These types of announcements are important because they show that women had deep roots in their communities, and many keenly felt their loss. While the death is an action women had no control over, the ways in which they were remembered are reflective of their standing in society.

Eleven obituaries ran in the Philadelphia papers in 1770. These also tended to

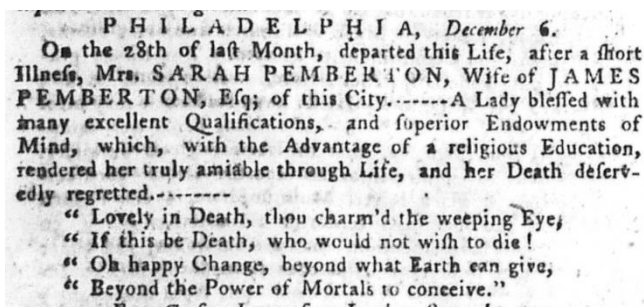


Figure 1: Sarah Pemberton's obituary, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 6, 1770.

follow the typical formula of a brief biography of the woman and then a larger section on her virtuousness, as well as a listing of her relatives, especially children and grandchildren. Many of these

women were noteworthy because they were either very old or young. Out of the five that listed the age of the woman, two were in their nineties and one was referred to as "advanced."²⁷ Only one, Sarah Pemberton's death notice, included a short poem on life and death. [Figure 1]²⁸ Lydia Jones' obituary also included a short sermon on her life, how religious she was, and how she was an example in the community.²⁹ Only two listed the cause of death: a horse kicked Ann White in the chest killing her instantly, and

²⁶ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 8, 1790.

²⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), 1770.

²⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 6, 1770.

²⁹ *Ibid*, September 27, 1770.

Hannah Winter had been “tapped for Dropsy” seventy-nine times in the last five years taking away three hundred and fifty-five gallons of water. In the last two years, she was tapped every two weeks. Dropsy, or edema, certainly contributed to her cause of death, or at least the course of her long illness.³⁰

The Philadelphia papers ran ten obituaries for women in 1790. Two of these obituaries were actually bequests, when a woman left behind a business or something to that effect and her executors had to seek recompense for credit or debt owed to the estate.³¹ It is also in this year that the mother of George Washington, Mary Ball Washington, died, which the *Pennsylvania Gazette* noted.³² The rest of the obituaries were fairly typical, containing some biographical information as well as comments about that women’s character. One, Lydia Daragh’s, deserves closer scrutiny. While her obituary contained the typical information, it also mentioned that “she applied herself, for the support of her family, to a profession, in which the female part of society experienced her skill.”³³ From this, and other mentions of midwives, it is clear that Daragh was a midwife. It is also clear that she brought in a significant enough income to provide for her family, marking the first time in this analysis that a woman’s profession appeared as part of her memorial. Daragh is also of the middling sort, not an elite woman like previous announcements. Class certainly played a role in what sort of people that received mention in the newspapers.

One explicit example of “Republican Motherhood” is an advertisement for a new translation of the Bible that Carey Stewart published in the 1790 run *Pennsylvania Packet*

³⁰ Ibid, January 11, 1770.

³¹ Joshua Way and Edward Vernon, John Gardner, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), September 30, 1790; October 28, 1790.

³² Ibid, September 2, 1790.

³³ *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 1, 1790.

and General Advertiser. In this address to subscribers, Stewart appealed to both Protestant and Roman Catholic women to buy this new translation in order to educate their families.³⁴ This advertisement overtly targeted women, stating that they need this specific Bible to better educate their children. It is a clear example of the ideas of “Republican Motherhood” in action.

While some events were strictly for entertainment and appealed to both men and women, other events targeted women specifically. Many entertainments, such as plays, were advertised to both men and women. Other lectures and curiosities also caught the attention of the female eye; in some cases in a lurid way. These papers typically reported stories that were sensational, in order to increase sales. These curiosities included concerts, curiosities, lectures, and plays. Some of these curiosities mention women, mostly to scare them about things that can happen with their children. These lurid tales served two purposes: education and compliance.

There were two curiosities and one lecture advertised in the pre-Revolutionary *Maryland Gazette*. Maria Theresa and Miss Namah Leech were both little people. A Mr. Heppenstall purchased Maria Theresa from her home on the island of Corsica. Maria Theresa was 27 years old when Mr. Heppenstall brought her to the London. When she was brought to the United States, she was only about thirty two years old and weighed about twenty six pounds. The *Maryland Gazette* stated that the average two year old of the time was larger than her. Maria Theresa was also quite accomplished, speaking both Italian and French.³⁵ Miss Namah Leech was a native of Beverly, Massachusetts and traveled to Salem where she caused quite the stir. She was fifty two years old and twenty

³⁴ Carey Stewart, “Address to Subscribers,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), September 30, 1790.

³⁵ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 25, 1770.

five inches tall. Many people came to see her, causing a “curiosity of numbers.”³⁶ The purpose of including a discussion of these women in the newspapers was almost purely for shock value. These little people were a commodity, to be bought and sold by whoever had enough money simply because they were different. They also served another important purpose: to educate women on these conditions as well as serve as a warning to women of what can happen to their children if they are born with these conditions.

The lecture is by Dr. Graham. He discussed the eye in three parts. The first part analyzed the anatomical structure of the eye as well as how it works. In the second part, Dr. Graham discussed various eye diseases and how they could be cured by diet, medicine, or surgery. The third part blended a discussion on medicine in general as well as noting his qualifications and his success in treating diseases of the eye. Dr. Graham listed his previous education as the University of Edinburgh. While this lecture was not specifically advertised to women, it was open to them, especially if they or their loved ones suffered from a malady that a particular doctor would expound upon.³⁷ Attending these lectures was another way that women fulfilled their role as “Republican Mother.” A “Republican Mother” had to educate her children, and in order to give her children the best education possible, a “Republican Mother” needed to educate herself.

³⁶ Ibid, October 25, 1770.

³⁷ Mrs. Bullen, “On Wednesday the 31st of January, 1770. At the Theatre, in Annapolis, Doctor Graham from London, Proposes to read a Lecture on that Most important Organ, The Eye,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 25, 1770.

R U L E S A N D M A X I M S
For promoting MATRIMONIAL HAPPINESS.
 Addressed to all the Widows, Wives and Maids, in
 A M E R I C A.

A V O I D both before and after marriage, all thoughts of managing your husband. Never endeavour to deceive or impose on his understanding, nor give him uneasiness (as some do foolishly) to try his temper; but treat him always beforehand with sincerity, and afterwards with affection and respect.

Be not over sanguine before marriage, nor promise yourself felicity without alloy; for that is impossible to be attained in this present state of things. Consider, beforehand, that the person you are going to spend your days with is a man, and not an angel; and if, when you come together, you discover any thing in his humour or behaviour that is not altogether so agreeable as you expected, pass it over as a human frailty—smooth your brow, compose your temper, and try to amend it by cheerfulness and good nature.

Remember always, that, whenever misfortunes happen to either, they are not to be charged to the account of matrimony, but to the accidents and infirmities of human life—a burthen which each has engaged to assist the other in supporting, and to which both parties are equally exposed; therefore, instead of murmurs, reflections and disagreement, whereby the weight is rendered abundant y more grievous, readily put your shoulder to the yoke, and make it easier to both.

Figure 2: "Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), June 10, 1790.

A change in tone occurred in the *Maryland Gazette* in lectures and entertainments offered to women in 1790. The only lecture offered was in print and was exclusively offered to women. "The Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness" [Figure 2] ran once in 1790. This lecture was addressed to "widows, wives, and maids." This printed advice contained such gems as "do not try his temper" and "consider

beforehand that the person you are going to spend your days with is a man, not an angel."³⁸ This change in tone is indicative of a change in the overall tenor of the decade. Those who were concerned with the behavior of women sought to control through the newspapers rather than through lectures and other entertainments. There were also less curiosities and a shift to more prescriptive ideas in the behavior of women.

While Annapolis seemed at a loss for entertainments, lectures and curiosities, Philadelphia in 1770 had a great many. This is not at all surprising as it was one of the largest cities in the colonies. Eighteen separate advertisements for various activities ran in all three of the Philadelphia newspapers, with one repeated in both the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Journal*. This was an advertisement for the play *The Maid*

³⁸ "Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), June 10, 1790.

of the Mill.³⁹ The *Pennsylvania Gazette* also repeated a similar advertisement about Maria Theresa that ran in the *Maryland Gazette*, as well as an advertisement for another of Dr. Graham's lectures.

In addition to Maria Theresa, two other curiosities made news in 1770 Philadelphia. The first is of a "dual-sexed" woman. This woman, baptized as Deborah in Massachusetts Bay, was born with characteristics of both sexes. After some consideration, the parents and doctors decided to dress her as woman. She lived as a woman for twenty-three years. She lodged with another woman and that woman became pregnant. The woman swore that the father of the child was Deborah. The couple married and the woman retained her name of Deborah Francis Lewis.⁴⁰ The second curiosity is that of a cannibal baby. Apparently, while the mother was pregnant she had a craving for human flesh, and even though her husband tried to indulge her by allowing her to gnaw on his arm, she could not break the skin. Once the child was born, it would not breast feed, but only ate the flesh of animals offered to it, and blood.⁴¹ By far, the representation of women as medical curiosities far outstrips that of men during this era. No examples of male medical exploitation were published in any examined newspaper.

The purpose of these stories was two-fold: the first, to draw in readership with the lurid nature of the tales, and the second to warn those of possible conditions described in the story. While the first story of Deborah does not pass any judgement, it does warn of a possible disorder, what is now known as intersex condition. The second warning is that of giving into unnatural cravings and how that can affect an unborn child. The theory of

³⁹ "The Maid of the Mill," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770; "The Maid of the Mill," *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), January 11, 1770.

⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), February 1, 1770.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, September 13, 1770.

maternal impression - the belief that a pregnant woman could influence her unborn child by what she saw, dreamt, and ingested - held sway until the late nineteenth century.

These stories may have been, in part, warnings to pregnant women against seeing these sensational curiosities as well as what can happen when one gives into their urges.

Five sections of advice ran in the 1770 Philadelphia papers as well. Women wrote two of these advice sections. The other three carry no name. Sabine Rumsay advised on how to best care for silkworms.⁴² Elizabeth Philips offered advice for how to best prepare sturgeon, and she, conveniently enough, sold the fish.⁴³ The *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* also ran one

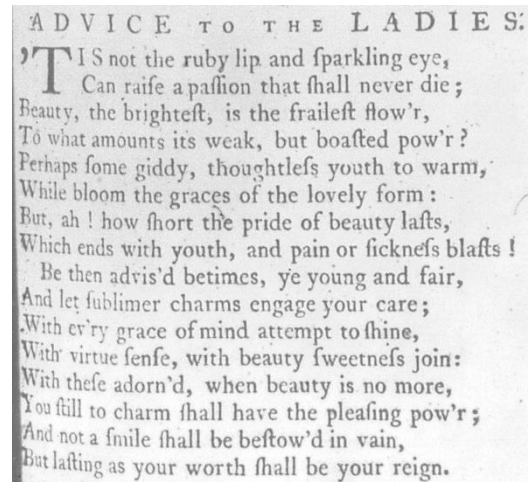


Figure 3: "Advice to the Ladies," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1771.

advice piece. "Advice to the Ladies" is actually a poem. [Figure 3] This poem warned against relying solely on one's looks, but encouraged ladies to develop a personality and conversation skills.⁴⁴

In addition to the advice pieces, advertisements for lectures also ran in the papers. Philadelphia again had far more than Annapolis. In addition to the advertisement for a lecture by Dr. Graham, two different advertisements ran about the establishment of a school for young ladies. Matthew Macguire placed both of these notices and he specified that he taught reading, writing, arithmetic, as well as accompts. Accompts is an older

⁴² Sabina Rumsay, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), March 29, 1770.

⁴³ Elizabeth Philips, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), May 24, 1770.

⁴⁴ "Advice to the Ladies," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1771.

variant of the word accounts, so Macguire sought to teach these young women accounting and household budgeting. The same advertisement ran in both the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Journal*.⁴⁵ This notice is indicative of a changing world for women. Women began to attend school and learn accounting, better preparing them for the role as wife and house manager.

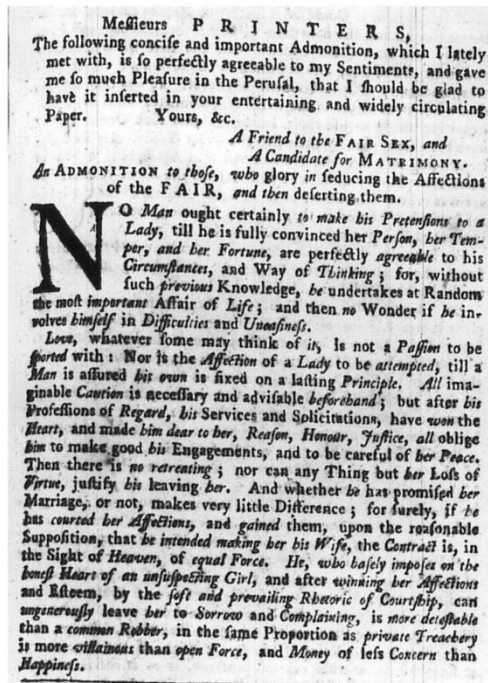


Figure 4: A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony, “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 9, 1770.

Another person, calling themselves “A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony,” posted “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them.” [Figure 4]⁴⁶ This protector of a womanly virtue urged men to not toy with a woman’s affections, and to only propose when he himself was sure of his own feelings toward said woman. This friend of the fair sex also urged men to choose women based on their own happiness and not on money.

Three plays specifically mentioning

⁴⁵ Matthew MacGuire, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 25, 1770; Matthew MacGuire, *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), October 18, 1770; November 1, 1770.

⁴⁶ A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony, “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 9, 1770.

women were advertised in the Philadelphia papers. Both the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Journal* advertised for *The Maid of the Mill*.⁴⁷ Two benefit plays also mentioned women: the double feature of *Love for Love* and *Wit's Last Stake* was for the benefit of Mrs. Douglass.⁴⁸ The second play, *Alexander the Great* or *The Rival Queen*, was for the benefit of Mrs. Harman.⁴⁹ The American Company put on both of these productions. Benefit plays such as these raised money for the people mentioned in the advertisement. While many other plays received mentioned in the papers, only these two plays provided financial relief for specific women.

Another genre of anecdotes aimed at women in the Revolutionary era contained poetry and prose. The poetry, either about or by women, offered a glimpse into the inner, domestic sphere. Fictional stories on the other hand, show the perception of women in popular culture. Most of these moral tales stated the dangers facing women, and how they got themselves into trouble by being vain or silly.

The *Maryland Gazette* printed only one poem and two stories of danger facing women in 1770. The first is a poem dedicated to Miss Hallam, an actress who played Imogen in *Cymbeline*. The author was quite taken with Miss Hallam's performance, and while he did mention the fantastic performances of the other actors, Miss Hallam stood out and he wrote a poem dedicated to her. This poem extolled her beauty and acting prowess, as well as her melodious voice.⁵⁰

The dangers faced by women seemed far less in 1770 than they were in 1790. The first moral tale is a story of a woman, wearing her hair in the latest fashion, accidentally

⁴⁷ "The Maid of the Mill," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770; "The Maid of the Mill," *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1770.

⁴⁸ "For the Benefit of Mrs. Harman," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), May 10, 1770.

⁴⁹ "For the Benefit of Mrs. Douglass," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 25, 1770.

⁵⁰ Y.Z., "To the Printer - To Miss Hallam," *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 6, 1770.

setting it ablaze. Her servant helped her put the fire out, but both suffered burns.⁵¹ This same story, with some differences, is repeated in Pennsylvania, making it most likely apocryphal. This story warned women against the dangers of being trendy, and pushes them to be more modest. The second danger facing women was a warning about the war in Greece. The Turkish army enslaved women and children.⁵² This war is most likely the Orlov Revolt, which occurred in early 1770. Count Alexy Grigoryevich Orlov instigated the revolt to create a Christian haven in the Ottoman Empire. Russia sent agents to Greece to foment rebellion, and though they met with some moderate success, the Ottomans crushed the rebellion.⁵³ In this factual story, the warning is clear. The description of women and children as slaves was meant to show women how lucky they are to live in America and to not venture out on their own.

The *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* also ran three separate poems. The first, entitled “Verses on Dancing” is addressed to a young lady. Presumably, the author is a man, and is entreating a young lady to dance with him.⁵⁴ The second poem, “To the Maid I Admire” is again authored by a man. This poem describes a mysterious woman who lives off the Barbary Coast, and could cure all the ills that this man has, if only he could call her his.⁵⁵ The last poem, “The Married Man” was written by a man who called himself Hymenæus. This man extolled the virtues of marriage, and how

⁵¹ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 2, 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), July 26, 1770.

⁵² *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 23, 1770.

⁵³ Harris Mylonas, “Peripheries, State Capacity, and Great Power Politics: Accounting for Secession from the Ottoman Empire,” American Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Illinois, August 29-September 1, 2013.

⁵⁴ “Verses on Dancing,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 11, 1771.

⁵⁵ J.P., “To the Maid I Admire,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1771.

wonderful it can be when one finds the right person.⁵⁶ All of these poems were presumably written by men and illustrated the characteristics of a desirable woman or wife.

Similar to 1770, the men and women of Maryland enjoyed far fewer social events in 1790. The *Maryland Gazette* listed one event where Mrs. Sewell invited the ladies of Annapolis to a ball and musical entertainment held at the Ball-Room on the same night she took out the advertisement. She had tickets available at her lodging as well as at that of Mr. Mann's.⁵⁷ Advice was also given to the ladies again, in the form of "Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness" mentioned earlier.

Philadelphia again had far more entertainments advertised than Annapolis. This is surprising because at least two of the papers ran the minutes of the congressional meetings very frequently, at least once per month if not more. Because these were weekly papers, this means that at least one issue per month was given over to the congressional meetings, with little to no advertisements in those newspapers. Despite having one less issue to run these advertisements, Philadelphia still had more entertainments, lectures and curiosities than Annapolis. The congressional meetings were obviously quite important to the business of running a country and the people, especially of Philadelphia, wanted to be informed.

Two notices ran in the Philadelphia papers in 1790. Ann Emes and Ann Jarvis both ran classifieds announcing their respective midwife businesses. In the case of Ann

⁵⁶ Hymenæus, "The Married Man," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 16, 1771.

⁵⁷ Mrs. Sewell, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 16, 1790.

Jarvis, she recently arrived from London and sought to open a new business.⁵⁸ Both advertised the address of their establishments where they could be reached, day or night. It is therefore safe to assume that these places were also their residences. Both midwives were previously located on Fourth Street; Ann Emes moved to Third St, and Ann Jarvis to Second Street.⁵⁹ At this time, midwifery was the only occupation from which men were completely excluded. This clustering of women together to perform a vital, medical action led to men demanding access to this private realm of women, upsetting the social order.

Curiosities were also present in 1790 Philadelphia. A curiosity mentioned in the paper is that of the alleged Miss Gore. A man named Edward Coulfield was put to death in Dublin after he appeared in women's dress for the majority of his life to evade the police. He lived with several families as a woman until they realized he was biologically a man and they then ran him out of town. Eventually, he stayed in a boarding house with various women and many of them became pregnant; he fled and was nearly killed while escaping. He then continued to live with other respectable families in the same vein, except he started to steal from them. It was for this that he was arrested and sentenced to death.⁶⁰ The second was a piece about a woman in Wilmington, Delaware who recently turned one hundred years old. The article described her activities on her birthday that included having a breakfast of bread and butter and spinning four cuts of tow yarn. Her daughter, aged seventy-six, resided with her all but one year of her life.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ann Jarvis, "Midwifery," *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 15, 1790.

⁵⁹ Ann Emes, "Ann Emes," *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA), January 2, 1790.

⁶⁰ "Singular Imposter," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 2, 1790.

⁶¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), February 25, 1790.

Similar to Maryland, entertainments were another way that colonial women socialized. Through these entertainments, the domestic sphere of wife and mother intersected with the public sphere of hostess and guest. Women went to these entertainments, usually accompanied by their husband, or a suitor, in order to be seen. Entertainments included things like balls, and attending a dancing school, as well as concerts, and traveling curiosities like a tightrope walker. All of these entertainments were present in Philadelphia in 1790. Six different entertainments were large enough to garner attention in the different papers throughout the year. The greater number is indicative of a larger population in Philadelphia than in Annapolis.

Lectures were another way that highborn and middling sort women entertained and also educated themselves. Sometimes these lectures ran in newspapers, other times they were advertisements for schools that would then educate them. Three different schools advertised themselves specifically to women, with one being a boarding school.⁶² Three other lectures ran in the newspapers, one on the influence of women in politics, another which discussed the forthcoming treaty with the Creek Nation, and a third on a plan to improve the condition of free persons of color.⁶³ [Figure 5]

⁶² “College Academy and Charitable School,” “Mrs. Pine’s Boarding School,” “Young Ladies’ Academy,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 15, 1790, August 12, 1790, December 12, 1790.

⁶³ “To the Printer,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, (Philadelphia, PA), November 4, 1790. George Washington, “New York, Aug. 14,” *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), August 25, 1790. “A Plan for improving the condition of the Free Blacks,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1790.

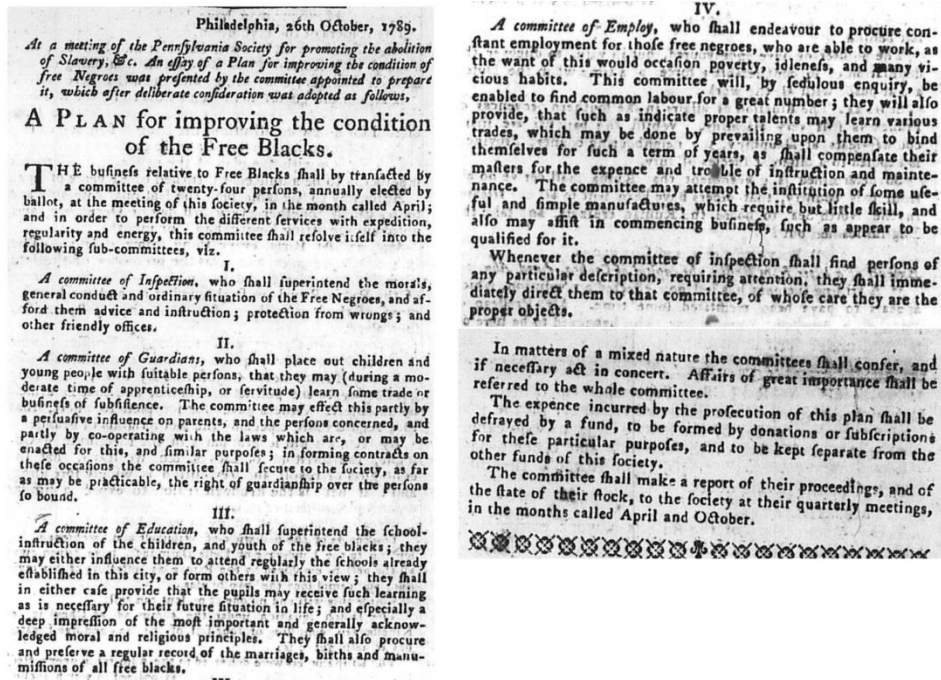


Figure 5: “A Plan for improving the condition of the Free Blacks,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1790.

The inclusion of “A Plan for improving the condition of the Free Blacks” shows that people in Philadelphia wanted to help their newly freed brethren. This plan, while not perfect, does at least give some indication that they sought to try to improve their circumstances, rather than leaving the newly freed slaves to fend for themselves.

Poems and stories also ran in 1790, and again the same trend continued. The *Maryland Gazette*, while running nearly three times as many poems and fictitious stories as it did in 1770, still ran four less than the Philadelphia papers. This is not to say that these poems and stories were less entertaining, as they most certainly were not. For example, the almost certainly dubious tale of the forgetful Stockbridge woman was a very amusing story printed in the *Maryland Gazette*. Her friend, upon seeing her working on the Lord’s Day, reminded her of this. The forgetful woman said that she was convinced it was the second day of the week, and begged the friend to tell her about the minister’s sermon. The friend then responded that the sermon dealt with the death of Christ. The

Stockbridge woman responded that she had no idea that Christ was dead! It had to be because her husband had stopped bringing in newspapers, and for all she knew half of Boston could have burned down and she would be none the wiser.⁶⁴ This story illustrates two things: one that newspapers were incredibly important in the spreading of news, but also that women were perceived as silly and forgetful and needed others to keep them in line.

Other stories are slightly less amusing and recount the near constant dangers facing women in the colonial era. Naturally, reports of Indian attacks, serial attacks in London, attacks on women in Paris, and the dangers of books were all reported upon in the *Maryland Gazette*.⁶⁵ Other terrifying stories included that of a letter written from beyond the grave. A man was sentenced to death in Ireland, but was granted a reprieve. He wrote to his wife, but she did not know that he was granted a pardon. He did not wish to continue to live with her and wrote her the following the letter:

My dear Mary,

I was hanged yesterday; father Mooney prepared me for death and I behaved like a good christian.[sic] Marry as soon as you can, that you may have somebody to protect you in the room of your deceased husband.

DANIEL MURPHY

Tralee, June 10 1790⁶⁶

This story shows that even though the husband, Daniel Murphy, did not want to stay married to his wife Mary Murphy, and he understood that she must have the protection of some man. This was not a legal divorce, and she not legally widow, neither could legally

⁶⁴ “Stockbridge, (Massachusetts) December 1,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 14, 1790.

⁶⁵ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), July 22, September 16, October 21, 1790.

⁶⁶ “Curious Letter,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 14, 1790.

remarry. However, he still wanted to her to have that sort of legal protection that he felt he could no longer provide.

Philadelphia also had its fair share of poems and invented stories. Two more articles on dangers ran in the papers; the first warned of bread riots in Paris and the trouble that was brewing there, and the second was the same warning about books that ran in the *Maryland Gazette*.⁶⁷ It seems that novel reading was considered a very dangerous pursuit for young and old alike.

In Philadelphia, however, and especially in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, poems and fictional stories were quite popular. Many poems were about the death of young ladies, articulating remorse, as well as expressing love for young women. Of the eight poems published in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, three were about death, four were about a woman, and two were written by women. “Ode to Reflection,” written by Laura Maria, discusses memory and sweet agony of nostalgia.⁶⁸ The other poem “By a Lady,” was authored by E.M and is “addressed to beautiful little girl of four years old, sitting in her baby-house, surrounded by her play-things.”⁶⁹ [Figure 6]

⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 6, 1790; *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA), October 14, 1790.

⁶⁸ Laura Maria, “Ode to Reflection,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA), September 23, 1790.

⁶⁹ E.M. “By A Lady,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1790.

Addressed to a beautiful LITTLE GIRL of four years old, sitting in her baby-house, surrounded by her playthings.

BY A LADY.

LITTLE Queen of infant treasure,
Smiling on thy throne of pleasure,
Happy in each fancied blessing,
More than Monarchs, worlds possessing,
Culling sweets from every rose
That in thy fairy garden blows,
Thy breast as yet untaught by sighs,
To check the transports as they rise ;
No dread thy little bosom fills,
Of physical or moral ills.
With pure delight thy eye surveys
The splendid toys that round thee blaze ;
Nor could a richer toy be thine,
Did all *Paradise* yield her mine.
Thy tiny cup of silver brings,
A sweeter draught than cups of Kings.
The doll for whom thy love prepares,
These emblems of maternal cares,
For whom this little board is spread,
For whom thou deck'st this little bed,
Obedient to thy magic wand,
Still eats or sleeps at thy command ;
And though thou play'st the mother's part,
No mother's pang corrodes thy heart.
O ever might thy future years
Be thus exempt from hopes and fears !
Thus with smooth current glide away,
While beams of joy, thus round thee play.
But thou a blendid lot must share,
And with the blessing take the care.
Then lovely *Betsy* hug thy toys,
Unfulfilled source of infant joys ;
And while thou can'st the pleasure keep,
To lull thy waxen babe asleep. E. M.

ODE TO REFLECTION.

O THOU whose sober precepts can controul
The wild impetuance of the troubled sou ;
Sweet nymph serene, whose all consoling pow'r,
Awakes to calm delight the lingering hour ;
O hear thy Votary's ardent pray'r,
Chafe from my pensive mind, corroding care ;
Steal thro' the heated pulses of the brain,
Charm sorrow to repose, and lull the throeb of pain.

*O tell me, what are life's best joys,
Are they not visions that decay ?
Sweet honey'd poisons, gilded toys,
Vain, glittering baubles of a day ;
O, say, what shadows do they leave behind,
Save the *Sad Vacuum of the Sated Mind ?**

Borne on the Eagle wings of FAME,
Man soars above calm REASON's sway ;
"Vaulting Ambition" mocks each tender claim,
Plucks the dear bonds of social life away,
As o'er the vanquished Slave she wields her spears
Compassion turns aside—Reflection drops a Tear.

Behold the wretch whose sordid heart,
Steep'd in *Content's* oblivious balm,
Secure in *Luxury's* bewitching calm,
Repels pale Misery's touch, and mocks Affliction's
smart ;
Unmov'd he marks the bitter tear,
In vain the plaints of woe his thoughts assail,
The bashful mourner's piteous tale,
Nor melts the flinty soul, nor vibrates on his ear.

O Blest REFLECTION, let thy magic pow'r
Awake his torpid sense, his slumbering thought ;
Tell him, Adversity's unpitied hour,
A brighter lesson gives, than *Stoics* taught ;
Tell him, that Wealth no blessing can impart
So sweet as Pity's Tear, that baibes the wounded heart.

Go tell the Vain, the Insolent and Fair,
That *Life's best days, are only days of care ;*
That BEAUTY, fluttering like a painted fly,
Owes to the *Spring of Youth*, its careless die :
When Winter comes, its charms shall fade away,
And the POOR INSECT wither in decay.
O, bid the giddy PHANTOM learn from THEE,
That *Virtue only—Braves Mortality.*

Then come REFLECTION—soft-eyed Maid,
I KNOW THEE, and I prize thy charms ;
Come in thy gentlest smiles array'd,
And I will press thee to my eager arms ;
Keep from my aching heart, the "*Fiend Despair,*"
Pluck from my brow her THORN, and plant the
OLIVE there.

Laura Maria.

Figure 6: E.M. "By A Lady," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, (Philadelphia, PA) November 25, 1790. Laura Maria, "Ode to Reflection," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), September 23, 1790.

The difference between poetry written by men and that of women is stark. The subject matter of the men's poetry was traits considered desirable in a woman, while women focused on children, love, and death.

The Philadelphia papers had a greater representation of women across the board. More women were represented in 1790 than in 1770. This is especially true in the abandonment announcements, divorces, and various entertainments, lectures, curiosities, and advice offered and advertised in the newspapers. Despite having more enjoyments overall, Philadelphia actually halved the amusements it offered during 1790. This is very significant as the population increased in 1790, and the number of travelers into Philadelphia also increased. The proliferation of visitors did not correlate to a rise in the number of events offered.

Women in the colonial era acted as social creatures. This was one area that built a bridge between the domestic and public spheres. By attending lectures, these women educated themselves and then passed on their knowledge to their children, creating good citizens in their sons, and good wives in their daughters, thus fulfilling the role of the “Republican Mother.” Women educated themselves by attending lectures and also reading the editorials in the newspapers. In reading the newspapers, they were also exposed to curiosities and stories of the other colonies. These stories not only created empathy among those that were different, but also served as a warning to the dangers that existed in the world. These dangers include not only those of maternal impression, but of attacks and riots in other lands. Part of the responsibility of a “Republican Mother” was to be a good neighbor as well, so by attending these lectures and entertainments, she acted as an ambassador for her family and the social glue of the community.

High society women also attended balls, concerts, and plays. These entertainments served as a larger bridge between domestic and public. Women served as both economic and political actors in this sphere as well. They acted in the economic

arena serving as the gatekeepers for their husbands' businesses. The women were in charge of the social sphere, they decided who attended the balls, concerts, and plays. A single businessman had to get the approval of the society matrons in order to not only succeed in business, but to find himself a wife as well.

These entertainments facilitated the politics as well. Women were not only the gatekeepers of business, but of politics as well. The same decisions as to who their husbands would see for their business related directly to politics. If the woman, and generally her husband as well, did not agree with the particular politics of another man, single or otherwise, he was excluded from their social gatherings. This man thus lost the chance to improve his position in society, either economically or politically. Through the social realm, women had much more control over economics and politics than they might have realized.

Chapter Three: “The most Fatal Consequences:” Women as Civil and Political Agents in the Revolutionary Era

Economics, social life, and politics were all closely related in a Revolutionary Era woman’s world. Women acted as the gatekeepers for their husbands into this closely watched world of the economic and political elite. Women, however, also behaved as civil actors themselves, through divorces and bequests. The newspapers warned women of the dangers of stepping out of their normal roles, as well as the perils that lurked around every dark corner of the eighteenth century world. Behavior guides printed in the newspapers told women how to act in order to avoid these dangers.

The newspapers from 1770 and 1790 Annapolis and Philadelphia give a greater insight into how women acted civically as well as the perception of their actions. The divorce and abandonment announcements, as well as bequests, show how women could behave civically, despite not having political rights. The dangers women faced in the newspapers show how the perception of women influenced their civic and political actions. If husbands and fathers perceived women as something to be protected, then enfranchising women would not be in the men’s best interests.

There has been an overwhelming quantity of research done into Revolutionary women’s civic rights. The quality of this research is also far better than the research done into other aspects of a Revolutionary woman’s life. Scholars such as Mary Beth Norton, Linda K. Kerber, and Cornelia Hughes Drayton assessed the evolving rights of women throughout the colonial and Revolutionary period. All of these scholars relied heavily on

local county and court records, and did not delve into the perception of Revolutionary women using the period newspapers as source material.

Eighteenth century colonial or post-Revolutionary law required divorce give public notice. While the abandonment announcements were not necessary, they served as a public record of abandonment, which was required to start the clock in order for the abandoned party to be declared divorced or widowed after a period of seven years. Divorce was the civil and legal act of the separating of the husband and wife because it required a legislative act. The plaintiff, with a witness, petitioned the state supreme court for a writ of libel of divorce. After the writ was declared, the sheriff placed the announcement in the newspaper asking the defendant to answer the charges.¹ This all had to take place during specific times in the judicial schedule, of which many people were not aware. Because filing for divorce was both legally tortuous and socially unacceptable many women just left their husbands.

The newspapers highlight the difficulty of obtaining a divorce in Revolutionary Maryland and Pennsylvania. More women abandoned their husbands than husbands abandoned wives. After the war, cases of legal divorce increase drastically; from one case in 1770 to five in 1790. The husbands typically announced that their wives' abandoned them in the newspapers, as well as indicating that they would no longer be responsible for any of their debts. Evidence from the 1770 *Maryland Gazette* substantiates this as only four women ran away from their husbands. Three of the announcements are fairly

¹ *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: From the fourteenth day of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred, to the twentieth day of March, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ten, Vol. II*, (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1810), https://books.google.com/books?id=7towAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA349&lpg=PA349&dq=pennsylvania+divorce+laws+1790&source=bl&ots=zG6umhJGzf&sig=KrOX_M8_XduErlcNh9jVOnuVfpI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7zJyJu4LOAhWF6IMKHa0pDIIQ6AEISjAH#v=snippet&q=divorce&f=false

generic. Christopher Hytch, James Spavos, and Philip Kentz, all advertised that their wives abandoned them and they would no longer be responsible for the debts of their wives, Susanna Hytch, Margaret Spavos, and Mary Kentz.² In addition to those four abandonments, another woman, Lady Grosvenor, had a particularly interesting divorce proceeding in London.

In that case, Lady Grosvenor petitioned a judge for alimony from her husband. She already received 1600 pounds monthly from her former husband, and the judge awarded her an extra 400 pounds per month.³ Because Lady Grosvenor petitioned a judge, she is also the one who filed for divorce. The standards for divorce in the eighteenth century were much higher; adultery was considered fairly run of the mill, especially if the woman was no longer capable of bearing children, or there were already legally recognized children. Typically, a divorce was granted only in cases of extreme abuse or neglect.⁴ Lady Grosvenor went through this legal process and her husband was considered the guilty party and he had to pay her a retainer. Despite the location of this instance, it illustrated the evolving rights of women and English common law, the type of law the Revolutionary government emulated.

The case of George and Sarah Livingston of Annapolis in 1770 adds additional insight into the inner workings of marriage. George Livingston asserted that his wife had abandoned his home taking with her their children and various chattels, including a slave.⁵ Sarah was gone eighteen months with no notice; he sent for her three times at her

² Christopher Hytch, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 22, 1770. James Spavos, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD) April 5, 1770. Philip Kentz, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 9, 1770.

³ *Maryland Gazette*, (Annapolis, MD), September 27 1770.

⁴ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage: In England 1500-1800*, (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 32.

⁵ George Livingston, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 30, 1770.

father, Stephen Horsey's, home in Worcester County, Maryland and she refused to return. Her father said that she would send some of the children along, but no furniture and that her father intended to sell the chattel to pay for unspecified "charges."⁶

It was Livingston's legal right to have his children with him, as they were considered his property, the same as the furniture and slave girl. The refusal of both the wife and her father to respect Livingston's rights and wishes as Sarah's rightful guardian show that even in colonial times, there were some behaviors, however unspecified, that would not be tolerated. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this announcement is that Livingston is primarily concerned with his legal right to their children, and not to his wife. He accepted the *de facto* separation of her abandonment. By returning to her father's home, Sarah Livingston sought the legal and civil protection of her father, instead of her husband. While she remained a *femme covert*, she took the action of leaving and taking property and her children with her. The fact that she also took the children gives further insight into the state of their marriage. Because it was Livingston's legal right to have his children, something must have been seriously wrong in the home for Sarah Livingston to risk taking them away.

Maryland in the 1790s saw far fewer women run away from their husbands. The only individual named is Mary Boylan. Her husband, Thomas Boylan, ran the announcement of her abandonment for nine weeks.⁷ Perhaps a more interesting story indicative of English common law is that of the former Lady Hoate. She was previously widowed and was left a sizeable fortune. When she remarried, to a counsellor named Hoate, they had an early form of prenuptial agreement that stated if the fault of the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Thomas Boylan, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 5 1790.

dissolution of the marriage lay with the husband, the wife would keep her whole fortune, whereas if it was the fault of the woman then the husband received two hundred pounds annually. The first judge ruled in favor of the husband; a later appeal ruled in favor of the wife. “This decree has given infinite satisfaction to the Irish ladies, who have now obtained a sort of precedent in their favor.”⁸ This judgment influenced cases in all British courts. Even though the United States were now separate, it still looked to the old country in the cases of law. The precedents this case sets are that pre-nuptial agreements can protect economic interests of the wife and that women have the legal right to appeal a judgment.

The newspapers in 1770 Philadelphia carried sixteen announcements of women who ran away from their husbands but only two for women whose husbands abandoned them.⁹ The most unusual announcement is that of Elizabeth Lawler nee Calfrey. Not only did she accuse her husband William Lawler of stealing her money that she worked for, but also that he beat her, and made her friends distrust her. She sought to publish this information just to inform the rest of the community of his actions against her, because at this point in time there was no legal recourse for her.¹⁰ Elizabeth Lawler was not a member of the elite. She worked for her money, and her husband only married her for it. Because Lawler was not a member of the elite, divorce did not seem like an option to her. This notice declared her official separation from him, a *de facto* separation that also functioned as *de jure*.

⁸ “Philadelphia June 10,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), July 22 1790.

⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette, Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser, Pennsylvania Journal*. 1770 - various.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Lawler/Calfrey, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 16, 1770.

In 1790, nineteen husbands announced that their wives abandoned them in Philadelphia. Of those nineteen, fourteen men simply announced that they would no longer be responsible for debts incurred by their wives, continuing the pattern set in the 1770 announcements. There were several others who merit closer examination. Mary McLaughlin left her husband multiple times and he asked to no longer be responsible for her debts.¹¹ McLaughlin, as a repeat offender, shows that the only legal option open to her was to abandon her husband. While cases of legal divorce did occur in the 1790s, in both Annapolis and Philadelphia, it was not yet an option that was open to everyone.

The case of Lydia Mathew is even more compelling. In the first notice, her husband announced simply that he would not be responsible for any debts incurred in her name since she left him. In the next issue, and in fact right underneath her husband's notice, Lydia Mathew fired back. She said she left because of his cruelty and that he "acted more like a savage than a husband." While she did not immediately announce that she would take legal action, she only sought to try him in the court of public opinion.¹² It was very uncommon in the newspapers for a woman to defend herself in the newspaper against these types of accusations. The only other case of a woman giving insight into the state of her marriage is that of Elizabeth Lawler. While legal recourse was limited for women, these actions had severe social and societal consequences for their husbands -- indeed it was the only way that they could try their husbands.

After the Revolution, divorce became more commonplace. While nineteen men announced that their wives had left them in Philadelphia, there are five announcements of actual divorce proceedings in the newspapers, while none had been announced in 1770.

¹¹ Bryan McLaughlin, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 25, 1790.

¹² Lydia and Thomas Mathew, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 9, 1790.

The sheriff called for the defendant to appear before the state Supreme Court to answer to the charges of libel placed because the plaintiff, man or woman, had filed for divorce. Out of the six divorce cases in the *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, five were initiated by women.¹³ Illustrative of this is the case of Mary Schultz.

Mary Schultz is distinct because she announced on July 7 that she would no longer accept the debts of her husband, and that she was initiating proceedings to procure a divorce from him.¹⁴ The only other case of a woman initiating divorce proceedings against her husband is that of Mary Boylan, announced in the 1790 *Maryland Gazette*. There were far more abandonment announcements in 1790 than in 1770, and 1790 is also the first year that sheriff announcements for divorce cases appear. Maryland also granted its first divorce in 1790. It shows that divorce became more commonplace after the war, and became legally easier for women to obtain.

The other most common way women exercise their civic or legal rights is through leaving or receiving a bequest. A bequest is an economic act that also took on legal implications. The woman, or her family, would have had substantial assets or a business to merit asking for credits/debts. Two specific women in 1770 Maryland had significant enough assets to make bequests. Lady Betty Geriman's bequest took place in London; therefore it established a baseline for how women's finances were handled in the colonies.¹⁵ More typical of the colonies, however, is that of Mary Hammond. Her executors, located in Annapolis and presumably her sons or other relatives from her husband's line, sold off her property. They also requested that anyone from whom Mary

¹³ James Ash, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 4, 1790 and September 9, 1790.

¹⁴ Mary Schultz, *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 7, 1790.

¹⁵ *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 1, 1770.

may have incurred debts or who may be indebted to her, to bring a document proving so.¹⁶ This may be evidence of her having some sort of business, personal or public. This is also indicative of her having the legal right to direct her estate after her death.

The *Maryland Gazette* publicized two other bequest disputes. In the anonymous case featuring children disputing a will leaving assets to a much younger wife, the younger wife lost her appeal for the acceptance of the new will. The children, represented by Annapolis lawyers, James Tilghman and John Dickinson, won the case.¹⁷ Despite her loss, the younger wife still had the right to file for the new will to be accepted, thus acting legally. The “Courley Matter” is another lengthy bequest dispute. Various bequests left the sole owner of a piece of property to Elizabeth Courley, and she sought the right, as a *femme sole*, to sell the land.¹⁸ She died before it sold, but the courts recognized her right to file a legal document.

The *Maryland Gazette* in 1790 showed no increase in the number of women leaving bequests. Only two women possessed enough to either cover their debts or leave bequests, Aquila Edwards and Anne Sanders.¹⁹ Fairly typical of the time Edwards left an estate for which her son or husband named William acted as executor to sell a portion of her property.²⁰ Anne Sanders is mentioned five times in the 1790 run of the *Maryland Gazette*. The advertisement asked for those who had debts or credits on the estate to come forward to Frederick Green at the printing office.²¹ These two notices show that women

¹⁶ Greensbury and John Hammond, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 6, 1770.

¹⁷ Editorial, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), March 15, 1770.

¹⁸ “Courley Matter,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), September 13, 1770.

¹⁹ William Edwards, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 1, 1790 - April 8, 1790; Frederick Green, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 14, 1790 - February 25, 1790.

²⁰ William Edwards, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 1, 1790 - April 8, 1790.

²¹ Frederick Green, *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 14, 1790 - February 25, 1790.

retained enough legal status after the Revolutionary War to direct their property after their deaths.

While there was no increase or decrease in the number of women leaving bequests, or having substantial enough property to call in debts, there is one subtle difference. In 1790 both of the women announced were not from the elite, but the middling sort and had lived in Annapolis. This meant a change in the status of average, or merchant class women, or the perception of those women to manage property or business in the post-Revolutionary period. The importance of the War for Independence cannot be understated here: it had a democratizing effect on the status of women leaving bequests.

There was only one woman named in leaving a bequest in the 1770 Philadelphia papers: an older woman of some considerable fortune left her money totaling near £11,000 to her butler.²² The announcement came from London. [Figure 1] This announcement, aside from the fact of being very personal, also showed a woman with the legal right to be in charge of her own estate after her death.

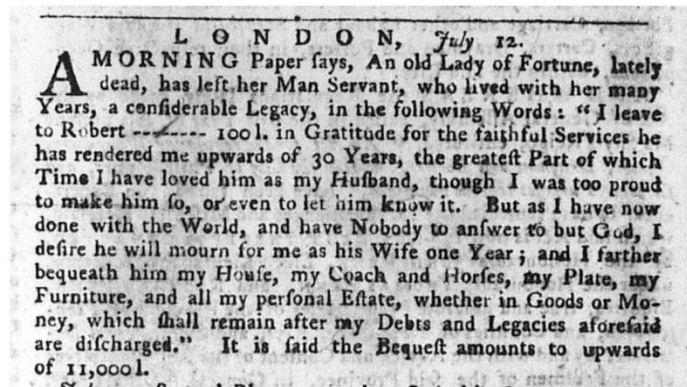


Figure 1: "London, July 12," Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia, PA), October 11, 1770.

In addition to leaving bequests, some inherited assets from others. In 1770 Pennsylvania, two women received bequests from relatives. Two attorneys advertised in the Philadelphia papers seeking Anna Margaret Winsh and Martha Richardson Plunkett,

²² "London, July 12," *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 11, 1770.

to come to their respective offices to receive their inheritances.²³ These women, even though they did not leave the bequest, still had the legal right to inherit and receive the assets given to them by their relatives

In 1790, the Philadelphia newspapers mentioned four women in bequests and eleven simple death announcements. Two of the announcements sought recompense for debts and credits, while one announced that Margaret Gibbons should see the printer about an inheritance from her brother.²⁴ Of the eleven death announcements, two asked for the settling of credits and debts. These announcements support the pattern in Maryland that women dictated their own estates. The other nine announced the death, age, and marital status, and extolled the virtues of the deceased.

The prevalence of death announcements and bequests in Philadelphia is not surprising. Philadelphia became the center of the federal government immediately after the Revolutionary War. The matriarchs of Philadelphia became even more powerful with the center of power located in the heart of their city. These women were the sentinels of the political elite. Only with express permission from the wives could aspiring, up-and-coming politicians gain an audience with important political men. The established politicians relied on their wives to perform this important function, and their passing was keenly felt by not only their husbands, but by all the political elite in the city.

Mary Beth Norton and Linda K. Kerber both mentioned women acting as political gatekeepers in their works, *Liberty's Daughters* and *Women of the Republic*. Norton analyzed numerous primary sources to show that women, especially those wives of elite

²³ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 4, 1770; *Pennsylvania Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), March 1, 1770.

²⁴ *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, September 16, 1790.

politicians, cared a great deal about politics and how it affected their lives.²⁵ Norton, while using newspapers to solidify her argument, does not use them to give additional clarity to the perception of the politics of women. Kerber, unfortunately, is much the same. Though her study focused more on the intellectual aspirations of women during the Revolutionary period, she does greatly discuss the implications of “Republican Motherhood” on women’s political lives.²⁶ Again, Kerber does not use the newspapers as a tool to find overt examples of “Republican Motherhood.”

The newspapers ran many warnings about the dangers facing women from 1770 to 1790. While some are almost certainly apocryphal, they serve a twofold purpose: to educate and to intimidate. These dangers may have been exaggerated to keep women within their strictly defined social and civic structure.

There are stark differences in the dangers women faced between 1770 and 1790. The mostly apocryphal story of a woman catching her hair on fire due to the silliness of her fashion is repeated in 1770 Maryland and 1770 Philadelphia.²⁷ The *Maryland Gazette* warned of the Turkish army enslaved women and children in 1770.²⁸ The stories in 1790 are less amusing and recount the near constant dangers facing women in the colonial era such as reports of Indian attacks, serial attacks in London, attacks on women in Paris, and the dangers of books are all reported upon in the *Maryland Gazette*.²⁹ The dangers faced in 1770 are slightly more silly and portrayed as the women’s fault: they were silly for following trends and catching their hair on fire. In 1790, the dangers were more concrete.

²⁵Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 190.

²⁶Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press (1980),11.

²⁷*Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 2, 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), July 26, 1770.

²⁸*Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), August 23, 1770.

²⁹*Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD) July 22, 1790; September 16, 1790; October 21, 1790.

There were attacks by groups of Native Americans, as well as a series of attacks on women in London and Paris. The shift of tone is indicative of a changing populous. The readers wanted to read more substantial stories, where there was real danger.

Behavior guides were one way that the newspapers reinforced implicit control of the female political elite. These guides extolled the virtues of a proper woman and how to achieve these goals for acceptance into society. The *Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness* ran once in 1790. This guide, addressed to essentially any woman who sought to marry, contained such gems as “do not try his temper” and “consider beforehand that the person you are going to spend your days with is a man, not an angel.”³⁰ The *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* also ran one advice piece in 1771, masquerading as poem. “Advice to the Ladies” warned against relying solely on one’s looks, and encouraged ladies to develop a personality and conversation skills.³¹ These particular guides, while they sought to control women’s behaviors, are also another example of “Republican Motherhood.” A “Republican Mother” was virtuous and educated, and worked with her husband, rather than against him.

Another person, calling themselves “A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony,” posted “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them.” [Figure 2]³² This protector of a womanly virtue urged men not to toy with a woman’s affections, and to only propose when he himself was sure of his own feelings. The author also advised men to choose a woman based on happiness

³⁰ “Rules and Maxims for Promoting Matrimonial Happiness,” *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), June 10, 1790.

³¹ “Advice to the Ladies,” *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 25, 1771.

³² A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony, “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 9, 1770.

and not on money. It is not explicit whether this behavior guide was written by a man or a woman, but one thing is clear: it is a guide for men. The writer directly addressed men as being in the wrong and sought to correct their behavior, but only belatedly. This could be another “Republican Mother” seeking to educate men who wish to marry on how best to choose a mate.

The editorial entitled “To the Printers,” and published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* 1790, shows a man’s opinion on women

stepping out of their traditional roles as guardians of the political sphere.³³ [Figure 3]

This editorial essentially went through a litany of powerful women and the woes they brought upon their kingdoms, with special attention paid to Marie Antoinette and the revolution currently raging in France. The author admonishes women to stay safely in their own sphere, lest they bring ruin upon their new country. While this man was certainly entitled to his opinion, he made no mention of how women already participated in the civil sphere; he only disagreed with women acting overtly political, and using their opinions to influence their husbands in untoward ways. It could be that the women he was familiar with were too skilled at the political game for him to notice that they were playing at all. The author failed to recognize women acting as guardians to their husbands’ all-important role as politician, but not behaving in an overtly political manner.

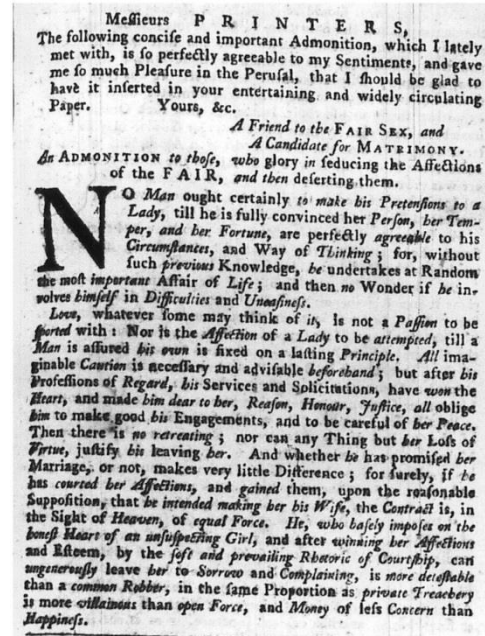


Figure 2: A Friend to the Fair Sex and a Candidate for Matrimony, “An Admonition to those who glory in seducing the Affections of the FAIR and then deserting them,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), August 9, 1770.

³³ “To the Printers,” *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 4, 1790.

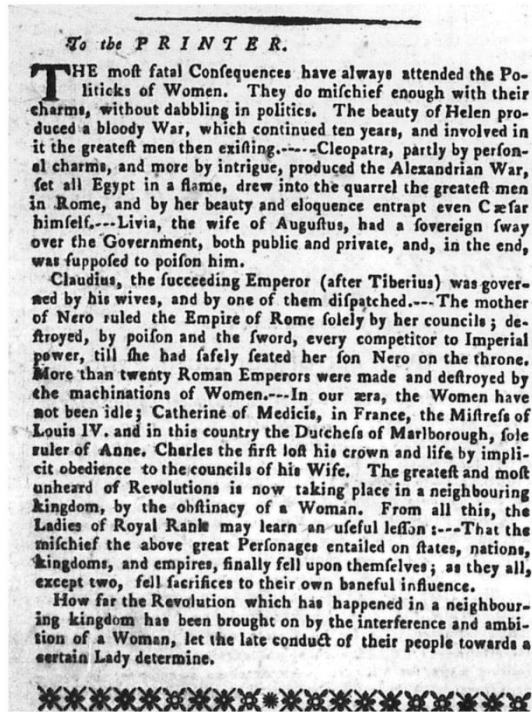


Figure 3: "To the Printers," Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia, PA), November 4, 1790.

This could be in response to the rising political importance of women such as Mercy Otis Warren in her role as playwright to the Revolution, or Abigail Adams as a leading political hostess.

While the average woman in the colonial and Revolutionary era did not have obvious civil or legal rights, elite women were afforded some measure of protection, mostly due to the wealth or status of their husbands. Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams are emblematic of this protection.

Because they were both well educated, well married, were patriots and for the most part, did not stray too much from their role as Republican Mothers, these two women were able to voice their civil and political opinions without fear of retribution. Other women, such as Grace Growden Galloway, who were not well educated, married to a loyalist, a loyalist in their own right or who strayed too far from the beaten path, were not so lucky. All three are illustrative of women who pushed past the traditional bonds of their civic and political roles.

Mercy Otis Warren began her civic life as a dramatist. She wrote political, satirical plays that appeared in her local Boston newspapers. While her illustrious parentage and familial history was already well established, it bears no repeating here, except to mention that her father, James Otis Sr., made certain that all his children,

including his daughter Mercy Otis, were well educated. Her brother, James Otis Jr., was also a political agitator in the pre-Revolutionary War period, until a blow on the head in 1769 from an attack left him unable to fulfill his potential as a Revolutionary activist.³⁴ Mercy Warren then took up his mantle as the political advocate in the family, through her writing. Her husband, James Warren, was also an incredibly important statesman during the American War for Independence. Mercy Otis Warren did not write pamphlets or editorials as her brother did. Rather, she used her wit to write plays and poems, based on contemporary events. She used her pen to cut down the British governor of Massachusetts Thomas Hutchinson, and satirized him so viciously in *The Adulateur* (1772) that he stepped down from his post and fled back to England. This is especially remarkable as Otis Warren was forty-three when she started publishing her plays.³⁵ She wrote plays and sometimes poetry, which were acceptable creative outlets for women. It was only when she strayed into the field of politics and history did her writing cause her trouble.

While she wrote her plays, which were frequently published in the newspapers under the names of men, she also fulfilled her role as the “Republican Mother.” She raised her five sons with respect for the country and actively participated in the burgeoning Revolution.³⁶ In fact, Otis Warren is perhaps the one of the ideal examples of the “Republican Mother.” She waited until her children were grown, and her duties as mother completed before contributing to the political discourse of the day.

³⁴ Katharine Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. (1958), 70.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 83.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 51.

Otis Warren was also well known in her own time for her book, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*. As its title suggests, this book chronicled the history of the American Revolution. First published in 1805, this three volume set analyzed the causes, battles, and the completion of the Revolutionary War as well as the building of the structure of the nation, within twenty years of its completion.³⁷ Otis Warren's near contemporary account is exhaustive in its battle analysis, as well as in its florid and elaborate style. Retrospectively seen as a solid primary source for American Revolutionary War history, the public reception of her work at the time of its publication was discouraging. Many of her contemporaries, especially John Adams, were very disappointed in her interpretation.³⁸ The disappointment stemmed from the fact that she stepped out of the culturally accepted role of her status as a woman, as well as her portrayal of Adams as a monarchist and under emphasizing his role in the making of the nation.³⁹

Mercy Otis Warren is also well known for her correspondence with Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams. This correspondence spanned nearly fifty years beginning in 1773, and within it, they discuss not only the goings-on of everyday life, but also the great ideas and plans of the day.⁴⁰ Adams is also famous for her "Remember the Ladies"

³⁷ Mercy Otis Warren, ed. Lester Cohen, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, (1994), xxv.

³⁸ Warren, xxvi.

³⁹ Edith B. Gelles, *"First Thoughts": Life and Letters of Abigail Adams*, London: Prentice Hall International (1998), 61

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 33.

letter to her husband, during the Continental Congress, asking him to remember the rights of the women in creating this new nation.⁴¹

Otis Warren was older than Adams, and Adams saw the older woman as a mentor.⁴² Within their prodigious correspondence, they discussed child-rearing, their husbands, as well as literature and politics. It is in the fiery passion of the Revolutionary Era that Adams found her voice with Otis Warren's encouragement. In discussing the boycotts of British goods, the Boston Tea Party, and the rash of patriotic feeling that broke out over New England, Adams and Otis Warren became very good friends, each other's confidantes and political sounding boards.⁴³ By empathizing in their frustrations with women's civil rights, they validated their own opinions and their rights to have those political opinions.

Adams' status as wife to an important statesman deeply involved in nation-building gave her great access to the political discourse of the day. Indeed, while she was not seen as her husband's equal, he frequently discussed the issues of the time with her. While he was away, sometimes as long as five years, she continued to update him about the financial state of the farm, the problems and trials of their home, as well as the information she received from other sources about political and civic issues.⁴⁴ During this time period, Adams assumes the right of *femme sole*, acting alone to fulfill the role of her absent husband.

Adams wrote prodigiously, and not just to Otis Warren, but to other friends and family. Her passionate prose, in not just her letters to Otis Warren and her husband John

⁴¹ Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March - 5 April 1776 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

⁴² Ibid, 27.

⁴³ Ibid, 44

⁴⁴ Ibid, 35.

Adams, show her education and great compassion. She felt compelled to write letters, much as Otis Warren felt compelled to write plays and poems.⁴⁵ While the majority of her letters to her husband involve the running of the farm, news of the children, gossip from the neighbors, and other domestic concerns, quite frequently she ventured into the political realm.

Abigail Adams was also a model “Republican Mother.” She managed the farm, as well as the children, and was the helpmeet to her husband. John Adams’ long absences actually gave her greater economic freedom, because she was then able to set a budget for the farm, manage the accounts, even buy and sell property, albeit in her husband’s name, again assuming the right of *femme sole*. It is in the realm of domestic economy that Adams wrote to Otis Warren, describing how women were not often recognized for their sacrifices, especially when their husbands were away.⁴⁶ Adams’ expression of her discontent shows that she was aware of her limited rights, even though she was perfectly capable of managing a farm and business without the aid of her husband.

Of course, Adams’ most famous letter is the one she wrote to John Adams’ during the Continental Congress in 1776. In this letter, known as the “Remember the Ladies” letter, Adams pleads with her husband to write in protection for women in this new codification of laws. As the wife of an important politician, she was in a unique position to use her influence over her husband to push for some measure of protection or rights for women. While this is the only recorded instance of her using her influence to seek legislative rights for women, it did not have the desired effect. John Adams assumed she was joking and responded in kind, teasing “As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I

⁴⁵ Gelles, 34.

⁴⁶ Edith B. Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, (1992), 38.

cannot but Laugh.”⁴⁷ While Abigail Adams did not show her disappointment, or indeed her anger, at her husband for his failure to take her seriously, she confided to her friend, Otis Warren.⁴⁸ Adams’ hurt and disillusionment showed how upset she was at not being taken seriously solely because of her gender.

At the other end of the political spectrum was Grace Growden Galloway, an illustrious society matron in colonial Philadelphia and fierce loyalist. She married her husband, Joseph Galloway, a successful businessman and politician, in 1753. Both remained devout loyalists throughout the War for Independence. When the war began to gain steam in 1774, Joseph Galloway and their daughter Elizabeth took refuge behind loyalist lines, first in New York then in 1778 in England. Like many other loyalist wives, Grace Growden Galloway stayed in Philadelphia in order to settle their affairs and to secure their property and funds. Joseph Galloway, and other loyalist husbands, assumed that their wives were capable of this task and that they would not be arrested because they were women. Her stay proved fruitless, as the rebels seized their estate and removed Galloway from their home. She was forced to rent rooms and had fallen on hard times, economically, socially and politically. Despite this, Galloway refused to renounce her dedication to the Crown, stating “they want me to decend [sic] to abject Treason for my estate which I will not do.”⁴⁹ She was loyal to the British Crown, alone, and she had the legal right to assert her loyalty to the Crown.

Galloway also learned the hard way about her civil and legal rights as a woman and wife. She had assumed that the inheritance she received upon her father’s death was

⁴⁷ Gelles, *First Thoughts*, 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 18.

⁴⁹ Grace Growden Galloway, “Diary of Grace Growden Galloway,” ed. Raymond C. Werner, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 58 (1934) 152-189, 178.

hers; however, it was legally her husband's, to do with as he pleased.⁵⁰ As she attempted to secure funds for her own retainer, this infuriated her. She discovered that her "Mr. G" had sold off part of her inheritance, as well as other lands she brought into the marriage. This knowledge disgusted her. She looked upon herself as a highborn lady with a substantial amount of influence, and to find that she no longer had the means to back that up was quite distressing to say the least.⁵¹ She thought that the property she inherited was legally hers alone, and not her husband's. The fact that it was not caused her a substantial amount of grief, as she was unaware that her husband could act in her stead for her property.

Galloway also dealt with lawyers and other legal professionals extensively, in order to get her estate back. Because she was not well versed in these matters, she grew quite angry that the matter of her estate, and that of her husband's, was not settled quickly. She was justifiably angry that these legal professionals could not, and sometimes would not, help her. The laws were changing so quickly that many of these lawyers simply did not know how they would be interpreted under the rules of the Continental Congress.⁵²

These economic difficulties lead to social difficulties. Galloway's old friends began to distance themselves from her because of her reduced financial circumstances and outspoken political beliefs. Again, the domineering woman that she was, this quite upset her. Despite the economic issues, she still imperiously demanded the social niceties

⁵⁰ Grace Growden Galloway, "Diary of Grace Growden Galloway," ed. Raymond C. Werner, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 55 (1931), 32-94; 45.

⁵¹ Beverly Baxter, "Grace Growden Galloway: Survival of a Loyalist, 1778-1779," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1978), 62-67, 63.

⁵² *Ibid*, 65.

that she had come to expect as the wife of a great man and politician.⁵³ She felt entitled to the same rights she enjoyed before the war; it never occurred to her that her rights could be infringed.

Galloway faced many issues during her time alone. Not only did she desperately miss her daughter, she no longer had the economic means to retain the societal function she had come to rely upon. She struggled through illness, physical and mental stress, and disenfranchisement. The diary she kept during the turbulent years of 1778-1779 also affords a unique insight to the worries of a highborn woman brought low by circumstance.

Despite these struggles, Galloway found an unexpected freedom in being able to make her own choices. She had spent her entire life until then being pretty, being a pawn, and never having to think or make decisions for herself. While this made her ill prepared to manage the world without a husband, she found that period of her life invigorating and enjoyed speaking for herself. Her diary, which at first was just a simple record of what she did each day, became a place where she confided her innermost feelings, remarking ironically, "I am happy & ye Liberty of doing as I please Makes even poverty more agreeable than time I ever spent since I married."⁵⁴ This statement is proof that Galloway in particular felt freer outside the traditional bonds of marriage. While she was acted as *femme sole* to file legal requests and settle the estate, she was still technically a *femme covert*.

Galloway would never see her daughter or her husband again. She died in 1782. She never renounced her loyalty to the Crown and never won the right to her property.

⁵³ Galloway, 75.

⁵⁴ Galloway, 60.

After over twenty-five years of legal battles, the courts ruled that her heirs had the right to the Growden-Galloway estates.⁵⁵ Galloway was abandoned as a process of the Revolutionary War, and acted until her death as *femme sole*, without the title to prove it.

While vastly important in the fields of economics and social life, women also contributed greatly to civil discourse. By seeking a divorce in an unhappy marriage, or leaving bequests to her family and that family seeking her debts repaid, a woman could be active in the civil sphere despite lacking civil rights. These two cases are one of the few ways a colonial woman could retain the respectability of her time while still acting in a civic manner. While under rigid constraints in the colonial era as far as behavior, and threatened by various dangers at every turn, women during this time proved that despite this, they would survive and thrive in times of great civic distress.

The influence of Mercy Otis Warren, Abigail Adams and Grace Growden Galloway to the civil discourse of the time cannot be understated. Mercy Otis Warren used her pen to mercilessly poke fun at those in charge, while also writing a serious, if exhaustive, history of her current time. Abigail Adams stayed closer to the domestic sphere, using her influence as a wife and mother to attempt to gently guide her husband to give women some measure of civic responsibility. Grace Growden Galloway represents the other side of this coin, her righteous anger coloring her fight for property and the indignity she faced as the wife of a Loyalist and proud one at that.

The newspapers of this time period speak in small ways to the grander challenges that Mercy Otis Warren, Abigail Adams, and Grace Growden Galloway faced. Adams and Galloway acted as a *de facto femme sole* for a portion of their lives. Galloway filed

⁵⁵ Baxter, 67.

legal suits, like the anonymous younger wife in the bequest dispute. Adams acted as a deputy husband, fulfilling the role of her husband during his absence. Otis Warren used her pen to engage in the civil discourse of the day, like the women who wrote the behavior guides. The newspapers show, in everyday life, how some challenges were universal.

The years of the Revolutionary War and the formation of the United States saw a marked written legal contracture of women's civil and legal rights. However, women were still willing, and able to act in their own self-interest when the time came. There were no instances of divorce in the newspapers prior to the Revolution, but after the country had settled into an uneasy peace, the instances shot up over five hundred percent. This clearly shows that despite the actual displacement of their rights, the enforcement of it was substantially different than the word of law.

Conclusion: Women as Gatekeepers to the Republic

Women played an incredibly important role in Revolutionary era society. That role evolved as the War for Independence wreaked havoc on the households and homes they worked so hard to create. Women contributed to society in economic, social, and civic ways, with each of these tying into the emerging notion of “Republican Motherhood,” as well as dealing with the changes necessitated by the war. While many women did not step outside their roles as shopkeepers, mothers, or wives, how they interacted within these confines is extremely important in understanding how the middling to upper class white colonial women created a degree of agency, despite not having hegemony. The newspapers revealed a new, deeper understanding of the lives of the women represented within them.

Women behaved as independent economic actors, and their behavior is uncovered in the newspapers. Whether they offered a reward, acted as the executrix for an estate, sold, owned, or bequeathed property, or initiated a divorce, these actions had economic consequences. Even though women did not assert economic independence, they contributed to a burgeoning American economy. The generally accepted interpretation is that women of this era were less active economically; the newspapers prove this false. Typically, women contributed less to the economy in both Annapolis and Philadelphia in 1790 than they did in 1770. This is indicative of a correlational relationship to civic rights. As women began to lose civil rights, they were also deprived of economic rights. While one did not cause the other, the relationship between them is important. Despite this, women did act economically in both years, in both cities. Conversely in Maryland, more women acted as executrices in 1790 than in 1770. While this could be because of

epidemiological and medical reasons, it does not account for more women seeming to be in a better position financially. Over half of the women did not ask to settle debts or credits after the deaths of their husbands, either because the wives were intimately familiar with the business, they knew of no such debts or credits, or they did not see a need to settle up, as they were in a comfortable financial situation. The same, again, held true in Philadelphia: more women acted as executrixes in 1790 than 1770.

Another way that women acted economically was by selling, owning or bequeathing property. All of the women that sought to sell property obviously owned it, the same with those who left bequests and all of the executrixes that sought to sell portions of their husband's or father's land, as well as those offering a reward for stolen property. The newspapers revealed that women gained some economic clout in Maryland compared to Philadelphia where the number decreased by half. The women in both time periods and both cities, acted as *femme sole* to sell property, leave bequests, or execute an estate. This established a precedent that women had the economic and legal right to act as they did. The newspapers suggested that women continued to exercise this right throughout the Revolutionary period, when the decline happened, it was when the federal and state governments became more established.

Women also behaved as social actors: they hosted and attended events, and educated themselves through their attendance at and the reading of lectures as well as learning about the fears and dangers that eighteenth century women faced every day. The newspapers divulged how women were perceived in this time period through the publication of dangers, as well as advertised the events, schools and lectures. It is in the social role that a woman started to fulfill the demands of "Republican Motherhood" more

completely than as an economic actor. Through their attendance at lectures they educated themselves and thus their children. The same held true for reading the behavior guides printed in the newspapers, as well as the dangers that women faced. While lurid, the dangers in the newspapers provided a dual role to educate women about the issues and problems in the world, as well as to keep them in their proper place. It was only when they deviated from the role of a good Christian "Republican Mother" that these dangers befell them, such as exposing herself to something extreme during pregnancy and having the child born as a little person, or behaving foolishly in fashion and catching her hair on fire.

The social activities reported in the newspapers included marriage and birth announcements, event notices, and advertisements for schools. The marriage and birth announcements prior to the Revolution focus mainly on European royalty and the political alliances that came along with that. After the war, an expected shift occurred; the newspaper announcements regarding the personal lives of foreign royalty markedly diminished with a focus on the new American aristocracy. The newspapers also advertised for lectures, boarding schools, and morning and night schools for ladies and men. The prevalence of these schools post-Revolutionary War suggest that there was great importance placed on education, whether for children or for young ladies and men about to enter the world of adults.

The newspapers also advertised events such as benefit plays and other events. Attendance at these events allowed women to behave as a social actor, and fulfilled another important role -- that of social gatekeeper. Any new businessman had to go through the wife before he could talk to the husband. It was only if he passed her strict

social standards that he was allowed access to the social situations of the husband, in business as well as politics. It was also through contact with these society wives that an up-and-coming single businessman or politician found himself a spouse. These women as gatekeepers performed not only an important social role of arranging marriages, but they also had knowledge of their husband's business and political dealings in order to "interview" prospective associates. A man of means relied on his wife to perform this role, so he could focus on other matters in business or politics. An increase in party engagements advertised in the newspapers in both cities exposed that women grew in this particular role after the War for Independence.

In behaving as a civic actor, women had little agency. It is only when they moved up the societal ladder that they gained more political clout, mirroring their male counterparts. Despite this, the middle class women had some means to exhibit civic duty, not only through the role of a "Republican Mother." The newspaper announcements of bequests, dangers, as well as divorce are all means through which a woman could behave within the legal system, without disturbing the societal norms.

Highborn women, while they did not have as much economic freedom as those with less social status, exercised a measure of influence in politics, or at least had an opinion in the political matters of the day. This was especially true in three case studies: Mercy Otis Warren, Abigail Adams, and Grace Growden Galloway. Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams both fulfilled the role of a Republican Mother in not only their social roles, but in their civic roles as well. Otis Warren wrote of the Revolution in thinly veiled terms, using plays and poems as her medium. She also did not begin publishing until her children had grown and left home, thus allowing her to take on the role of passive

Revolutionary activist/writer – through her poems and plays. Abigail Adams was great friends with Mercy Otis Warren, and in their prodigious correspondence they talked of all manner of things, with politics and domestic roles at the forefront. Adams used her role as the wife of a great politician, John Adams, to attempt to influence political change in the rights of women. While her attempt was unsuccessful, it was the first challenge of a women seeking to change the status quo of women in a subordinate role to men.

Grace Growden Galloway was unique because she did not fulfill the role of Republican Mother. She was a devout Loyalist, and because of her political beliefs lost her property as well as social status. Her diary revealed her bitter feelings about the changing tide of politics during the years of 1772 and 1773. Because she made her opposition to the Revolution widely known, she was systematically deprived of her economic, social and political rights. In fact, she was quite despondent upon finding that when she married, the inheritance she received from her father was no longer hers, and was in fact her husband's to do with as he pleased. The reflection of Galloway can be seen in the bequests and death announcements of women. Those women were in control of their own property, or the property of others, and thus had the legal right to it, where Galloway did not retain her legal right.

The unifying theme throughout these areas of women's lives is divorce. Divorce was a way that a Revolutionary-era woman could exercise what limited rights she had at once. She attained economic freedom, by cleaving herself from a husband and taking what money she had brought into the marriage, or by incurring debts on his behalf as many women did. She gained social freedom, by leaving a husband who did not treat her well, as Lydia Mathew explained her response to her husband's announcement. The

divorce and abandonment announcements were published in the newspapers and divorce announcements only appeared after the war.

Divorce is a legal act, and it is only after the American Revolution that cases of the actual legal proceedings of divorce hearings are announced in the newspapers. Five were published, with four initiated by women; prior to the war, only was announced and it did not take place in the colonies. This stunning increase in the amount of legal cases of divorce could be because after the Revolution, women felt they no longer had to stay in a bad marriage. Another reason could be because even though they had little legal rights and protections, they internalized the ideals of the Revolution: that of freedom, liberty, and independence, and expressed these ideals by seeking literal freedom from a marriage that no longer suited them.

The effect the Revolution had on the colonies is undeniable. The effect it had on the practical lives of women however, is much more subtle and not universal and is revealed through an ordinary source – that of a newspaper. Women had slightly more economic freedoms in Maryland, where they acted as owners of slaves as well as physical property. Women had more political freedom the higher the economic and social status they had, but less economic freedom. The actions of women contributed greatly to the economy, sociality, and political culture of the time before and after the Revolution, and the effect of the Revolution is most clearly felt through divorce.

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