Consuming women: gender, ideology, and the consumer revolution in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 1740-1800

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Consuming Women: Gender, Ideology, and the Consumer Revolution in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 1740-1800

by

Susan A. Hoffman

A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee of Lehigh University in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

in History

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Thesis Advisor

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 – “Bought Without my Knowledge by my Wife,” 1740-1800</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 – “Went to the Shops for Several Sundries,” 1740-1765</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 – “I Have Done Much to Carry on the War,” 1765-1783</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 – “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 1784-1800</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Philadelphia Women’s Inventories</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Philadelphia Women’s Wills</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Northampton County Women’s Inventories</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Northampton County Women’s Wills</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Miscellaneous, Philadelphia Women’s Inventories</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Miscellaneous, Northampton County Women’s Inventories</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Miscellaneous, Northampton County Women’s Wills</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Miscellaneous, Philadelphia Women’s Wills</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Signature or Mark in Wills, Philadelphia Women’s Wills</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Signature or Mark in Wills, Northampton County Women’s Wills</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Estate Values based on Inventories (Converted to Pounds Sterling)</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philadelphia Women’s Inventories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Estate Values based on Inventories (Converted to Pounds Sterling)</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northampton County Women’s Inventories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Consumer Goods for Daily Living, Northampton County Women’s Inventories</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Consumer Goods for Daily Living, Philadelphia Women's Inventories</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Women and Home Manufacturing, Northampton County Women's Inventories</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Women and Home Manufacturing, Philadelphia Women's Inventories</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>Women and Home Manufacturing, Philadelphia Women's Wills</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18</td>
<td>Women and Home Manufacturing, Northampton County Women's Wills</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 19</td>
<td>Consumer Goods for Daily Living; Philadelphia Women's Wills</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 20</td>
<td>Consumer Goods for Daily Living, Northampton County Women's Wills</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Loving Memory of my Mother,
Florence K. Hoffman
(1925-1998)
Abstract

In the middle decades of the eighteenth century, growing imports of British manufactures and foodstuffs created what historians have termed the "consumer revolution." Consumerism came to play a vital role in the lives of women, and it is central to our historical understanding of early America. A gendered ideology of consumerism developed that was more complex than previously credited and which evolved over time from its initial growth in the 1740s in the colonies through the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath. Generally, elite women envisioned consumerism in a positive light, because they associated it with strengthening the bonds of family, friends, and community. Consuming also provided women with an important link to the public world outside of their homes. It further enabled women to make independent choices in their lives.

In contrast, most elite men commonly viewed consumerism in more negative terms, particularly in regards to women. They often feminized the negatives of consumerism, such as extravagance, excessiveness, and status-consciousness. Thus, consumerism played a paradoxical role: it tended to reinforce traditional views and stereotypes of women and their status in society, while at the same time it served as a means by which women could expand their horizons.

Ultimately, the consumer revolution did not fundamentally alter societal views about women, but rather it had an ambiguous effect upon women's status in early American society. Although it did not topple traditional gender views, nonetheless, consumerism, held significant implications for women and their conceptions of themselves and their society.
Introduction

The significance of consumerism to the study of colonial America has received much attention from historians in the last several decades, particularly on the question of whether colonial Americans were self-sufficient or market-oriented. On the one side, historian James A. Henretta asserted the more traditional view that a "pre-capitalist mentality" pervaded colonial life, with self-sufficiency as its hallmark. On the other side, historians T.H. Breen, Carole Shammas, and James T. Lemon found colonial society to be more market-oriented, with consumerism as an important component of the colonial economy. The more traditional position has attributed a yeoman farmer image to our colonial predecessors, wishing to venerate them as self-sufficient patriots. Historians such as Breen, however, challenged this perception by recognizing that contemporary Americans have difficulty accepting our founding mothers and fathers as consumers. He concluded that American colonists played an integral role in Britain's "empire of goods." Likewise, Breen countered the traditional tendency, to perceive consumerism in largely negative terms as "mindless materialism," by indicating that in reality what historians have now dubbed the "consumer revolution" may have been embraced by many colonists and viewed in a more favorable light than previously conceived.¹

In related areas of historical literature, much useful work has been done with quantitative analysis of probate inventories and other primary sources. These studies have provided us with a more comprehensive view of the economy of the colonies, the colonial standards of living, and the material culture of the colonists. Yet more studies need to be conducted even in these related spheres of historiography, particularly for the Middle Colonies.

Despite the gains in related historical explorations, the tendency to envision consumerism as "mindless mass behavior" is still with us. This tendency is evidenced perhaps most clearly by the paucity of historical studies of colonists' ideas and perceptions of consumerism, especially where women are concerned. Such studies are necessary in order to gain a better understanding of how colonists perceived themselves and their world, because their views and attitudes on consumerism were inextricably entwined with their conceptions of society, politics, religion, the economy, and gender itself. In particular, gendered aspects of consumerism have not been adequately explored. Although historians have rendered some valuable contributions concerning women, for the most part they have not focused specifically on the relationship between consumerism and gender. Likewise, the valuable contributions made in the study of consumerism transformation was generally marked by a rising standard of living particularly for the middle and upper sorts, the proliferation of imported goods, and the adoption of genteel standards by those with increasing amounts of disposable income.

have largely centered on men's relationship to the consumer revolution and thus
have predominantly overlooked women. Moreover, these two strains of
historiography, consumer history and women's history, have largely taken
separate paths, which have rarely intersected. Hence, although some historians
have begun to look anew at the second half of the eighteenth century as the
"consumer revolution," they have not addressed whether it was revolutionary for
women, or in other words, whether consumerism fundamentally operated to
change embedded gender attitudes in colonial and early republican society or
women's lives.

By moving the focus to contemplating women and consumerism directly,
greater insight into women's lives and early American society should be
obtainable. The primary objective of my research is to search for patterns of
values, attitudes, and beliefs through an analysis of extant colonial American
writings by women or about women. To examine consumer ideology, my
sources ranged from private writings, such as diaries and journals, commonplace
books, and family papers, to public writings, such as newspapers, broadsides, and
magazines. Moreover, in order to gain some insight into whether colonists'

3 Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in
Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's
Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800
(Boston, 1980); Jean R. Soderlund, "Women in Eighteenth-Century
Pennsylvania: Toward a Model of Diversity," Pennsylvania Magazine of History
and Biography (hereinafter PMHB) 115 (1991): 163-83; T.H. Breen, "Narrative
of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology and Community on the Eve of the

4 I have altered capitalization, spelling, and punctuation in direct
quotations taken from colonial writings in order to conform to contemporary
usage. I have chosen to make these changes to facilitate reading of my paper
since I quote so often from eighteenth-century sources.
conceptions of consumerism influenced their actual consumer behavior, I have analyzed various estate papers, including samples of women's wills and inventories. My study has focused upon the period from 1740 to 1800, for the colonies of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

This evidence suggests that consumerism played an integral role for many colonial and early republican women and is central to our understanding of colonial women's lives. It did not constitute merely "mindless materialism." Rather it manifested a particular ideology that was more complex than previously credited and which evolved over time from its initial growth in the 1740s in the colonies through the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath. This evolution transpired due to the intimate connection between consumerism and the political, social, economic, and gender aspects of society with which it constantly interacted.

In addition, I argue that the colonists conceived of consumerism in gendered ways. Generally, women envisioned consumerism in a more positive light, because they associated it with the vital elements of their everyday life. Indeed, women most often conceived of consumerism in the context of family, friends, and community. Consumerism served not only to strengthen bonds between female friends and family relations, but also acted as a point of conjuncture between the sexes, through family networks, common consumer experiences, and social functions in which consumerism quickly became entrenched. In addition, consumerism also functioned as an important bridge, for women, from their largely private realm of home and hearth, to the public realm of politics, society and the economy.\(^5\) It further operated as an outlet for

\(^5\) On this issue see Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*. She finds that
independent economic and intellectual choices in their lives, which were largely circumscribed and determined by the decisions of males. Nevertheless, this ideology also encompassed a rich array of variegated views correlating with diversity of the middle colonies themselves. Likewise, consumer ideology held room for negative connotations in women’s minds, which allowed for the possibility of excess not only for themselves, but for men as well.

In contrast, most men generally viewed consumerism in negative terms, particularly in relation to women. Men’s conceptions of women and consumerism are replete with references to traditional stereotyped vices of women’s weakness, particularly their luxury-loving and lustful ways. Indeed, men often feminized the negatives of consumerism, such as extravagance, excessiveness, and status-consciousness. Alongside these negative connotations, men generally held the assumption that consumerism would almost inevitably run to overindulgence in the hands of women, especially if the family pocketbook was held in those hands. Depending on the social, political, and economic milieu of the day, however, men espoused contradictory views of women and consumerism. For instance, during times of exigency such as the Revolution and the building of the new republic, men would also accentuate women’s potential prior to the Revolution women’s lives were largely confined to the private realm of the home. Coming first with the Revolution and then in the early Republic, she argues women’s worlds acquired greater connections with the public realm. However, due to her different focus, Norton failed to recognize the importance of consumerism in effecting this transformation. Women’s links to the public realm did become amplified during the Revolutionary era and the early Republic, often through their willingness to consume or not to consume. The evidence of consumerism extending women’s private realm into the public realm, however, could already be viewed prior to the Revolution.
for virtue in home economy due to its vital connection to the larger public economy.

Consumerism tended to reinforce traditional views and stereotypes of women and their status in society, while at the same time it served as a means by which women could expand their horizons into the public sphere. But ultimately, my evidence reveals that the consumer revolution did not manifest substantial or fundamental change in societal views about women, but rather had an ambiguous effect upon women's status in American society. Although consumerism did not fundamentally alter gender views, nonetheless, it held significant implications for women and their conceptions of themselves and their society.

Certain assumptions underpin this study, while others do not. I am not presuming that the middle colonies are necessarily representative of the whole of early America. Neither will the assumption be made that the consumer attitudes and beliefs manifested by colonial writers are representative of the entire colonial population, as such sources necessarily represent the elite perspective, rather than that of the lower and middling sorts. My research into estate documentation will ameliorate this bias to some degree by providing a glimpse of the lives of the more middling and lower sorts. Moreover, this thesis will be part of a larger body of work, which will address in greater depth the consumer behavior of early Americans in relation to their ideology. In that study, my focus will be broader in order to encompass both genders more fully. Whereas here the focus in primarily on women and men's attitudes toward women, the future work will be extended to attempt the gauge the difference, if any, between men's and women's actual consumer behavior.

The title, "Consuming Women," holds two connotations. First, history
has long had a way of consuming women. Largely until the last several decades, historical literature has tended to include women merely as peripheral elements to the primary thrust of study, rather than the main focus itself. Likewise, due to women's secondary status throughout most of American history, many sources dealing with women have been lost to us or remained embedded within sources that have been mined for other historical issues, just as the ordinary people of various ethnicities had been neglected until recent decades. Yet just as consumerism helped to empower women, the second meaning of "consuming women" is emblematic of women's active role in defining their own ideas, roles, and actions. Traces of what women have left behind them in their own writings, as well as those of men, function to help historians ensure that women will no longer be seen as passively consumed by historical processes around them over the course of the eighteenth century, but rather as actively consuming in their lives in that century and well beyond. Indeed, the issue of consumerism bears resonance for our society today. For even today, consumerism is commonly perceived in gendered ways. We are only now beginning to more fully appreciate that this legacy was not bequeathed to us merely by our Victorian forebearers, but rather possessed a more distant heritage, which we owe to our founding mothers and fathers of the colonial and early republican eras.
Chapter 1
“Bought without my Knowledge by my Wife”
1740-1800

From the inception of the “consumer revolution” in the 1740s, many elite men believed that women were the driving force behind the new consumerism. As Robert A. Gross has perceptively observed: “To hear many writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tell it, the demands and desires of women were the basic cause of the new consumerism... From Benjamin Franklin’s charming account of the sudden appearance of a china bowl and silver spoon on his breakfast table to Henry David Thoreau’s denunciation of false ‘economy’ of his times, the complaint is invariably the same: status-conscious women first introduced the corruption of luxury into the home.”

Benjamin Franklin, in fact, offers compelling insight into male perceptions of the female role in causing the consumer revolution:

“... my breakfast was a long time bread and milk (no tea), and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle: being called one morning to breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she had thought her husband deserved a silver spoon and China bowl as

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well as any of his neighbors. This was the first appearance of plate and China in our house, which afterward, in the course of years, as our wealth increased, augmented gradually to seven hundred pounds in value.”

This witty vignette, excerpted from Franklin’s autobiography succinctly delineates the metamorphosis of his breakfast table from plain dining utensils to embellished accoutrements of china and plate after 1740. It highlights the increase of British manufactures in colonial port cities, including Franklin’s Philadelphia. The episode also blamed women for the consumer revolution. Franklin remonstrated his reader to “mark how luxury will enter families,” which in his vision is through the female sex. It also underscores the behavior of women as consumers. By exercising her power over family expenditures for household goods, Deborah Franklin rendered the ultimate decision to purchase imported items. Indeed, her husband complained that she made the purchase without his knowledge, suggesting that in her role as a consumer, his wife wielded a new kind of authority over the family pocketbook. This control of household expenditures perhaps afforded women a certain degree of power over their hearth and home.

At the same time, Deborah Franklin’s explanation for buying the fashionable goods illustrates how colonists of the mid-eighteenth century were increasingly communicating social status through possession of imported wares. By framing her response to Benjamin that he deserved the same comforts as his neighbors, Deborah justified her purchase. Her rationalization for procuring the

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7 *The Autobiography & Other Writings by Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Peter Shaw (New York, 1982), 73.
8 While the “china bowl” in Franklin’s vignette was undoubtedly imported, the “spoon of silver” could have been produced locally by Philadelphia craftsmen.
china and silver serves to illuminate other impulses, particularly that of emulative buying, which were shaping the colonial demand for burgeoning imports. Furthermore, Deborah Franklin's actions reflect her desire to actively engage in the latest consumer trends.

Finally, Benjamin Franklin's anecdote resonated with a myriad of gendered meanings. The presumption that women would naturally spend to excess because of their inherent love of luxury and status underpins the statement. Franklin's comment further suggests men's heightened anxiety about women making independent consumer decisions, even though such decisions dovetailed with their normal housekeeping roles. Consumerism may have opened an avenue of relative freedom for many women in choosing among the various alternatives of goods for domestic use, particularly in urban areas. However, this newfound freedom must have been tempered by their need to obtain either money from husbands or credit at retail establishments. For poorer women, the opportunity to purchase superfluities must have been curbed by their struggle for subsistence. On the other hand, in Franklin's account it is not clear how his wife received the funds she expended for the china and silver, whether she had a household fund provided by her husband or perhaps another source of her own monies. Likewise, it is unclear whether she maintained records of her household spending to be reviewed by her husband, since Franklin was well aware of the "enormous" cost of the china and plate. What is apparent, however, is that men expressed concern over their wives' independent spending for consumer items. Perhaps this

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anxiety over women's freedom in economic decisions contributed to men's emphasis upon the detriments rather than the benefits of female consumption to colonial society.

Indeed, such views of women and consumerism show how traditional eighteenth-century gender views were being reinforced, even in the midst of far-reaching vicissitudes wrought by the consumer revolution. Men perceived women to be physically, emotionally, and intellectually weaker than themselves, and thereby more likely to bow before temptation. Hence, they were more likely to be corrupted by consumerism. For example, men feared that women would too easily forsake home economy and hard work for luxury. Once again Benjamin Franklin published an apropos verse echoing this concern: "Many estates are spent in the Getting, / Since Women for Tea forsook Spinning & Knitting." Men's perceptions of women's roles in consumerism were vitally linked to their perceptions of women's economic roles in the home. Joan Hoff-Wilson found that women's gender role as a household manager was an integral part of the early economy of the colonies, with spinning and weaving the primary types of home production for women during the eighteenth century. In a similar fashion, men found the proverb of "vanity thy name is woman" to be particularly applicable to consuming women. Benjamin Franklin included in his 1742 almanac the following verse: "Celia's rich Side-Board seldom sees the Light, / Clean is her Kitchen, and her Spits are bright /...Her Plates unsullied, shining on the Shelf; / For vain Celia dresses nothing, -- but herself."¹⁰ This verse implies

that consuming women would no longer be interested in tending their home economy, but rather only in their own dress or appearance.

Historians of colonial America have traced the roots for such traditional views of women to a number of sources. Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton located European traditional stereotypes of women in political theorists like Locke, Filmer, Rousseau, and Machiavelli, who collectively deemed women incapable of exercising political rights. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich looked to Biblical references to weaknesses of women dating back to Eve. Moreover, these stereotypes dovetailed with the patriarchal nature of colonial society, which deemed men to be dominant in both public and private life.¹¹

The perception of women as particularly status-conscious, which could be conveyed more and more through consumer goods, came to be reflected in shopkeepers' advertisements. Advertisers increasingly addressed women directly as consumers. One historian who studied colonial advertising, Richard Bushman, revealed that while listings from the 1720s solicited the business of gentlemen consumers, they more often appealed to "ladies" by the 1750s. Bushman suggested that by portraying customers in this manner, such advertisements attracted customers by implicitly promising status to those who shopped in particular stores. What is equally important, however, is the implication that women played a greater part in shopping activities after mid-century; merchant advertisements targeted them, perhaps, in recognition of their increasing roles as

purchasers of fashionable British wares for themselves, their households, and their families. 12

Women's roles as consumers grew out of their domestic responsibilities. In other words, women still maintained the responsibility for feeding and clothing their families. As a consumer society began to take shape, that duty became increasingly expressed in the act of shopping for household goods rather than the act of producing them. Therefore, women's work as consumers evolved together with alterations in the economic function of the household. In the eyes of some elite male critics, however, the unprecedented scale on which women made purchases utterly transformed the act. As women acquired more and more store-bought goods, they bought items to meet psychic and social needs, rather than solely for their family's material sustenance. One colonial farmer lamented that after mid-century his wife increasingly expended the family income on market commodities, including luxuries for his daughters' trousseaus as well as the family dining table. Indeed, he claimed that his wife's spending effectively dissipated their savings. His statements, however, not only point to "a spendthrift wife and luxury-loving daughters," but further suggest a change in the kinds of articles consumed by women. Over the course of the eighteenth century, consumers had greater choice in goods available to enhance their lifestyles. At that time, the beginnings of mass production allowed the growing "middle sorts" to take part in the accumulation of luxurious goods. Therefore, more and more

women must have derived both psychological and emotional satisfaction from their role as consumers, in making choices for their families and themselves.\textsuperscript{13}

During the revolutionary era, politics pervaded the gendered ideology of the colonists. Looking first to men’s perceptions of women’s capacity for political participation, Linda Kerber contends that male distrust of the female capability to take politics seriously existed when the Revolution began and persisted long after the war’s close. Despite anecdotal evidence of the economic and physical sacrifice of individual women, a folklore long endured which discounted women’s political behavior. In fact, many men assumed that women were as incapable of rendering unbiased and reasoned political judgments as they were of sacrificing their creature comforts for higher national purposes. In the eyes of male colonists “creature comforts” were consumer goods imported from Britain. The popular press excoriated American women for their excessive consumption of British goods, both during the war and after. The critics held that by indulging in British products, American women were effectively undermining the efforts of American men to forge an independent national culture.\textsuperscript{14} The male assumption that women had caused excessive consumption in the colonies was naturally extended to the

\textsuperscript{13} Cleary, 50-1; Carole Shammas suggested that this 1787 letter signed “a colonial farmer” may have been the guise of a gentleman involved in politics and thereby making a political statement. Notwithstanding its doubtful origins, the letter accentuates the role of women in the consumer revolution; American Museum 1 (1787): 11-13, cited by Shammas, “How Self-Sufficient?”247-9; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York, 1990). Ulrich reminds us that early American women could be both consumers and producers at the same time. Through the example of Martha Ballard, textiles were produced in the household, while money received from such items, as well as her midwifery practice, enabled Ballard to purchase teapots, imported cloth and other consumer goods.

\textsuperscript{14} Kerber, Women of the Republic, 35-36.
revolutionary cause. In the male patriot’s view, there arose a heightened, almost frenetic fear that consuming women may cause the Revolution be lost. If they did not influence women to mend their consuming ways, the consequences could be dire. Thus, upper and middle class men’s conception of women was highly contradictory, on the one hand disparaging women for their innate female weaknesses, while on the other hand encouraging them to be virtuous.

Moreover, male patriots specifically equated luxury and corruption with "femininity in their revolutionary rhetoric leveled against Britain. One historian has found that prior to 1765 Philadelphians perceived Great Britain as strong, manly, and virtuous. By 1776, however, they envisaged England as luxurious, corrupt, immoral, and by their extrapolation, weak, effeminate, and on the road to destruction. One revolutionary writer explicated that Americans were “a rough and hardy people, uneffeminated with luxury.” Rather than emulating the luxurious fashions of the English elite, the colonists were urged to renounce “all the pageantry, and the robes, and the plumes” and look to American manufacture as the “symbol of dignity, the badge of virtue.” Another author prophesied that “[t]he independent spirit of a free American would never sink prostrate at the unworthy feet of luxury and surrender up our dearest rights for the paltry pomp and pageantry of unmanly tinsel.” Overall, these Whig polemics highlighted the great disparities separating England from America, with the greatest of all being that England was effeminate, whereas America was manly. Consequently, England was disparaged for its supposed feminine qualities of being corrupt, weak, and luxury-loving.

As one gentlemen wrote in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, “[w]omen in all ages and countries are the same, and whatever our fair Americans may think of themselves, coquetry and vanity are not unknown even here.” By categorically insisting that all women throughout history and the world were the same, this anonymous writer argued that in spite of women’s positive conception of themselves, their gender inherently endowed them with the negative attributes of coquetry and vanity. He went on to wish that “my pretty country women [would] but leave off those superfluities of dress, which their native beauty should teach them are unnecessary, and by this patriotic measure remove all complaints of their would-be admirers against milliners and toy shops. . . .” 16 This author viewed women’s clothing stores and other shops catering to women consumers as mere “toy shops.” His denunciation implies that women were behaving childishly in adorning themselves with the latest British fashions. Moreover, his rationalization for why women should willingly eschew British accoutrements was not merely for “patriotism’s” sake, but rather their “would-be admirers” would become their adoring devotees. Thus, this elite male writer believed that women had to be cajoled into making patriotic self-sacrifices for their country.

Generally men believed that a woman’s gender caused her to be luxury-loving. In the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, a male writer recognized that the British “think that though the men may be contented with homespun stuff, the women will never get the better of their vanity and fondness for English modes and gewgaws. The ministerial people all talk in this strain, and even many of the merchants.” 17 Although this view of women was ascribed to British men,

17 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 22, 1769.
women's vanity and fondness for consumer goods was a common complaint among colonial men. By placing it within the context of English perceptions, the author appeared to be attempting to encourage women to prove the British wrong.

In addition to their vanity and fondness for such consumer "toys," men also feared women's love of the status which consumer goods could afford them. As historian Cary Carson acknowledged, the familiar refrain that "the wife of the laboring man wishes to vie in dress with the wife of merchant, and the latter does not wish to be inferior to the wealthy women of Europe," colored men's perceptions of women's supposed inability to abstain from British luxuries. If men did not actively instill political virtue in women, then they would never rise above their own selfish status-seeking to do what was best for the patriot cause. The suggestion, therefore, was that women were incapable, without male direction, of such a heightened "political consciousness."

According to historian Linda Kerber, the first state in raised political consciousness was to wear homespun or else old clothes of British cloth. In effect, men were beseeching women to police themselves. If the act of purchasing imported goods was politicized, so was the manufacture of their substitutes, especially homespun clothing. Because ordinary behavior, such as the buying of goods or the home manufacture of wearing apparel, suddenly became charged with political significance, political decisions might be attributed even where none were contemplated by women. For instance, the act of purchasing British cloth or tea could mark a person as a Tory. Moreover, even those who wished to remain neutral during the Revolution might find themselves

18 Of Consuming Interests, 520-539.
accused of aligning themselves one way or another. 19

Boycotts of English goods during the 1760s and later during the war greatly increased the importance of female production of textiles in the home and in the early piecework factory system. Commencing with the first boycotts of British goods, women of all classes were urged to make and wear homespun. Women were actively recruited into domestic textile production by male patriots with such pleas as “[i]n this time of public distress you have each of you an opportunity not only to help sustain your families, but likewise to call your might into the treasury of the public good.” They were further implored to “cease trifling their time away [and] prudently employ it learning the use of the spinning wheel.” By mid-1776 in Philadelphia, 4,000 women and children reportedly were spinners under the “putting out system” for local textile producers. 20 Just as consumerism for women manifested an extension of normal household duties for women, so did domestic production of cloth.

Men also called on “virtuous wives and amiable daughters” to “become fully sensible how much it is in their power to contribute to the present noble design, of not only increasing the means of subsistence, but of restoring to a course of virtue, the many scores of unhappy females who may be found in their

20 Pennsylvania Packet, August 7, 1775, December 19, 1774; The male misconception that women should “cease trifling their time away” reveals their lack of understanding of the sheer volume and complexity of women’s household work, which historians Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Jeanne Boydston have illuminated in their studies. See Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York, 1990) and Boydston, “To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working-Class Subsistence,” 35 Radical History Review (1986): 7-25; Hoff-Wilson, “The Illusion of Change,” 340.
neighborhood!” They looked to morally upright women’s “spirit of reforming others from idleness, and dissolute manners,” so as to “induce them to become notable and encouraging examples of industry, as well as economy (their peculiar province).” By “holding the distaff with their hands,” virtuous women could show by way of example to their indolent neighbors, that it is the “virtuous woman who seeketh flax, and who willingly worketh with her hands.”

Here, instead of limiting women to a negative political voice of abstaining from purchasing British imports, the author is calling on women to pursue an active role in encouraging other women to promote the patriot cause, by being paragons of industry and economy themselves.

In addition to pre-war boycotts initiating the politicization of the household economy, they further marked the inception of the use of a political language that explicitly comprehended women. State statutes usually relied on the generic “he,” but those relating to commodity production for the war made it very clear that women were particularly regarded as sources of the clothing and blankets the army desperately required. A New Jersey procurement act for November 1777, for instance, made a point of prescribing penalties, “If any person having any blankets to sell, or such sufficiency as to enable him or her to spare a part without distressing his or her family, and shall rate them at an exorbitant price, ...or if any commissioners shall reason to believe that any person hath secreted his or her blankets.” According to Kerber, the amount expected from each county was immense and it is probable that the commissioners could not have approached

21 Pennsylvania Gazette, November 19, 1767; See also Ulrich, Good Wives.
their quotas if women in great numbers had not taken to their looms. 22 This recognition of women’s connection with blankets, textile manufacturing and consumer goods in general, grew out of women’s domestic sphere, but at the same time served to extend women’s domestic province into the public realm during the exigencies of war. Moreover, the government’s acknowledgement of women’s vital role in supplying the military is also significant for it suggests that women had control of such consumer items in their households.

Just as male patriots conceded women’s importance to cloth production, they also recognized the salience of women to the success of boycotts of British imports. One writer harkened back to the advent of the Revolution, by reminding his readers that “[i]n the beginning of this glorious revolution, associations for non-importation were formed; the merchants, the farmers, the women combined against the English commerce.”23 Here, women were afforded a separate category of participation, along with merchants and farmers, as those groups of colonists who had joined forces to thwart British mercantilism. Men’s perception of women’s relationship to consumerism was contradictory, encouraging women on the one hand to strive to be virtuous patriots, while denying on the other hand that they could exercise adequate restraint and self-sacrifice to be deemed worthy of political participation.

Finally, in the Early Republic, the paramount national concern of forging a new nation influenced gender ideology. As Linda Kerber has demonstrated, few men were prepared to agree that a wife and mother could also be an

23 Pennsylvania Gazette, April 3, 1782.
21
independent political being. Those men who did conceive that women should play a political role in the new republic, would have to win over a hostile public that certain political actions by females did not threaten the traditional domestic order. Through the ideals of “Republican Motherhood,” some elite men argued that a patriotic woman could join her seemingly opposing loyalties to the home and to the state.24

On the one hand, there were luminaries like Benjamin Rush, who asserted that women had to be properly educated in order to become competent citizens of the new nation instead of being trained merely for the marriage market. Only if appropriately prepared could the model republican woman exercise sufficient self-discipline and political virtue to be able to raise republican sons. She could moderate her consumption to benefit her country rather than herself. To Rush, the marriage market inevitably functioned to undermine the new republic by rewarding those women who were mere fashion plates and single-mindedly pursued a well-to-do husband. Indeed, he lamented the “dependence” for which women are “uniformly educated.”25

On the other hand, advocates of a female brand of republicanism faced “stubborn prejudices” concerning women’s education that continued to pervade male perceptions of women. Indeed, the same newspapers and magazines that published essays encouraging women’s education also published discouraging articles on the subject. In Philadelphia Lady’s Magazine, for instance, an essay

cautioned that educated and intelligent women would be induced “to become men.” This author argued that it was “classical knowledge” that he wished to withhold from women, as “pursuits so repugnant to female delicacy, so derogatory to the natural character of her sex . . . such a desertion from nature,” as to render an “evil influence” upon women. Such pernicious influence translated into an educated woman becoming “negligent in their dress” and careless in her household duties because she would rather be reading. He further remonstrated that he knew of “no way of rendering classical knowledge so ridiculous as by clothing it in petticoats.”26 The prediction that intellectual accomplishment would unsex women was conjoined with the warning that educated women would abandon their proper sphere. In fact, the female pedant and the careful housekeeper, it was implied, could never be located in the same woman. Furthermore, it was argued that classical learning for a woman was against her very nature.

Supporters of “Republican Motherhood” faced a hostile male-dominated society in which female learning was equated with pedantry and masculinity. At the same time, however, men were complaining that American women, who lacked proper education, were boring, frivolous, and spending excessive amounts of money for impractical fashions. The importance of these arguments lies in the fact that the ideology against excessive consumption came to be used in the republican attempt to win greater educational opportunities for women. Nevertheless, as Linda Kerber makes clear, republicanism did not function to fundamentally alter women’s spheres; rather what it did was underscore the

significance of the actions women assumed in their homes to instruct their sons in republican principles. The properly educated republican woman would stay in the home, and from that position of new prominence, would shape the characters of her sons and husbands in the direction of benevolence, self-restraint (particularly in consumption) and responsible independence. According to the “Republican Motherhood” argument, expanded education for future republican mothers would not translate into women discarding their supposedly proper domestic sphere, despite their critics’ claims.\textsuperscript{27}

Moreover, the belief that consumption behaviors had political implications would endure long after the Revolution. With every international crisis in the years of the early national period, affluent men appealed to women to render contributions to the family economy on the public account. In 1787, during the incipient stages of the national drive to improve domestic manufacture, for example, an anonymous author argued to women that since “your country is independent of European power . . . your modes of dress should be independent of a group of coquettes, milliners, and manufacturers, who . . . endeavor to enslave the fancy of the whole world,” by means of “vanity” and “avarice.” Indeed, buying American wares became a patriotic gesture, with the ultimate purpose to support the “Infant” manufacturers imperiled by more fashionable products from abroad. Hence, it was up to American women as prime consumers to furnish a protected market for domestic goods. According to Kerber, American ideologues gradually developed an imaginary sumptuary system that applied only to women. They appealed to women on the most frivolous terms as

\textsuperscript{27} Philadelphia Minerva, April 4, 1795; Kerber, 107-9.
revealed by this 1800 New Jersey toast: “The fair daughters of Columbia—May their modesty, industry, ingenuity and economy, supersede the necessity of such large importations; and these accomplishments be their only recommendations to procure the best of husbands.”

Thus, rather than appealing to women’s patriotism, these polemics entreated women to curb their consumption as the surest means by which they could catch good husbands. Other disparaging male views of women and consumption filled the periodicals of the period, juxtaposed among more optimistic views. A 1787 letter purportedly written by a colonial farmer described how his wife increasingly wasted the family income on market commodities, store-bought goods and luxuries for his daughters’ trousseaus as well as for the family table. He lamented that her spending habits eliminated their savings. This complaint about a spendthrift wife and luxury-loving daughters emphasizes the role of women as excessive consumers, the reason behind the “necessity of such large importations” mentioned above, so often highlighted by men.

Other arguments against women assumed an even more humorous turn. In one essay on the female fashion of wearing hoops, a father complained of the “public and private inconveniences,” of these “so universally worn” contrivances. He regrets that his four daughters had been induced to “adopt this worse than useless fashion.” As a public inconvenience, he laments that it was now “impossible for a person to walk the streets, without being turned off the

28 Kerber, 45-7; American Museum, I (1787), 475; New Jersey Journal [Elizabeth Town], March 17, 1800.
pavement, and in danger of being run over by coaches." As a private inconvenience, he disparages that his household had to be "changed for larger," his chaise had to be exchanged for a coach. In short, the "whole system of [this father's] affairs" had been "turned topsy-turvy." He concluded that, "I hope what I have advanced . . . will be sufficient to persuade my own daughters, at least (if not wholly to lay aside their hoops) to appropriate the dimensions of them to the size of my apartments, and to convince them that extreme fashion is extreme folly." 30 In a similar article, shopping is defined as a "fashionable female amusement," in which "two, three, or four ladies, set out to make the tour of the most fashionable shops . . . and the most fashionable goods." The author further chastised that "after a whole forenoon spent in plaguing mercers and milliners, they return home . . . thoughtless of their folly." Indeed, both of these two male authors sought to accentuate the absurdity of women's excessive consumption.

Throughout the periodicals aimed at women, negative essays concerning consuming women were juxtaposed with articles appealing to the women's positive attributes. In contrast, rather than condemning female faults, these positive writings emphasized the degree to which the future of the nation is dependent upon women's exercise of their virtuous qualities. One such article expressed the author's concern that since "many thousands are annually expended by the citizens of the United States, to purchase foreign superfluities of dress," the influence of women was necessary in reforming men. He argued that "the ladies [would] merit much praise, should they exert their power (which would not

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30 Philadelphia's Lady Magazine, November 1792, 254-255; February 1793, 125.
be inconsiderable on this occasion) to save their country from this reproachful and ill-timed extravagance." Here, the male author explicitly acknowledged that the “manners of women, have great influence on the manners of men,” thereby women’s power over men “would not be inconsiderable” in encouraging frugality and prudence in consumption of superfluous, imported articles of clothing.31 Implicitly, however, the same statement suggests that women’s power over men is “inconsiderable” on most other occasions.

In addition, as to the related issue of women’s natural abilities for domestic economy and industry, another author extolled “How great is the honor of that lady, who by her economy and industry, endeavors to support the reputation and credit of her husband!” Similarly, in another issue, in a section entitled “On American Manufactures,” the writer articulated that “there is no branch of political economy, that more deserves the attention of a wife and prudent government, than that which tends to promote the spirit of industry amongst the people, and at the same time to maintain a favorable commerce with other nations.” 32 Thus, these statements emphasize women’s natural abilities for economy and industry as essential for the progress of the new nation.

In a similar fashion, the imagery of women in these periodicals portrayed them as the goddess guardians of the commerce of the new American nation and the republican virtue of its denizens. On the frontispiece of the first volume of the 1787 Columbian Magazine was the engraving captioned “While Commerce spreads her canvas of the main, And agriculture plows the grateful plain, Minerva and Columbia’s rising race, With arms to triumph and arts to grace.” This

31 Ibid., 282.
32 Ibid., 283; The Columbian Magazine, February 1787, 281.
engraving depicts goddesses Minerva and Columbia in the foreground with an abundance of ships sailing in a harbor and a farmer plowing in the distance, and on an open scroll is printed "Independence the rewarded Wisdom Fortitude and Perseverance." The two are holding children's hands, as proud republican mothers of the "rising race" of Americans. Likewise, in the first frontispiece for Philadelphia's Lady's Magazine, the genius of the Lady's Magazine, approached lady Liberty, kneels and presented her with a copy of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." This depiction of women was imbued with consumerism, as the editor advertises his selling of "A Vindication" and afforded it a prominent review in his first issue.

Indeed, at the end of each year's Philadelphia Lady's Magazine were conspicuous advertisements for the publisher's other books which he was also offering for sale. In both advertisements, Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" is the central focus. This work occupied the top portion of the announcement in large print, with the publisher promising that it was currently "in the press, and speedily will be published, that much admired and truly elegant performance, called a "Vindication of the Rights of Woman." In addition, books aimed specifically at women were delineated, such as "Fables for Ladies," and "Advantages and Disadvantages of the Married State for Females." These

33 The Columbian Magazine, June 1787, 491; Philadelphia Lady's Magazine, November 1792.

However, Wollstonecraft's work was much more of a feminist publication than the magazine that advertised it for sale. Indeed, she advocated a greater degree of equality between the sexes than most males, and even most females of the day would have espoused. In her view, there were no innate sexual or social differences between men and women; all differences were rooted in the social
advertisements, in fact, evince how segments of the consumer market in the new nation came to be targeted at women. The publisher not only hoped that ladies would subscribe to his magazine, but also that they would purchase books, which he also published.

In conclusion, although men’s attitudes toward women were ambiguous, they appeared more likely to attribute negative connotations to female involvement with consumerism. They seemed to assume that women would naturally be excessive in their spending habits, while they themselves would invariably be thrifty. On the one hand, in times of war and national urgency, however, men would accentuate women’s capacity for domestic economy. On the other hand, they would chastise women’s equally strong propensity to shop, and therefore, to partake in the new consuming culture. In the pages that follow, we will see that women’s perceptions of the consumer revolution in early America were of a quite different persuasion.

environment and could be removed by changes in that environment, particularly through education for women.
Chapter 2

“Went to the Shops for Several Sundries”

1740-1765

In 1758, Elizabeth Drinker recorded that she “went to the shops for several sundries” as a commonplace event in her daily routine. Such shopping activities, however, would not have been possible a mere half a century before, even in the port city of Philadelphia. What set the period from 1740 to 1765 apart, in fact, was the dramatic increase that occurred in the importation of British goods. Indeed, these years marked the incipient stage of what historians have dubbed the “consumer revolution.” In T.H. Breen’s estimation, it was during this age that colonists became consumers, purchasing finished manufactured goods at an unprecedented rate. Between 1740 and 1770, for example, per capita American imports grew approximately fifty percent. As Carole Shammas has demonstrated, the primary goods being brought in were consumer ones: tea, sugar and its by-products, wine, woolens, linen, and cotton, both cloth and garments. Moreover, she determined that the average American spent over one quarter of his or her annual income on imports from outside his or her colony of residence. 35

35 T.H. Breen, “The Meaning of ‘likeness’: American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society,” Word & Image 6 (1990): 325-50; Shammas, “How Self-Sufficient,” 265-6. By the term “consumer goods” I mean not only these specifically enumerated commodities, but other goods imported from outside the consumer’s colony of residence. Most often, the term is used to denote non-essential goods, or in other words, items not necessary for sufficiency of food, shelter, and clothing. Moreover, in the context of the eighteenth-century North American colonies, the term further indicates that the items were mass-produced in the British Empire to be sold on the commercial market. However, consumer goods could also include locally produced luxury items, such as furniture and silver. Although these goods were produced by increasing
According to T.H. Breen, colonial observers understood something fundamental about the imperial connection that modern historians have commonly overlooked: mid-century Americans confronted a situation that was "genuinely new." Before the 1740s, few would have described their relation with Great Britain within the framework of a rapidly expanding consumer marketplace. After that date, the commercial connection became much more invasive, more manifest—a development demanding adjustment and accommodation and one that touched the lives of people living in all parts of America. Moreover, Breen argued that contemporaries were fully aware of these changes that had dramatically transformed the face of a provincial material culture. People dressed more opulently and more colorfully, furnishing their homes with a greater array of decorative items and conveniences. Indeed, they procured more manufactured items that made them feel happier, warmer, or better looking.\footnote{Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life," 483.}

The Great Awakening is also central to understanding this period, for New Light colonial ministers particularly railed against ostentatious consumption. They equated luxury with sin. As one minister remonstrated, "it expresses itself, in boasting of and praising our persons or actions [and] in extravagant apparel, building, furniture, expensive and pompous ways of living." But ministers, including George Whitefield, James Davenport, and Jonathan Edwards, were not able to roll back the rapid unfurling of a consumer society. No doubt, for many colonists, the purchasing of British imports may have engendered a certain degree of guilt and may thereby have discouraged extreme forms of conspicuous numbers of skilled craftspeople in the colonies, their materials were often imported from abroad or from other colonies.
consumption. In the end, nevertheless, the goods continued to stream into America.  

Likewise, during the French and Indian War, reports abounded of the colonists living too well. Their opulent consumption of British manufactures strongly impressed "the gentlemen of the army" who learned that Americans "spend full as much [on] the luxurious British imports as prudence will countenance, and often much more." However, colonists like John Dickinson, a respected Pennsylvania lawyer, challenged these accusations, arguing that during the mid-century war, European visitors had witnessed an abnormal economy, artificially fueled by large military expenditures, rather than mere American extravagance.

Historians have perceived that women may have played an increasing role in the eighteenth-century "consumer revolution." Indeed, women's roles as consumers grew out of their domestic responsibilities. In other words, women still maintained the responsibility for feeding and clothing their families. As a consumer society began to take shape, that duty became increasingly expressed in the act of shopping for household goods rather than the act of producing them. Therefore, women's work as consumers evolved together with alterations in the economic function of the household. As women acquired more and more store-

bought goods, they bought items to meet psychic and social needs, rather than solely for their family's material sustenance. Over the course of the eighteenth century, consumers had greater choice in goods available to enhance their lifestyles. At that time, the beginnings of mass production allowed the increasing "middle sorts" to take part in the accumulation of luxurious goods. Therefore, more and more women must have derived some degree of satisfaction from their role as consumers, in making choices for their families and themselves.  

Whereas men appeared more likely to attribute negative connotations to women's involvement in consumerism, women appeared more likely to ascribe positive connotations to it. Women's writings reflect the significant social, economic, and religious implications of consumerism to their worlds. Indeed, they tended to envisage consumer goods as strengthening their social bonds with their families, friends, and communities. On an economic level, women appeared to relish their role in making household purchasing decisions as well as recording such decisions. Finally, as to their religious convictions, they appeared more likely than men to view the danger of excess as a non-gendered possibility for both sexes rather than a gendered eventuality for women alone.

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40 Patricia A. Cleary, "She-Merchants of Colonial America: Women and Commerce on the Eve of the Revolution," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1985): 50-1; Carole Shammas suggested that this 1787 letter signed "at colonial farmer" may have been the guise of a gentleman involved in politics and thereby making a political statement. Notwithstanding its doubtful origins, the letter accentuates the role of women in the consumer revolution; American Museum 1 (1787): 11-13, cited by Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient?" 247-9.
Social Implications of the Consumer Revolution for Women

Contemporary writings by middle and upper class women reflected the positive social implications that consumer activities held for them. Such consumer-related activities as tea drinking, shopping, and reading occupied central places in women's writings thereby attesting to their vital importance to women. Women's writings point to the social importance of shopping for women. From their writings, shopping for consumables emerged as a highly social event. Family and friends could share the experience. It also served to forge links in the community with women frequenting shops and building relationships with retailers, some of whom were women. For instance, on numerous occasions throughout her diary, Elizabeth Drinker recorded shopping with her friends and family. 41 On one occasion she told her diary that she “went after Dinner with Becky Rawle, to Buy China, at Peter Thompsons.” On another date, she wrote that she “went with Hannah to several shops.” On yet another, when her friend Polly Mooe called for her one day and discovered Drinker was out, she “overtook us in Market Street,” where Drinker and her sister were most likely visiting shops. In fact, comments that women made about shopping suggest that they enjoyed the social bonding element of it. In her diary entries, Elizabeth Drinker reported shopping trips without purchases as well, indicative of the social importance of shopping. She frequently recorded going shopping after dinner. One day’s entry consisted primarily of visits to retailers: “went this morning-to

Wests . . . went in the Afternoon to sundry shops with Becky Rawle, and Nancy Warner."

Women's writings suggest that shopping allowed family and friends to bond when they were far apart as well as in each other's company. Through what may be termed family buying networks, women occupied a strategic position in the purchase and exchange of consumer goods with their loved ones. In part, these networks reflect the varying availability of goods in urban as compared to rural areas. In addition, they reveal one of the means by which friends and families remained close although miles, or even oceans apart if they lived in different countries or colonies. Across the physical distances separating them, loved ones maintained their emotional ties through correspondence and the shipment of consumer items.

Dr. Richard Hill and his children maintained a purchasing network while some family members relocated to Madeira and others remained in Philadelphia. They constantly kept in touch with one another via letters. A common topic was the consumer goods they purchased for one another. For instance, Richard Hill mentioned in a letter of March 31, 1758, to his "dear Hannah," his daughter, that "I have got several things for my dear girls, which I intend to send to the care of B. Robinson, by a sloop of his, which I daily expect, such as taffetas, cambrics, and Hollands." A few years later, in a letter of February 10, 1761, addressed to his "dear daughters," Hill advised that he would "write a short letter to sister Rachel, with the silver teapot and milk-pot, which go by Capt. Chancellor, and will leave your sister to inform you of everything else that goes."

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42 Ibid., July 27, 1759; October 20, 1759, May 4, 1759, August 4, 1760.  
43 The Letters of Doctor Richard Hill and His Children, ed. John Jay
Elizabeth Graeme’s papers also illuminate purchasing networks among family and friends. Her brother-in-law James Young wrote to Elizabeth to send “my love to my dear children & tell Anny [his wife] I send a fan & her umbrella which I desire she will make use of, I bought it for that purpose, the sun is equally strong in country or city . . . .”  

In the same letter, he spoke of less mundane topics in relaying the following message: “Tell your mamma I shall endeavor to buy Poussels’ Negro for her today though he may exceed your Papa’s limited price as I have a very extraordinary character of him.” Thus, personal property in these networks ranged from ordinary consumer items, such as fans and umbrellas, to enslaved human beings who, unfortunately, were deemed chattel during this time period and for some time to come.

These family networks extended to friends as well. Elizabeth Graeme received word from her friend, Eliza Stedman, that, “the gown I have received . . . is quite answerable to my expectations.” She went on to say that she felt “indebted for the trouble you have had” and to ask Graeme to “please accept my thanks for the stomacher and bows which are very pretty and did I want to be reminded of an absent friend they would answer that purpose whenever I put them on.” This statement reveals that consumer goods held not only monetary, but also sentimental value. Serving as vital reminders of cherished relationships, material items symbolized intangible connections to family and friends.

Smith, (Privately Printed for the Descendants, Philadelphia, 1854); 152-3, 178-9.  
44 James Young to Elizabeth Graeme, July 23, 1763, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereinafter HSP).  
45 Ibid.  
46 Eliza Stedman to Elizabeth Graeme, March 9, 1765, Gratz Collection, HSP.
Therefore, goods functioned to cement bonds between friends as well as family members.

Such networks among relatives and friends could also act as a bridge across gender divisions, with both men and women buying items for one another. Hence, consumer purchases may have helped to forge bonds of common experience between the sexes. As the letters of Dr. Richard Hill and his children demonstrate, female and male relations sent purchases to each other. Another example is the letter from Isaac Norris to Susanna Wright, in which he noted forwarding some of the books that she had requested, but not others due to their exorbitant cost.47

In addition to shopping, other consumer activities helped to link female and male worlds. Important new social rituals developed around pots, cups, and tables designed especially for the enjoyment of tea, coffee, and chocolate. The place of the tea ritual within courting, in providing a socially acceptable occasion for young women and men to get acquainted, was also made manifest by women's personal writings. For example, Elizabeth Drinker recorded when Henry Drinker drank tea with her prior to their marriage in 1761. In 1760, she records, “Henry Drinker drank tea with us.” Indeed, Rodris Roth in examining the ritual of tea drinking, asserted that tea parties constituted one of the most socially permissible environments for couples to develop relationships while in the presence of family and friends.48

47 Isaac Norris to Susanna Wright, September 14, 1753, Norris- Fairhill Collection, HSP.
The wider availability of books also served to promote shared experiences between the sexes. Elizabeth Graeme, in her courtship with William Franklin, illustrates the emergence of a growing variety of popular reading materials written for both a male and female audience. In their courtship, they emulated elements of Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, often deemed to be the most popular novel of the eighteenth century. Elizabeth called Franklin her “Tom Jones” and she labeled herself his “Sophia.” He sent her a muff from England, just as Tom Jones had bestowed upon his beloved Sophia in that novel. William lovingly scried to Elizabeth: “But I must confess I had a tenderer motive for sending her a muff. As she often pleased to liken me to Tom Jones, and expressed herself much delighted with the story of Sophia’s muff mentioned in that Novel, I could not help flattering myself that this might, in the same manner, tend to raise or keep alive some soft emotions in my favor.” On another occasion, William further entreated his feelings for Elizabeth through his reaction to a gift she had sent him, “Immediately upon the receipt of the silken chain you were so kind to send me, away flew the steel one I before had in my possession. Who is the encroacher now Betsey? Not contented with having bound my soul to you by indissolveable ties, must every moveable about me also wear your fetters? . . . .”

In a little more than a year’s time, however, he bitterly recounted in the midst of their recorded quarreling, “the contemptuous reception she gave a small present I sent her, particularly the muff and tippet, which, though worn by people of first fashion in England, she sneeringly treats as a “gaudy gewgaw.” Indeed, William goes on to write that he took Elizabeth’s rejection of the gift as a sign of her lack of esteem for him or his presumption in sending her a present. 49

49 Martha C. Slotten, “Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson: A Poet in ‘the Athens
These excerpts epitomize the place consumer items came to occupy in colonists' lives, from novels, like *Tom Jones*, which was widely disseminated in the new commercial world, to other consumables that served as love tokens for courting couples. Here it is quite interesting that consumer goods themselves became enmeshed with the enjoyment of other consumables, such as muffsf and tippets with novels. The fact that readers of early novels would actively purchase the items mentioned therein demonstrates the significance of consumer wares in colonists' lives. It also illuminates the means by which consumer goods could evoke a variety of sentiments in women and men depending on the grantor of the gift and the circumstances of the parties' relationship. William referred to the watch chain Elizabeth had sent him, and questions whether “all movables about him must also wear her fetters?” He appeared to envisage this present as a constant reminder of Elizabeth and his feelings for her at that moment in time. The tone of the subsequent letter, nonetheless, is quite different. William's present of a muff and tippet to express his affection and esteem is transformed into a “gaudy gewgaw,” in the eyes of Elizabeth, when their differences could not be resolved and their relationship became strained. William is seemingly perplexed by this reversal, expressing what he viewed as the highest
recommendation of the muff and tippet, that they are “worn by people of first fashion in England.” Moreover, he takes Elizabeth’s snubbing of his gift as emblematic of her lack of esteem for him. Thus, Elizabeth and Franklin communicated their affection, or lack thereof, not only through written discourse, but also through consumer goods.

Shopping may have further bridged private and public realms of experience for women since the shops themselves provided an area for women to interact with one another. Consumer goods could afford common meanings through which women shared domestic concerns and social interactions. Elizabeth Sandwith (Drinker) indicated that she retained friendly relationships with shopkeepers, as well as other business owners who provided various services related to consumer goods. On June 30, 1758, she records that she “called at the Stay-makers, at Rebecca Birchalls, at Betsy Moodes, and at Widow Maddoxes.” Similarly, on April 17, 1760, Sandwith told her diary that she had “called after meeting at Uncles, and at several shops.”

Indeed, in 1760 at the age of twenty-five, Sandwith recorded specifically where and when she shopped sixty-one times that year, almost one-fifth of her entries for that year prior to her marriage. Therefore, as a single woman she regularly frequented shops with her friends and family. However, the incidence of her shopping declined following her marriage to Henry Drinker and their starting a family together. In 1778, at age forty-three, she documented shopping only twenty-two times or six percent of her entries. At age sixty, Drinker’s shopping had increased, with her family requiring less of her time to thirty-six times or ten percent of her entries by 1795. Nonetheless, it still did not

\[^{50}\text{Cleary, “She-Merchants,”132-3; ED, June 30, 1758, April 17, 1760.}\]
approximate the incidence of her shopping prior to her marriage in 1761. These figures suggest that women's shopping patterns altered over the course of their lifetimes, diminishing during years of greater domestic responsibilities, while increasing in years of lesser ones. Notwithstanding this finding, Drinker's diary does not indicate that she and her family consumed less over the course of her lifetime, but rather that she was more likely to share shopping responsibilities with her sister, daughters, and servants. Moreover, just because she spent less time actually in the process of shopping does not necessarily translate into her purchasing fewer consumer goods for herself and her family, but may only indicate that Drinker as wife and mother spent less time shopping.

Indeed, the fact that some women worked as shopkeepers also held significance for women. One historian, in her study of women shopkeepers, suggested that women may have preferred shopping at female-owned establishments. She illustrated that women shopkeepers often advertised their shops as being owned by women. Possibly women did more of their buying from other women, making choices to shop according to gender. Female shopkeepers' roles as arbiters or handlers of fashion made them important sources of information; displaying their stock of British styles, they revealed their own consumer skills. Some females may have believed that other women understood their gender's fashion and styles better than men. Furthermore, many of the women shopkeepers in Philadelphia were Quakers, thus these women's lives, as consumers and retailers, may have intersected in several ways: with shared religious beliefs and activities, commercial experiences, and neighborhood

51 ED, 1760, 1778, 1795. Women's shopping patterns may also have been altered with obtaining servants when they married.
residences, which would engender common meanings and modes of thought among them. Most likely, goods provided common means for sharing domestic concerns and social interactions.\textsuperscript{52}

However, Elizabeth Drinker's description of shopping stands in sharp contrast to evidence of women's shopping patterns in the Chesapeake, as studied by Allan Kulikoff. Apparently, few women there held accounts at neighborhood stores and those who did seldom visited them in person.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps the fact that Drinker lived in an urban area, indeed a center of consumption like Philadelphia as a port city, altered the equation from the primarily agricultural, rural area of Chesapeake. What also may have contributed to the difference is that Kulikoff examined shop accounts, most likely maintained by men, rather than women's diaries, which gave the perspective of women themselves, in their own words. In such cosmopolitan areas, shopping provided well-to-do women with an acceptable public pursuit, one of the few they could engage in without male chaperons.\textsuperscript{54} Accordingly, it afforded females an important sense of social freedom as a vital link from women's private sphere into the public one. Although rural areas did not offer the same variety of shops as cities, they had some stores and peddlers. Family networks, moreover, furnished women with greater opportunities to sample a wider field of consumer goods even if they resided in the country.

Women combined shopping and the purchases it produced with other visiting activities. While Nancy Tomes' excellent study revealed the importance

\textsuperscript{52} Cleary, "She-Merchants," 133-148.
\textsuperscript{53} Allan Kulikoff, \textit{Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800} (Chapel Hill, 1986), 225-6.
of visiting patterns in women’s daily lives, she nevertheless failed to recognize
the salience of consumerism embedded in these women’s visiting patterns and
social interactions. In fact, tea drinking was a vital element within women’s daily
lives and visiting routines. For example, Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker recorded
that after spending the afternoon at “several shops” with her dear friend M. Parr,
she also “came home and drank Tea with us.” In 1758, Elizabeth was twenty-
three years old and had not yet married Henry Drinker. Therefore, as a young,
single woman she had more time at her disposal to be able to spend the afternoon
shopping and sharing tea with her friends.

Similar to shopping, tea parties around the middle decades of the
eighteenth century became an essential part of the consumption patterns of
women. In particular, middle and upper class women residing in urban areas
were able to enjoy the tea ritual on a daily basis. According to Rodris Roth, tea
became the preferred social beverage of the eighteenth century. To serve tea
properly to guests, was a sign of gentility and hospitality. To drink it properly
with family, friends, and acquaintances became an important custom with
distinctive manners and specific equipment. Indeed, “the tea ceremony,
sometimes simple, sometimes elaborate, was the very core of family life.” To be
a proper hostess, preparing, serving, and consuming tea necessitated the purchase
of fashionable, new containers and implements. It required a full assemblage of
tea equipage including tea kettles, teapots, tea caddies, a tea strainer, a sugar
bowl, sugar tongs, a creamer or milk pot, teacups and saucers, teaspoons, a slop

55 Nancy Tomes, “The Quaker Connection: Visiting Patterns among
Women in the Philadelphia Society of Friends,” in Michael Zuckerman, ed.,
Friends and Neighbors: Group Life in America’s First Plural Society,
bowl, and a tea table. This proliferation of highly specialized accoutrements offered new opportunities for consumption and display by women, but more importantly, these objects transformed tea drinking into a preeminent social ritual. ⁵⁶

In addition, tea-drinking, held other important social implications for women's worlds, and, as such, prominent places in their writings. Elizabeth Drinker, for instance, recorded on a frequent basis with whom she drank tea and in whose home. Most often, Drinker also delineated the social relationships she retained with her fellow tea drinkers (whether they were family, neighbors, friends, or co-religionists). On one occasion, she recounted that "my friend M. Parr drank tea with us." A week later, she noted that she "drank tea at Neighbor Callender's." On another date, she recorded, "Drank tea at Friend Warners."⁵⁷

Indeed, in her daily recordings for the year 1760, Elizabeth Drinker specifically noted where and with whom she partook tea in 34 percent of her entries (or an average of 10 days a month). In contrast to her frequency of shopping, her recordings of the frequency of tea recordings increased appreciably. For instance, tea appeared in 42 percent of Drinker's entries in the year 1778 as compared to 52 percent in 1795. As editor Elaine Forman Crane notes, Drinker's early diary

⁵⁶ Roth, "Tea-Drinking in Eighteenth-Century America," 439-44. According to Roth, for the first half of the eighteenth century there was only a limited amount of tea available at prohibitively high prices. Consequently, its use was restricted to a proportionately small segment of the population. However, by mid-century, tea was drunk by more and more people, albeit without all the genteel accoutrements the upper classes could afford. In fact, supplies increased and costs decreased, due in part to the propaganda and merchandising efforts of the East India Company. According to Peter Kalm, by 1748, tea, chocolate, and coffee "constitute even the country people's daily breakfast," in Pennsylvania.

⁵⁷ ED Oct. 9, 1758; Oct. 15, 1758; March 28, 1759; July 7, 1760.
entries are generally much briefer than in later years when she was a more experienced diarist. Therefore, it is not entirely clear whether she drank tea more often in her later years, or was merely more careful in recording it.

The entrenchment of consumer goods in the social fabric of early American women's lives is also illuminated by the fact that the tea ritual became a time reference for affluent colonists. Tea-time became part of how women planned their day, scattered across the pages of their private writings, as common place as the occurrence of other meals. Indeed, women appear to have utilized tea drinking as a demarcation of time in a world not really run by the clock. For instance, the event of tea in Elizabeth Drinker's diary is often provided as a time frame during her day, situated in a daily routine much like breakfast and dinner. She recorded that "Hannah Moode came after tea," on one particular occasion, and on another, Drinker noted that she "went after tea with Sarah Wamsley to shops." On yet another she told her diary that she and her sister had "left home before tea." 59

Consuming routines became enmeshed not only with regular activities in women's lives, but also non-routine activities, such as traveling. Indeed, women employed consumer items as a point of commonality between the different places they traveled to and their homes. In fact, adhering to normal consuming activities may have served as a point of familiarity or security for women to remind them of the comforts of home. It also further confirms the pervasiveness of consumer goods in their lives, whether at home or abroad. For instance, Hannah Callender indicated in her diary where and when she drank tea while she was traveling. On

58 Ibid., 1760.
59 ED, August, 22, 1759, September 22, 1759.
one occasion, she “drank tea” at “the half-way house.” On another, “we stopped at a house intending to drink tea but it looked dirty and we did not.” On yet another date, Hannah revealed the comfort she and her travelling companions received when “[we] drank part of a poor dish of tea, yet it refreshed us from a fright we put ourselves in on the road.”

When women encountered cultures distinct from their own, they often noted consumer behavior. Hannah Callender, for example, chronicled a visit to the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem, which maintained communal living, social, and religious practices vastly different from most colonists’ experience. Hannah wrote that she “[d]rank a dish of tea in the Guardian’s room opposite the brethren’s chambers.” On another date, “we drank tea with the sisters in an outer room.” In a similar fashion, Hannah Callender recorded that during a ceremony of the Moravians, each person in attendance was given “a small cup of chocolate,” another important luxury which came to be enjoyed increasingly by colonists during this time period. Here, Hannah places into perspective her new experience of encountering the Moravian way of life by recounting similarities between their culture and her own.

Statistical evidence supports contemporary impressions of the centrality of tea-drinking in not only affluent women’s lives, but also those of the “middling and lower sorts.” Judging from an analysis of colonial probate records of Philadelphia women prior to 1780, almost ninety percent of the city women owned tea equipage (Table 1). Those tea accoutrements could include teapots,

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61 Ibid., 451- 453.
62 See Appendix.
kettles, spoons, tongs and tables specially designed for such purposes. In 1759, for instance, Sarah Cresson owned tea tongs, a pewter teapot, two tea kettles, tea spoons, a cream pot, one dozen china tea cups and saucers, a tea chest and canisters and a tea table. In total, her consumer goods were valued at approximately 247 pounds of her estate of 856 pounds or a little less than a third of her entire estate. In comparison, Mary Holloway's estate was valued at 101 pounds in the same year, with 67 pounds or approximately two-thirds of it laid out in consumer goods. She had six silver teaspoons, china and glassware, a tea kettle and table. Similarly, Mary Williams in 1768 with an estate of 126 pounds, and consumer goods accounting for 36 pounds, had a tea chest, ten silver tea spoons, a pair of silver tea tongs, and two china tea cups and saucers. Apparently, the many city women who did own tea equipage, owned not merely one or two items, but rather a more complete tea service. Moreover, these women did not necessarily have to be wealthy to participate in the tea-drinking culture, as they were able to afford at least some of its trappings with their relatively modest estates. In fact, consumer goods accounted for relatively significant proportions of these estates. Therefore, even though wealthier women were able to participate in the "consumer revolution" to a greater degree than those less well off, the most salient indication from these findings is that the "lower and middling sorts" did partake in that consuming culture.

In addition, twenty percent of these Philadelphia women made a specific bequest of tea equipage in their wills (Table 2). Sarah Cresson, for instance, left

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63 Sarah Cresson, (1752) Philadelphia Inventories, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereinafter CAP); Mary Holloway (1759) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Mary Williams (1768) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP.
half a dozen china tea cups and matching saucers to her friend, Susanna Medcalf, with the other half dozen “which are on the mantelpiece in the front room” to another friend, Molly Moore. By the same token, Mary Williams provided that her “tea chest and six silver teaspoons marked “M” be given to her “dear granddaughter” namesake in 1768. Thus, these women considered their partial tea services to be of sufficient monetary or sentimental value to bequeath to female relatives and friends.

In contrast, women’s estates from Northampton County, which was founded in 1752 and considered a frontier region throughout the revolutionary period, yield significantly fewer tea implements (Table 3). Prior to 1780, twenty-seven percent of these women owned at least one tea item, compared to the 87 percent in the Philadelphia sample. For instance, in 1768, Catharine Wetzel of Northampton owned a pewter tea pot and kettle. Her estate was valued at 194 pounds, with consumer goods accounting for only one-fifth of her estate. Likewise, Sibilia Keahler in 1770 had a tea kettle, in her estate valued at 115 pounds, of which approximately one-sixth was in consumer wares. Indeed, this tea kettle must have constituted a large expenditure for her, since it was valued at 12 shillings, only three shillings less than her dresser, which was one of her few pieces of furniture. Before 1780, fewer Northampton women owned tea equipage and those who did owned fewer pieces than Philadelphia women. Moreover, none of them specifically bequeathed tea equipage to a loved one (Table 4). However, that is not to say that tea equipage was unimportant to these

64 Sarah Cresson, (1752) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Mary Williams (1768) Philadelphia Wills, HSP.
65 Catharine Wetzel, (1768) Northampton County Inventories, RW; Sibilia Keahler, (1770) Northampton County Inventories, RW.
women. In a newly settled frontier region, to find that almost a third of these women pioneers owned any tea equipage during the first decades of settlement, speaks volumes for the pervasiveness of market commodities in colonial society by the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Although it is unclear whether these women purchased their tea wares while living in the nascent settlement of Northampton County or whether they brought them from their prior residences, these women actively participated in the consuming tea culture even out in the wilderness of Pennsylvania.

Other aspects of colonial women's social worlds became intertwined with consumerism, including their domestic role as caregiver to the ill. By far the predominant role of eighteenth-century women in medicine was in domestic practice. Caring for members of their own households, visiting sick neighbors, and attending at births and deaths was part of a network of social interactions that helped cement family and community ties. Although women's caregiving role has been recognized by other historians, the place of consumer items within it has not. 66 Furthermore, there is evidence that women actively participated in the long tradition of lay persons' recording of medical information for their own use as well as to share with others. Elizabeth Coates Paschall of Philadelphia, who lived from 1702-1768, was one of these women who maintained a recipe (or receipt) book of medicinal remedies. 67 What stands out in her book is the pervasiveness


67 Elizabeth Coates Paschall (1702-1768) Recipe Book, Manuscript at College of Physicians of Philadelphia Library Historical Collections, ca. 1749-1764 (Photostat copy), 2, 6, 14, 17, 43, 25, 39, 51. Elizabeth Paschall was of
of consumer items, as well as her assumption of their ready availability for herself and others. Many of the ingredients for the remedies were imported commodities like tea, sugar, and cinnamon, while others, such as rum, were produced by local distillers from foreign goods like molasses. To “cure a fellow” (an inflammation on the fingertip) use “double rum and salt twice a day.” Most importantly, perhaps, the measuring implements Paschall used were also consumer items, such as tea cups, earthenware, and teaspoons. “For a violent swelling of throat . . . funnel bottom upwards over the top of the teapot cover.”

In another concoction, she called for the components to be “put it in a tea cup.” In yet another remedy, to make a “poultice for a sore eye” she recommended “in a very small earthen cup . . . [place] a bit of Double Refined Sugar . . . and pour a tea kettle of boiling water [on it].” Indeed, throughout her recipe book, she differentiated between tea cups and earthenware cups and dishes, between brown sugar, double refined sugar, white sugar candy, and loaf sugar. Moreover, the fact that she distinguished between these items illuminates not only the greater variety, but also the widespread availability of consumer goods. In addition, she recorded some patent medicines, although she made no specific reference to apothecaries or other suppliers from whom they were purchased. Thus, she includes consumer items as quite commonplace items, as essential ingredients and

Anglo-Quaker and French Huguenot descent. She was the daughter of Thomas and Beulah Coates, she married Joseph P. Paschall in 1721. She was widowed in 1742 and had nine children, only 3 survived infancy. Paschall inherited property from her father and was a successful shopkeeper for much of her life, taking over for her father and husband. Her receipt book has 90 pages and contains 203 recipes, of which 12 are for cookery and several are for other household needs such as stain removal; the rest are medicinal.
implements for mixing. Finally, in the 191 medical recipes she recorded the utilization of consumer goods (or non-essential manufactured imports) as ingredients or as preparatory tools in 149 of the recipes, or in other words, 78 percent of her recorded remedies.  

Elizabeth Paschall procured the medical knowledge she recorded from a number of sources: physicians, various laypersons, and publications, which were themselves consumer items. She obtained one of her cures "for a Dropsey" from "Franklin's newspaper of January 6th, 1757," while another was "taken from the London Magazine 1752." Moreover, she collected some of her antidotes from published medical tracts. Paschall also exchanged information and advice with a large number of other people: relatives, neighbors, friends, servants, and patrons in her shop. In her collection of 191 medical recipes, she mentioned over 150 different individuals as patients, providers or recipients of advice. Such information moved in all directions in society: from washerwomen to heads of households, from neighbor to neighbor, and from men to women. Paschall often carefully noted the social standing or reputation of people from whom she received information. She did so by describing their possession of consumer goods. For instance, she was pleased to have her recipe for consumption recommended by a "young woman that was well dressed & seemed like a person of credit."  

In addition, women sometimes turned their skills in gardening, cooking, and distilling into profit by selling herbs or medicines. Some of them advertised in colonial newspapers. The pages of the Pennsylvania Gazette, for example,

68 Ibid., 2, 6, 14, 17, 43, 25, 39, 51.
69 Ibid., 30, 48.
contain advertisements for a gout ointment offered for sale by one Barbara Grant and a cure for the "Scald head" by Hannah Pearson. Various panaceas were themselves becoming consumer items, which women used to enter the commercial world.\textsuperscript{70} These advertisements suggest that women recognized that they could profit from their domestic role as medical caregivers. In relation to medical care, colonial women forged social bonds through the knowledge they shared, as well as the common goods they used. Furthermore, medical care could serve as an intellectual outlet for women in a colonial world in which their intellectual talents were often stifled, particularly within the public sphere.

Reading also functioned as an important edifying activity for women, as well as a popular entertainment form. Hannah Callender mentioned reading out loud to her family "the Journal of Frederick Post [Moravian missionary] to the Ohio among the Indians, in July 1758." Indeed, in the colonial world reading aloud to a group of family or friends was a common form of entertainment, which could be shared by everyone. However, it could also be a solitary activity for women, to be combined with their other daily or routine activities. Elizabeth Drinker summarized one of her day's activities as follows: "Spent the day in the Blue Parlor--reading and darning." With the greater abundance of books on the market, elite women, particularly those living in cities, had more options in their reading, which had once been limited to the Bible and other religious works. For women, indeed, reading was one of the few intellectual outlets open to them during this time.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Pennsylvania Gazette, July 31, 1746; February 19, 1752.
\textsuperscript{71} HC, November, 7, 1758; ED January 2, 1760; David D. Hall, "Books and Reading in Eighteenth-Century America," in Of Consuming Interests, 354-373.
Further statistical analysis of wills and inventories confirm the increased opportunities for women to obtain books for their personal use. In Philadelphia prior to 1780, sixty percent of the women's inventories included books (Table 5). Of these inventories, all recorded more than a single book, with one having as many as "seven books and three pamphlets," while another had "a parcel of books." By the same token, sixty percent of Northampton County women, who died between 1752 and 1780, owned books (Table 6). However, if they owned books they generally had a lesser quantity, with over half of the rural women possessing only one book. Some of these women, nevertheless, made a specific bequest of their books in their wills. For instance, Dorothea Yund of Northampton County gave her "large folio Bible" to her son, while Margaret Koon directed that her "eldest son John shall have the Bibles, and my son Henry another book called the Legend" (Table 7). Mary Lingard of Philadelphia granted her "great Bible" to her "dear friend, Thomas Gibson, while Rachel Pemberton gave her "large folio Bible with my husband's name" to her son Israel. Thus, when women bequeathed books they apparently envisaged their family Bibles as being of most value to the next generation. These figures attest that both urban and rural women deemed their books to be worthy of bequests to their love ones.

Nonetheless, the question remains whether women of this time period had gained adequate education to be able to read the books they had added to their

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72 Elizabeth Abbott, (1779) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Alice Forster, (1778) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Dorothea Yund, (1780) Northampton Wills, RW; Margaret Koon, (1773) Northampton Wills, RW; Mary Lingard (1758) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Rachel Pemberton, (1765) Philadelphia Wills, HSP.
households. Literacy rates, as measured by women’s ability to sign their wills, differed dramatically in urban and rural areas of Pennsylvania even though their incidence of ownership was approximate. Philadelphia women’s literacy rates were significantly higher than for Northampton women (Tables 9 and 10). Prior to 1780, whereas almost ninety percent of city women could sign their names, fewer than 25 percent of rural women could sign their names to their wills. City women clearly enjoyed greater opportunities for education than country women. Most likely, the wealth differential between residents in a newly settled frontier and those in a well-established port city also played a role. Whereas almost three-quarters of the rural inventories prior to 1780 fell under 100 pounds, less than one-sixth of the urban inventories did (Tables 11 and 12). Although fewer Northampton women had the ability to read or the funds to purchase consumer items like books, these factors did not impede them from participating in the new consumer society to the fullest extent that their means allowed.

Economic Implications of the Consumer Revolution for Women

Shopkeeping and selling such consumables as medicines held important economic implications for women. Consumerism opened pathways into the commercial world for widows like Elizabeth Paschall, and for single women, as shopkeepers, milliners, or mantua makers. It also held significant meanings for women as purchasers of consumer goods and services.

From an analysis of colonial probate records, it is evident that women increasingly took advantage of the greater variety of market commodities as they became available. When comparing the city of Philadelphia with the frontier of
Northampton County, the inventories from the city demonstrate a much greater abundance of consumer items. In regards to imported luxury goods, as expected, urban inventories illustrated a much greater incidence of luxury goods than their rural counterparts. Prior to 1780, 80 percent of the city women owned looking glasses, compared with only 20 percent in the country (Tables 1 and 3). As to clocks, almost fifty percent of Philadelphia inventories recorded this amenity prior to 1780, whereas only seven percent of the Northampton inventories did. This difference is highlighted when examining which women owned both a looking glass and a clock; indeed, forty percent of Philadelphia women owned both before 1780, while in contrast, no Northampton female decedents did. Moreover, a difference in quantity also was evidenced, with urban inventories recording, for instance, two or three looking glasses per inventory, whereas frontier inventories most often contained only one of any luxury good. Correspondingly, whereas almost two-thirds of Philadelphia women owned both pewter and brass before 1780, no Northampton women did.

As consumers, women quickly developed buying strategies to obtain the best price or the exact product they desired. For instance, Elizabeth Drinker shopped around and compared merchandise before making a purchase, traveling “to several shops to look for pocket handkerchiefs.” Generally, she specified where she went to buy a particular item. On July 13, 1759, for example, she “went to R. Steels to buy silk.” Drinker frequented many different shops and thereby gave her business to various owners. For instance, she “went in the Afternoon with M. Parr, to M. Burrows, S. and R. Steels, and several other shops.” Although Drinker did not explain explicitly why she shopped at different establishments, better prices, stock, or specialization in certain wares clearly
induced her to shop around rather than frequenting just one or two merchants. Indeed, on June 12, 1760, Drinker recalled being “at Abm. Mitchells to buy knitting thread,” and during the next month she went “to Josh. Richardson to buy a Thimble.” By exercising considerable shopping strategies, Drinker gained economic benefits not only for herself but also for her family.

In addition, with the growth in consumer imports during the mid-eighteenth century, women formed a greater number of economic relationships with providers of consumer-related services. Elizabeth Drinker often recorded errands such as going “to Sarah Browns silk dyer,” or leaving “silk with Polly Parrish to make a bonnet.” Most certainly in making her decision, she took into consideration which individuals offered the best prices, stock, and service. Thus, Drinker gave her business to both male and female shopkeepers and craftspersons.

However, as consumers, women did not merely purchase what we commonly think of as colonial luxury items, such as silk, looking glasses, and pewter, but also household items which we today envision as essential household furnishings. As to beds and bedding, fewer than half of the Northampton women decedents had both of these articles in the period 1752-1780 (Table 13). Items which we consider as the most basic of furniture today many of these women did not own. For instance, only thirteen percent possessed tables or chairs. This finding is even more stark when looking at the fact that none of these women appear to have owned both. No rural women owned bookcases or sideboards.

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73 ED, August 23, 1759, July 13, 1759, May 4, 1759, June 12, 1760, July 21, 1760.
74 Ibid., May 14, 1759, March 15, 1760.
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over the entire period. They did, however, own chests, which were the most common piece of furniture owned. In fact, over two-thirds of the Northampton inventories recorded them over the entire period.

By the same token, fewer than one-third of all Northampton women owned basic household linen, such as towels or tablecloths prior to 1780, with none owning curtains or napkins (Table 13). With eating utensils, the numbers appear surprising as well: only forty percent owned plates, dishes or bowls from 1752 to 1780. As to knives, forks and spoons, only slightly more than a third of these women had the benefit of these utensils as part of their households. Although in twentieth-century terms these figures appear stark, it must be remembered that Northampton County was a frontier community, having been officially founded as late as 1752. These frontier women, nevertheless, clearly possessed quite a variety of consumer goods, in contradiction to James Henretta and other historians who contend that subsistence agriculture characterized the early American economy. In fact, if Henretta was fully correct in his arguments, then most of these women’s inventories would reveal all the necessary equipment to produce cloth, but not imported luxuries such as tea equipage. Instead, although the inventories of Northampton women bore a lower incidence of ownership of certain goods, which are quite commonplace today, the incidence of imported luxuries belied mere subsistence.75

Moreover, prior to 1780, fewer than half of rural women owned a

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75 Although these common items were missing from many rural women’s inventories and wills, this does not necessarily mean that they were altogether absent from their households. Since only single women and widows could legally leave an estate, it is likely that some of these women resided in houses owned by other relatives or friends.
spinning wheel and other cloth-manufacturing items. (Table 15). Further, because no Northampton woman's inventory recorded a loom in addition to a spinning wheel in this period, few women were able to produce homespun cloth in their own homes without functioning in an informal neighborhood economy that had ties to a larger Atlantic economy. Moreover, only thirteen percent of rural women had the equipment required to produce their own bread or butter. As expected, even fewer city women could produce their own cloth, with only seven percent of city women owning both a spinning wheel and other cloth manufacturing items (Table 16).

A comparison of consumer goods utilized on a daily basis between urban and rural women is perhaps even more revealing of their disparate worlds. Whereas no Philadelphia inventories manifested a bed or bedding only, approximately a third of the Northampton inventories had only a bed or bedding (Tables 13 and 14). Likewise, before 1780, whereas 93 percent of city women’s households had both, only 40 percent of frontier women’s households had both a bed and bedding. This trend was comparable for other pieces of furniture. In Philadelphia, 87 percent of women owned both tables and chairs, whereas no Northampton inventories listed both. Household linen also marked a disparity, with no rural estates revealing all types of linen, whereas almost a third of the urban estates held all of them. Notwithstanding the above differences, city and country inventories were more consonant for eating utensils, ironware and stoves. For example, whereas eighty percent of urban women owned ironware, sixty percent of rural women did. Moreover, as to stoves, in both samples, one-fifth of the women possessed them.

76 Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale; Jensen, Loosening the Bonds.
The extent to which colonists of all economic levels participated in consumer experiences is highlighted by a 1751 petition to the overseers of Philadelphia's almshouse. Two female inhabitants requested that "Tea, Coffee, Chocolate" or any other suitable substance "more agreeable to their palates" be added to their diet. While Mary Mariot and her daughter appreciated the plentiful food they received, they "were both brought up in a delicate way" and required something more dainty. The things they wanted consisted of imported luxury items: tea, coffee, and chocolate, which they deemed necessities, even under their dire economic circumstances. Despite their difficult, indigent condition, these women believed they should be allowed to partake of the latest imported trends. Even if Mary Mariot and her daughter were only temporarily down on their luck, their petition clearly suggests the pervasiveness of consumerism by mid-century. 77

Philadelphia women's wills also testify to the greater availability of consumer goods in densely settled areas compared to the frontier. For instance, city women were more likely than their rural counterparts to grant imported luxury goods to their family and friends. Approximately one-fifth of those women's wills sampled, bequeathed a looking glass or tea equipage (Tables 2 and 4). About 20 percent of these women left china and glassware to others. As to other luxury items, approximately 10 percent gave jewelry to loved ones, while almost one-third of the testators granted silver items. Moreover, urban women also appeared more likely to entrust basic household goods, including bed, bedding, and chests of drawers to loved ones, most likely because greater

77 To the Overseers of the Poor (Philadelphia) Society, March 29, 1751, Miscellaneous Collection, HSP.
numbers owned them (Tables 19 and 20). Approximately one-fifth of these women passed on eating utensils or household linen. They were also more likely than their Northampton counterparts to pass on ironware. Almost 50 percent of these women bequeathed wearing apparel before 1780.

When looking at the language employed by testators in their wills, it is clear that many city and rural women believed that their consumer items constituted precious heirlooms worthy of a bequest to loved ones. Sarah Cresson passed on to her son, Caleb "a pair of gold buttons," and directed that her son was "to have the pair that was his father's." Sarah Morris gave to her "dear friend and niece Deborah Morris, a silver porringer marked 'SM,' six walnut frame chairs with needle-worked seats, one feather bed, and [her] newest pair of low walnut drawers. Sarah Morris further bequeathed to her "nephew Anthony Morris, a quart tankard which was [her] dear father's."78

Similar to Suzanne Lebsock's findings in her study of the South, *Free Women of Petersburg*, women's wills in the North also held a "personalistic" quality.79 Indeed, Philadelphia and Northampton females generally did not divide their estates equally among their heirs, but rather favored some heirs over others. The heirs most likely to be favored by women appeared to be those of their same gender. Rachel Wells conferred to her married daughter, Ann Collum, various consumables, charging that such items be for her "sole use & benefit of them during the natural life of [her husband] James Collum. And upon

78 Sarah Cresson, (1752) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Rachel Pemberton (1765), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Mary Williams, Northampton Wills (1768), RW; Sarah Morris, (1775), Philadelphia Wills, HSP.
the decease of James Collum that [her] executors permit my daughter Ann to dispose of the before mentioned things at her own free will & pleasure.\textsuperscript{80}

Indeed, this will attests to women's particular concern to provide support for female members of their family.

Women's wills also reflected their benevolence toward other women. In addition to bequests to family and friends, 7 of the 30 women, or 23\% of the women testators in the Philadelphia sample, directed that a portion of the estate be utilized for charitable purposes. Sarah Morris granted funds to the Women's Friends Meeting, to be distributed to "reputable housekeepers." In addition, 5 out of the 39 Northampton women, or 13\% of the women testators in the sample, left legacies for charitable purposes.\textsuperscript{81}

By the same token, women also attempted to reward other females for services that they had performed for them during their lifetimes. Verona Miller, for example, granted "the rest of" her estate to her daughter "in consideration of her attendance upon me during my illness." Frances Lathropp of Northampton County directed that her grandchildren "take an equal share" in supporting the slave named Mary, once she was "old & infirmed."\textsuperscript{82} Although it is difficult to conceive of support in old age for a lifetime of slavery as sufficient reward, Lathropp appeared to have believed that she was imparting a substantial benefit "for [Mary's] service to" herself, as well as her family.

Through an examination of women's inventories and wills, it becomes

\textsuperscript{80} Rachel Wells (1758), Philadelphia Wills, HSP. Northampton Wills, RW.

\textsuperscript{81} Sarah Morris (1775), Philadelphia Wills, HSP.

\textsuperscript{82} Verona Miller (1778), Northampton Wills, RW; Frances Lathropp (1758), Northampton Wills, RW.
clear that to their female owners consumer goods were more than mere possessions. Indeed, some of these articles they deemed worthy enough, whether because of sentimental or pecuniary value, to pass on to loved ones of the next generations. Once more, women utilized consumables to strengthen bonds with family and friends even after they had departed the world. Indeed, consuming could be enjoyed in their lifetimes as well as thereafter. When women bequeathed consumer items to succeeding generations of females, they ensured that such family heirlooms would continue to be cherished and of benefit to their legatees for many years to come.

Thus, unlike many men, women ascribed more positive and gender-neutral meanings to their own increasing involvement in consumerism. Women’s writings during the incipient stages of the consumer revolution manifest the salient social and economic ramifications consumerism held for their lives. Indeed, women more readily accepted consumer goods as reinforcing their ties to families, friends, and communities. Economically, they enjoyed making purchasing decisions and participating in the emergent world of consumption. In women’s eyes, therefore, the inception of the consumer revolution brought in its wake a multitude of changes that served to better their everyday lives.
Chapter 3
"I Have Done Much to Carry on the War"
1765-1783

During the revolutionary period, consumerism assumed unprecedented significance in the minds and actions of the colonists. Importation of foreign goods attained extraordinary levels in the decades preceding the war. Carole Shammas estimated the annual per capita colonial American expenditure on foreign imports between 1761 and 1770 at 3.35 pounds. Since the per capita family income in this time period was approximately 12 pounds, under this estimation, Americans expended approximately one-quarter of their income on manufactured items. Likewise, T.H. Breen finds that per capita consumption of these wares rose yearly, with imports growing by 120 percent in the two decades preceding the Revolution. Indeed, Breen finds an "Anglicization of America" during the incipient stages of the Revolution due to colonists’ acquisition of ever-increasing amounts of British consumables. 83

Revolutionary protest and the struggle for independence were often influenced by colonists’ consumer ideology and actions, while at the same time shaping the meaning and reality of colonial consumerism itself. During the Revolution, women in Pennsylvania and New Jersey furthered the patriot cause in various ways. They protested the Stamp Act, the Tea tax, and the Coercive Acts, by refusing to consume taxed items, like tea, or by actively protesting British policy. They organized under the banner of the Daughters of Liberty as a

counterpart to the Sons of Liberty. A group of Philadelphia women launched an effort to furnish the Patriot troops with desperately needed clothing. Other women moved into the enlarging war-related textile industry, to supplant colonial dependence upon British manufactures with American home production. Although women participated in the war effort in diverse ways, their actions, whether willing or involuntary, generally involved consumer goods to some degree. Despite the pervasiveness of consumer goods in women’s revolutionary experience, however, most historians have not recognized the centrality of consumerism to women’s ideas and actions in the Revolution. 84

Rachel Wells’ declaration, “I have Done Much to Carry on the War,” was emblematic of the linkage of women’s participation in the struggle for independence with consumables. In 1786, Wells, “a widow far advanced in years” petitioned for compensation from the new government, stating that she had “done as much to carry on the war as many that set now at the helm of government.” Wells’ efforts had revolved wholly around consumables: “If she did not fight she threw in all her might which brought the soldiers food & clothing & let them have blankets.” 85 Although historians have cited Rachel’s petition as evidence of women’s aid in the war effort, they have not examined

84 Kerber, Women of the Republic; Norton, Liberty’s Daughters.
85 Kerber, 87 quoting Petition of Rachel Wells, May 18, 1786. As the war continued, the Continental Congress began to receive petitions directly from individuals. In a society with few formal elements of poor relief apart from workhouses, those who owed their economic desperation their sacrifices for their country thought it only fitting that their government should respond. Perhaps 5 percent of the petitions received by Congress were from women. Most petitioners were widows who had been left destitute.
why women's revolutionary experience was so intimately bound up with their consumer experience.

On the other hand, women's perceptions of consumerism during the Revolution diverged markedly from men's views. In scholar Kathryn Derounian's estimation, the ordinary elements of colonial women's lives that they valued most -- family, friends and community--continued to prevail in women's writings even during the upheaval of war. Women generally excluded or at least downplayed political events unless they held "personal relevance." By reducing the macrocosmic to microcosmic, women emphasized the immediate, personal significance of general political events. Indeed, consumerism often served as the medium through which women personally encountered the revolution. While some portions of women's writings confirm the feminine stereotype of maintaining the rounds of social calls, parties, shopping, and tea, women's writings also reflected the effect of war on their consumer experiences and ideas. Although women's consumer ideology evolved over the course of the Revolution, in relation to the different political, social, and economic ramifications of war, they essentially retained their basically positive view of its place in their worlds. This does not mean that they always perceived consumerism in a favorable light, even in circumstances of excess. Rather, my argument is that in the context of their daily lives, women generally viewed consumer goods as making their worlds more convenient and comfortable. Due

87 By reference to this stereotype, I do not mean to imply that women's social activities, such as social calls and shopping, were frivolous. In fact, historians like Derounian have revealed the importance of female visiting in maintaining strong social bonds.
to the exigencies of war, however, that more favorable attitude was often expressed with a certain degree of ambivalence for those women whose religious faith or pacifism rendered the decision of patriot, loyalist, or neutral support, a more complicated one.

Political Implications of the Revolution for Women's Consumerism

Women's conception of Revolutionary events was often framed within the context of consumer goods, because it colored the way they experienced the war in their daily lives. Jemima Condict of New Jersey, for example, told her diary on Saturday, October 1, 1774, of the first incidences of the troubles between the colonies and the mother country: "It seems we have troublesome times a coming for there is great disturbance abroad in the earth & they say it is tea that caused it. So then if they will quarrel about such a trifling thing as that what must we expect but war & I think or at least fear it will be so." This statement by a young woman is quite revealing. In her allusion to the Boston Tea Party and the Coercive Acts, she contends that "they say it is tea that caused" the conflict. She implies that colonists viewed tea itself as a causative factor in the "quarrel" with England, rather than serving as merely a symbolic gesture of protest or destruction of valuable crown property in protest of imperial taxes, which the tax on tea was but one of many. Although she characterizes tea as a "trifling thing"

88 *Jemima Condict, Her Book. Being a Transcript of the Diary of an Essex County Maid during the Revolutionary War.* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1930), 36-7. She was the daughter of Daniel and Ruth Williams Condict. They lived in Essex County, New Jersey. Her father was a farmer, a soldier in the Revolution and a deacon in the Presbyterian Church; Roth, "Tea-Drinking," 439-42. In 1767, The Townshend Act imposed a duty on tea, among other imported commodities
to dispute, she concludes nonetheless that if they can feud over something so minor, then they must expect war. This statement, along with the following recordings of women during the Revolution, indicate that they frequently envisioned political events in terms of the familiar objects or elements of their daily lives. Furthermore, these writings testify that in one sense, the Revolution was about consumer goods and that fact essentially made women full partners in the struggle.

Non-consumption and boycotts, especially of British tea, politicized women's private decisions about household purchases as well as consumption of such acquired items. Non-consumption of tea and other consumables constituted some of the most significant personal and political concerns of women during the Revolution. As historian Mary Beth Norton has observed, many women first began to express political opinions with the advent of the Revolution. However, Norton failed to adequately emphasize the fact that women's political opinions as to British acts, such as the tax laws, were often offered through the prism of consumer goods.

During the Revolution, even the most loyal colonists questioned these tax policies to be a violation of the imperial relationship. But for Quakers, the connection between pacifism and loyalism was particularly complicated. Thus, for some women, a certain degree of ambivalence imbued their writings when discussing the sacrifice of consumables. This ambivalence is reflected in Hannah Griffitts' poetry. In her poems "The Female Patriots" and "Beware of the Ides of March," Griffitts castigated British politicians. Written seven years apart, in 1768 and 1775, Griffitts' two poems criticized the policy of taxing colonial

89 Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*. 67
consumption of British imports such as tea. "The Female Patriots" was
"addressed to the Daughters of Liberty in America," and urged women to join the
nonconsumption movement, by finding substitutes or simply doing without the
taxed items. She entreats the "Daughters of Liberty" to "nobly arise," and even
though "we've no Voice, but a negative here, the use of taxables, let us
forebear." Griffitts goes on in an ironic turn to wish that although "merchants
[may] import till their stores are all full," that their "buyers be few & yr. Traffic
be dull." "Stand firmly resolved and bid Grenville to see," she beseeched, "that
rather than Freedom, we'll part with our Tea." Indeed, even though "we love
the dear Draught when a dry, / As American Patriots,--our Taste we deny."
Moreover, seven years later in her "Ides of March" poem Griffitts took another
British minister, Lord North, to task for this tax on tea. Her tone of resistance
had grown even more remonstrative in the intervening years of revolutionary
protest. In 1768 she encouraged American women to thwart Grenville's policies.
By 1775 she not only advocated non-consumption but also warned that "Justice"
would deal with "wicked North." She invited women to "come sacrifice to
Patriot Fame," to "give up Tea by way of healing." Referring to the British as
"proud Nabobs" who will doubtlessly "storm and fret" over colonial
nonconsumption by women, Griffitts boldly reminded women that despite British
power, "they cannot force our Throats to swallow."90

On the other hand, in another 1775 poem, entitled "Wrote Extempore on
Tea," Hannah Griffitts expressed a marked ambivalence at having to give up a

90 Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace book from
Revolutionary America, eds. Karin Wulf and Catherine Blecki (Pennsylvania,
1997), 172-173, 175.
consumable as precious to her, and other women, as tea. She lamented the loss of the “blest leaf whose aromatic gales dispense...to men, politeness & to ladies sense,” concluding that only politicians, doctors, and misers “rail at tea.” In addition, in another poem, “The Ladies Lamentation over an empty Canister,” Griffitts ironically queried, “Why all this malice shewn to Tea/ So near, so dear - -beloved by me, / Reviving draught, when I am dry-- / Tea I must have, or I shall dye.” She went on to challenge that “King, nor Parliament, nor North, nor Congress, nor committee/ will not dare to hinder me,/ from getting fresh recruits of tea.”

Griffitt’s friend, Susanna Wright wrote in response to reading the poem: “how could the wise & generous gentlemen who composed the [Continental] Congress be so cruel to the whole female world, to debar them so totally of their favorite Potation?” Here, Wright associates the boycott of tea as an incredible slight to the female world, since tea is their favorite drink. However, even though she could not understand why they made this “innocent aliment the chief object of their vengeance,” Wright stated that she had “public sp[iri]t enough never to taste one drop of what has paid the Duty.” Yet she differentiated between tea that had not paid the duty which she would still drink “not openly but in a manner to elude scandal & not give offence.” Thus, she would still use her beloved tea in private as long as it did not bear the Townsend duty.  

Women also expressed their ambivalence when it came to their sex’s province of home manufacturing, which became greatly amplified with the revolutionary cause in order to obviate the country’s dependence upon British

91 Ibid., 94 115, 247.
92 Ibid., 250.
manufactures. Jemima Condict, for example, in her entry of May 20, 1772 confided to her diary that she “went to weaving yet not very willingly for I Love that yet it likes not me and I am in the Mind that I never shall be well as long as I weave.” On yet another occasion she laments that she “had to weave.”

Despite the fact that she alleges that she loves to weave, it unfortunately does not “like” her back. Moreover, Jemima further avers that she shall never be “well as long as [she had to] weave.” Thus, although men may have taken for granted that women would be virtuously fulfilled by their domestic contributions to the war, they failed to take into account the drudgery involved in producing homespun.

Notwithstanding some women’s ambivalence to their household economy, others proudly recalled their own or their female family member’s contributions to the war effort. Sarah Frazier described her grandmother’s pains: “All the cloth and linen that my grandfather wore during the war were spun at home, most of it by her own hands. All the clothing of the family, (and it was not a small one) during this time was made at home except weaving.” Moreover, while men of the family were off at war, Frazier’s grandmother attended to “all the business of every kind . . . [the] farm, iron works, and domestic matters” Indeed, not only had Sarah’s grandmother produced clothing for her large family at home, rather than buying imported British manufactured cloth, but in addition to these already arduous tasks she also assumed all the responsibilities which had normally been fulfilled by the family’s menfolk. In a similar fashion, Sarah Logan Fisher

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93 *Jemima Condict*, April 21, 1779.
proudly told her diary that she had spent the “morning at home cutting out four shirts for my Tommy.” 94

In addition, women actively participated in political demonstrations and thereby the public realm, often through their gendered connection to consumption. Throughout the war, open hostility to British fashion continued to serve as a means for mobilizing civilian enthusiasms and of offering a target for civilian anger. When the patriots recaptured Philadelphia in 1778, they celebrated the Fourth of July with understandable enthusiasm. Among their displays, Elizabeth Drinker reported, was “a very high Head dress . . . exhibited through the streets this afternoon on a very dirty woman with a mob after her, with Drums & c. by way of ridiculing that very ridiculous fashion.” Of course women had been participants in crowds before the Revolution, but the war intruded into the family economy and gave more obvious and more frequent opportunity for the enforcement of consumption codes and for the display of more aggressive and active political behavior by women.95

In addition to protests, women for the first time actively solicited funds for the war effort. The best-known organized political action by American women is the campaign of the female patriots of Philadelphia to collect funds for Washington’s troops. Organized and led by Esther De Berdt Reed and Benjamin

94 [Sarah Frazier], “A Reminiscence,” PMHB 25 (1922), 56. One must be cautious however to note that this was written after the fact, with the passing of time tending to distort accuracy and well as inducing nostalgia in remembrances; [Sarah Logan Fisher], “A Diary of Trifling Occurences,” PMHB 82 (1958), 411-65, June 23, 1777.

Franklin’s daughter, Sarah Franklin Bache, the campaign gained a great deal of contemporary publicity because its leadership encompassed “the best ladies” of the patriot side. As one participant recounted, “Instead of waiting for the Donations being sent the ladies of each ward go from door to door and collect them I am one of those honored with this business. Yesterday we began our tour of duty and had the satisfaction of being very successful.” By July 4, 1779, Esther Reed wrote to George Washington that “the subscription set on foot by the ladies of this City for the use of the soldiery” had resulted in some three thousand dollars, albeit in continental monies. Ultimately, these women used the money to purchase linen for shirts, which they sewed themselves, in order to provide much needed clothing to the soldiers. By December, they had forwarded Washington 2,200 shirts, with the wish that they “be worn with as much pleasure as they had been made.” For all its limits, this call to action was a novel formulation. Western political theory had provided no context in which women might comfortably think of themselves as political beings. The major theorists of the Enlightenment, the Whig Commonwealth, and the republican revolution had not explored the possibility of including women as part of the people. 96 Here, middle and upper class women explored their roles as political actors through their roles as consumers and producers of consumables.

Attempting to duplicate their effort, New Jersey women organized a similar fund-raising drive, which was used to provide stockings for the New Jersey Troops. They had published a broadside advertising their campaign, entitled “The Sentiments of a Lady in New Jersey,” which stated that New Jersey women desired to emulate “the noble example of their patriotic sisters of

96 Kerber, 99, 102-105.
Pennsylvania” by raising the same “patriotic feelings and sentiments ... particularly manifested by the Ladies of Philadelphia in their liberal contributions of money towards rendering the situation of the soldiery of the continental army more convenient and comfortable.” In the Pennsylvanian broadside, “Sentiments of an American Woman,” the women had more fully expounded upon their efforts: “The time has arrived to display the same sentiments which animated us at the beginning of the Revolution, when we renounced the use of teas...we placed former necessaries in the rank of superfluities, when our liberty was interested.” In addition, their “republican and laborious hands spun the flax, prepared the linen extended for the use of soldiers; when [as] exiles and fugitives we supported with courage all evils which are the concomitants of war.”97 Thus, women framed their participation with consumer goods and home manufactures in lieu of consumption of British imports.

The version of female patriotism described in women’s broadsides is not quite as bland as male depictions of female patriotism, which described female virtue as completely passive (i.e., to sacrifice luxuries, to give up husbands). In contrast, the female broadside variant was somewhat more assertive. While it continued to praise sacrifice, women sought to actively bring politics within the domestic circle and found ways to make it relevant to the conditions of daily living through commodities. 98

Women’s benevolent activities through consumer goods also took place on a more individual basis. For instance, some women collected old clothing for the army. During the dreadful Valley Forge winter of 1777-1778, Mary Frazier of

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97 New Jersey Gazette, July 12, 1780.  
98 Kerber, 107.
Chester County, Pennsylvania, rode "day after day collecting from neighbors far and near, whatever they could spare for the comfort of the destitute soldier, the blankets, yarn and half worn clothing thus obtained she brought to her own house, where they could be patched, and darned, and made comfortable to wear...sometimes sitting up half the night, sometimes all, to get clothing ready. Then, with it, and whatever could be obtained for food," she made a much-repeated journey to the camp. In a similar fashion, despite her loyalist leanings, Elizabeth Drinker sent consumer goods to aid patriot soldiers in Philadelphia. For example, she sent her servants one afternoon "in the rain... with a jug of wine-whey and a tea kettle of coffee for the wounded men." A little more than a week later these same servants went "with coffee and whey for [the] soldiers."

These recordings serve to confirm Jean Soderlund’s and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s findings that the colonial period did not constitute merely a "static backdrop" for women’s benevolent activities during the nineteenth century. 99 To the contrary, through their connection to consumerism, women often acted benevolently within the public realm, individually or in the aggregate, during the Revolutionary era.

Another way in which diverse women acted (whether by force or choice) within the public realm was in their important role as protectors of family property, which often involved household consumer goods. Women’s diaries during the revolutionary period are replete with notations of property lost. Indeed, they not only noted their own property losses, but also of family, friends and community members. Such property deprivations came about in a variety of ways: through theft; confiscation by the government to pay taxes, to support the

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99 Ibid., 43; [Sarah Frazier], “A Reminiscence,” 55, ED, October 9, 1777, Oct. 18, 1777; Soderlund, “Women’s Authority;” Ulrich, Good Wives.
army, or as part of Loyalist property; or through war protest.

On an involuntary basis, one of the unfortunate ways women with Loyalist husbands experienced the war was through the confiscation of their family property, although they actively sought to retain as much of that property as they possibly could. For instance, Grace Growden Galloway’s diary during the Revolution abounds with references to the powerful effect the confiscation of her property wrought upon her, when she was ejected from her home by the republican authorities because her husband was deemed a loyalist. On August 24th, 1779, Galloway records that her neighbor came home after the sale of her estate and “...said they bid too high for Me to get any of My Estate,” although her friends had appeared on her behalf at the sale. Likewise, Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson’s property, Graeme Park, was seized as loyalist property because her husband served with the British during the Revolution. It took her two years aided by the influence of old friends and a special act of the Assembly in 1781 to reacquire her inheritance from her father; most of the contents of her house except for a portion which she had been allowed to keep on “loan” had been sold earlier as loyalist goods.” 100 These incidences demonstrate how women sought to retain their goods, through the help of friends.

In her study of female loyalists, Mary Beth Norton found that women delineated household and consumer goods in their petitions in great detail, starkly in contrast to men. She argues that the common contention that colonial men functioned as the theoretical and legal heads of household and thereby frequently assumed a large share of domestic responsibilities, may be more tenuous than

100 Raymond C. Werner. ed., Diary of Grace Growden Galloway,” 58 *PMHB* (1934), 152-189; Slotten, “Poet in Athens,” 266.
commonly thought. To the contrary, she finds that men possessed little conception of the value of their own household consumer goods. According to Norton, if men has been deeply involved in running their households--in keeping accounts and making purchases, even if not doing day-to day chores--they should have described household furnishings and goods in much the same detail as their wives utilized. Just as female claimants were unable to delineate their husbands’ business dealings accurately, so men separated from their wives--regardless of their social status--failed to submit specific lists of lost household items like furniture, dishes, or kitchen utensils. One such refugee observed to the commission in 1788, that his household furniture “consists of a variety of articles, at this distance of time I cannot sufficiently recollect them so as to fix a value on them to the satisfaction of my mind.” In Norton’s estimation, it is impossible to imagine a loyalist woman making a comparable statement. For her, what to a man was simply a “Variety of Articles” resolved itself into such familiar and cherished objects as “1 Complete set blue and white Tea and Table China,” or “a Large new Goose feather Bed, bolster Pillows and Bedstead,” or “1 Japan Tea Board.” Moreover, whereas Norton found that men usually noted losses of clothing in a general way, by listing a single undifferentiated sum, women frequently made claims for specific articles of jewelry and apparel. For example, one Philadelphia woman claimed that she had lost to rebel plunderers a “Long Scarlet Cloak” and a “Velvet Muff and Tippet,” in addition to “One Pair of Earrings French Paste set in Gold and “One Gold Broach with a small diamond Top.” 101

According to Norton, the significance of such lists lies not only in the fact that they indicate what kinds of property the claimants knew well enough to describe accurately and in detail, but also in the insight they provide into the possessions claimants thought were sufficiently important to mention individually. To men, furniture, dishes and clothing could be easily lumped together under general headings; to women, such possessions had to be carefully enumerated and described. Norton surmises, that in the end, all of the evidence that can be drawn from the loyalist claims points to the conclusion that the lives of the vast majority of women in the Revolutionary era revolved around their immediate households to a notable degree.\(^\text{102}\) By contrast, in this study their significance lies in the importance of consumer possessions within those households to women. In fact, women’s knowledge of the value of such items may denote their role in making the decision to purchase them. It also suggests yet again that one of the important ways in which women thought about and experienced the war was through the vehicle of consumer items.

Another way by which only some items, rather than entire estates were confiscated, is revealed by Elizabeth Drinker’s diary. She notes on June 15, 1779, that “George Pickering came this afternoon for the Non-association fine . . . he took a Looking-glass worth between 40 and 50 . . . [shillings], 6 new-fashioned pewter plates and 3 quart pewter basin, little or nothing the worse for wear.” Later that same year, she recalls that they “came to seize for the Continental Tax . . . they took from us, one walnut dining table, one mahogany tea table, 6 handsome walnut chairs, open backs with crow feet and a shell sconce

\(^{102}\text{Ibid.}\) 77
Looking-Glass, and two large pewter Dishes. These notations of Elizabeth Drinker demonstrate not only that she was cognizant of the value of the items taken, but also could describe them in minute detail.

The government also confiscated consumer goods from the civilian populace for use by the military. Sarah Logan Fisher records that “An order came out today from the Board of War for men to go round the city & examine what salt provision, rum, sugar, molasses, coffee & c. each family had, & whatever they had more than sufficient for two or three weeks’ use was to be taken from them & applied to the use of the army, as they apprehended some of the inhabitants had stored up provisions for Lord Howe.”

In addition, the military from both sides of the Atlantic also plundered for goods when marching through the states, with women at home doing their best to protect their property for their families. Margaret Morris, for instance, recorded that she had heard from a friend from town that British army was coming and she should, “put all things of gold & silver out of their way--& all linen too, or you’ll lose it.” At first, Morris discounted her friend’s advice, responding that the British “pillaged none but the Rebels--&we were not such, we had taken no part against them. . . .” She records that her friend’s reaction was that her neutrality “signified nothing” and that “we should lose all” notwithstanding it. Moreover, in Eliza Farmer’s 1783 letter to her nephew she relates the “first of our many troubles” when they were warned that the army was “coming to Philadelphia and that the soldiers were to have three days plunder which put everybody into such a

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103 ED, June 15, 1779, Sept. 14, 1779. Since some Quakers refused to pay taxes for war, so the patriot government seized portions of their personal property instead.
104 SLF, April 13, 1777.
terror & confusion that happy was they who could get wagons to carry off their families and effects.” She lamented that it was four days before they could get a wagon, “there was so many wanted”, but once they did, she recounted that “we took our clothes with beds & bedding and as much as we could stow in the wagon to have room to sit in it with an old man on horseback to attend us in this plight.”

Female records of their property losses further hold important social implications. Indeed, women often recorded the property deprivations of their friends, neighbors or acquaintances. For instance, Elizabeth Drinker mentioned that her neighbors had been “plundered at their country house lately, of all the valuable furniture, provisions, coach, chariot, horses, 8 or 10 Negroes & c. to a great amount.” On another occasion, she noted that her friend “Baker has been robbed of some of his wife’s clothes.” On yet another she penned that “Isaac Catheral’s shop was robbed, last seventh day Night, of goods amounting to 100 k in value.” Drinker recorded these losses similarly to her own, when her daughters discovered that “they missed 6 silk gowns, all nearly as good as new, which had been taken out of the drawer in the blue room.” Such recorded statements seem to reveal that many women identified with others’ losses during the war and deemed them as salient as their own.

Women also confronted property destruction during the war, particularly Quakers due to their pacifist stance on the Revolution. Elizabeth Drinker, for instance, records that “It being the Anniversary of Independence candles were too

105 Margaret Morris, December 20, 1776; Eliza Farmer to nephew Jack December 4, 1783, Eliza Farmer Letterbook, HSP.
106 ED Dec. 6, 1777, Dec. 15, 1777, 264, May 9, 1778, October 2, 1781.
scarce and dear, for Illuminations which perhaps saved some of our windows.” Glass for windows constituted an expensive consumer item, and hence, their destruction came at a dear price for Quakers. Likewise, Sarah Logan Fisher scribed that “This being the anniversary of the declaration of independence ... in the evening were illuminations, & those people’s windows were broken who put no candles in. We had 15 broken, N[ighbor] Waln 14, T. Wharton a good many more, & Uncle Logan had 50 cracked and broken, & all this for joy of having gained our liberty.” 107 Not only does she note the losses of her neighbors and relatives in conjunction with her own, but lends an ironic twist to her narrative of the day’s passing in her telling statement “all this for joy of having gained our liberty.” The ideal of liberty, therefore, may have rung hollow for Quakers who wished to remain neutral during the rebellion.

Social implications of the Revolution for Women’s Consumerism:

On one hand, consumerism as a normal element in women’s lives continued even in the face of the exigencies of war, along with such activities as visiting, shopping and tea drinking. If one reads only select portions of women’s writings during the war in isolation of the passages describing the war’s effects, one would think the Revolution was not being waged outside of these women’s neighborhoods. In fact, women may have attempted to maintain some semblance of normality in their lives when their world was being turned upside down. On the other hand, however, women’s consumer experience was profoundly informed by the extraordinary changes wrought by the Revolution.

107 ED, July 4, 1778; SLF July 4, 1777.
Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of war, it is clear from women’s writings that consuming of foreign imports still went on in an albeit altered fashion. Family purchasing networks assumed an amplified significance with women confronted with the scarcity of consumer goods, like sugar and tea, which had come to be deemed essentials. Women depended on family, friends and community members to an even greater degree in order to cope with the war’s effects upon their lives. However, some things remained largely the same, such as the importance of consumerism to women in their daily experiences, even during the Revolutionary crisis.

According to scholar Kathryn Derounian, Deborah Norris’ adolescent letters to her friend Sarah Wister illustrate that she conformed to the feminine stereotype because she maintained much of her normal equilibrium during the war with rounds of social calls, letter writings, and tea parties. She remarked in one letter after detailing her outfit of imported cloth worn to the hill meeting, including her “new bonnet and gloves,” that she and Sally had thought ourselves tolerably nice, till fate directed Mrs. Logan to a seat near us, she was arrayed in bridal finery, and looked most elegantly in her white mantua.” Not only does this letter denote what Deborah believed Sarah would find interesting, but it also illustrates how women described their physical appearance by consumer goods they wore, including new items and imported goods even during war-time. Moreover, in her letter of early April 1778, Deborah not only noted clothes of their mutual friends, but also how they expressed their self-identities through that apparel. She writes that “Our friend S. Jones looks very genteel in her new dress the first time I saw her metamorphosed.”

Derounian, “Deborah Norris,” 511, August 2, 1779. Sarah (Sally)
into what consumer goods meant for adolescent girls, who envisioned grown-up women’s clothes as altering their appearance to such a degree as to turn them into the image of a fully-matured woman.

The normal routines of shopping for household necessities and services continued, rather than being fully eclipsed by the war. Indeed, Elizabeth Drinker records in 1777, that “Amos Taylor measured our sons for a suit of clothes each.” She still continued to call at different shops. For instance, on February 25, 1779, she “called at 2 or 3 shops.” Several months later she recorded that she “went this morning to shop with Nancy.” In her normal manner of recording the day’s events prior to the war, she also mentioned other family members and friend’s shopping. Likewise, she records that “sister went down to Abels, for a piece of linen and some Tea.”

Similarly, despite tea boycotts and non-consumption efforts, many women continued to enjoy the social activity of tea drinking, recording with whom and where they partook of tea. In her diary, Sarah Eve records drinking social tea regularly between 1772 and 1773. She notes she “drank tea with [her friend] Polly,” on December 19, 1772. Rachel Wilson recorded that she “drank tea at Cousin’s Whitwell.” Elizabeth Drinker told her diary that she had come “in good time for a dish of Tea to Jos. Smiths.” Likewise, Anna Rawle related to her mother in correspondence that, “Yesterday, Peggy and I drank tea up Market Street, at our old habitation.” Sarah Logan Fisher recorded that she “Drank tea at

Jones, youngest daughter of Owen and Susannah (Evans) Jones, was technically Sarah Wister’s aunt. However, their closeness in age made Sally Jones, Deborah Norris, and Sarah Wister.

109 ED October 13, 1777, February 25, 1779, June 14, 1779, August 19, 1778. It should be noted that Drinker, like many other pacifists or loyalists, did not give up imported British tea.
Sammy Smith's with several agreeable friends." She also recorded when she
drank tea alone, as an unusual event. "Afternoon my Tommy and self drank tea
alone." Sarah Eve, as well as other women diarists, recorded that on February
21, 1773 she "drank tea alone." Tea drinking also served as symbol of a
person's return to society after the occurrence of a traumatic event. Sally Logan
Fisher recorded that "Mammy drank tea with us for the first time since my dear
daddy's death."\(^{110}\)

Women continued to identify similarities when travelling in the context of
consumer items like tea. In Mrs. Mary Dewey's Journal, regarding her trip from
Philadelphia to Pittsburgh recounted calling at a house which "appeared more like
Philadelphia than any I have seen since I left that place." Such a statement shows
the recognition of similarities when travelling by consumer goods.\(^{111}\) Similarly
women continued to conduct business relations over tea. Elizabeth Drinker, for
instance, notes when "Doctor Redman drank tea with us," on May 8, 1779.
Grace Galloway recorded that her "lawyer drank tea with me & told me they
cou'd sell Mr. G[alloway's] right which would empower them to sell the wood,"
on the real property.\(^{112}\)

Many women also continued to use tea as demarcation of time, indicating
that it remained a part of the daily rhythms of their lives. Sally Logan Fisher
recorded: "after tea went with my Tommy to see Nicholas and Sally Waln."

\(^{110}\) Anna Rawle to Mrs. Rebeca Shoemaker, Sept. 25, 1780, The
Shoemaker Papers, HSP.
SLF, December 19, 1772, Dec. 1, 1776; Sarah Eve Diary, June 22, 1777, Rachel
Wilson, QC, HC; ED Sept. 16, 1776, July 3, 1777.
\(^{111}\) Mrs. Mary Dewey, October 13, 1782; October 23, 1782, October 22,
1782.
\(^{112}\) ED May 8, 1779, GGG August 22, 1779.

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Likewise, Elizabeth Drinker records that “spent the time till after Tea there.” Sarah Eve also utilized tea as a time measurement of the day, much like breakfast or dinner, by noting that “we got to Chester about 4 o’clock, after we had tea.”

Likewise, books continued to play important roles in women’s lives during the revolutionary period. Their remarks concerning reading indicate that they engaged with the text, formed opinions of books, and related their own beliefs to the judgments they rendered upon what they had read. Sarah Eve recorded in her diary some of her reading and her opinion of it. For instance, she noted that she “read the fashionable lover a prodigious fine comedy wrote by Cumberland.”

From her friend Hannah Griffitts, Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson received the following letter indicative of intellectual judgments women made concerning books: “I have sent you the Books & if they afford you any entertainment it will make me happy. I was fearful of sending them lest you should condemn my taste in reading and as I really know no person in whose esteem it would afford my greater pleasure to stand high than yours.” After discussing the importance of her friend’s opinion, Griffitts remarked “I would not deprive you of the pleasure of reading the play if it gives you as much as it did me you will not regret the time--the other books are merely entertaining but I leave them to speak for themselves.”

The important social element of reading out loud to groups also continued to entertain and edify groups of family relations and friends. Elizabeth Drinker recorded that her uncle “read the great part of Dr. Smith’s Journal to us” on

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113 SLF, Jan. 19, 1777; ED April 1, 1779; SE, October 27, 1773.
114 SE, April 4, 1773; Hannah Griffitts to Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, December 4, 1775, Gratz Collection, HSP.
October 17, 1777. Likewise, Sally Logan Fisher noted that “Tommy reading to me in the afternoon & evening in Lyttelton’s History of England.”

Women’s medical care of family and friends also remained much the same, with preparing their own remedies with consumer goods or buying manufactured medicines themselves. For instance, Elizabeth Drinker “called at Townsends Speakmans for medicines,” on July 6, 1778. However, she also dispensed her own remedies, for in an entry of 1780 Elizabeth records that she gave her ailing son, Henry “some rum and water to drink.” Similarly, Elizabeth Graeme received the following medical advice from a friend: “please take one paper of the powder every morning and evening in a small tea cup full of flax seed, Tea well-sweetened with molasses, and wash it down with a cup of the same or any herb tea you like . . . or a teaspoon full of brown sugar or molasses.”

Nevertheless, the Revolution brought changes in routine ranging from the mundane to the more dramatic. One of the more mundane effects was that coffee drinking appeared with greater frequency, appearing to serve as a substitute for British tea. For instance, in January 1778, Elizabeth Drinker recorded coffee consumption as many times as she recorded drinking tea. This may not appear unusual at first glance, however, throughout the earlier part of her diary up to that year, coffee drinking had been a rarity. In Martha Allinson’s letter to her husband she relates that she had “spent the afternoon with Rachal Collins & drank a dish of coffee with her.” In a similar vein, Sally Logan Fisher records that “In the

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116 Ibid., July 6, 1778; Aug 30, 1780; Annis Boudinot Stockton to Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, undated, Gratz collection, HSP.
afternoon [I] drank coffee at Mammy’s with my Tommy” 117

On perhaps a more dramatic level, tea drinking also became interlaced with war concerns in women’s writings. In 1781, for example, Elizabeth Drinker thankfully disclosed that she and her sister had “got home safe to tea,” on the ferry before nightfall. Evidently, women also received news of the war over tea. Sally Fisher told her diary, “Sammy Fisher drank tea with us, but told us nothing new except that it is supposed this heavy snow will prevent General Howe’s moving his army so soon as many people wished for”118

The social ritual of tea also took on greater significance as a means of solace for women afflicted by the war, with women gathering around each other in what we would now label a mutual support group. Sally Fisher, whose husband had been arrested along with other Quakers earlier that year by the patriots, confided to her diary that she “drank tea at Sister Hetty’s with Coz. Polly Pleasants & several other suffering sisters.” On another occasion she thankfully noticed herself “rather in better spirits today owing perhaps in some measure to the good company that shared tea with me.” Similarly, Elizabeth Drinker’s prewar life had a large share of social calls and visits between friends, but during the dark days of her husband’s arrest and the British occupation, perhaps six women gathered around her every day.119

In addition, while some aspects of family purchasing networks remained constant, others took on greater significance with the scarcity of consumer goods owing to war-time conditions. On January 3, 1781, Betsey Galloway writes “we

117 ED Jan. 17, 1778; Martha Allinson to Samuel Allinson, April 2, 1775, Allinson Family Papers, Box 1, # 968, QC, HC; SLF, Jan. 19, 1777.
118 ED April 17, 1781; SLF, Feb. 24, 1777.
119 SLF Sept. 24, 1777; ED Oct. 9, 1777.
sent you by vessel that sailed a few days past (a long list of items, which included) 7 yards of printed cotton and 1 silk handkerchief for Nurse . . . tell Nurse papa says her gown is elegant. I only intended it to keep her warm. . . .”

Ann Rawle writes to her mother, “I can inform my dear Mammy that our very elegant gowns are received...They are prettier than anything I have seen of the kind . . . none of the shoes are come. Uncle V’s spectacles are also delivered.”

These statements reveal that to some degree at least, family purchasing networks remained much the same, with family members purchasing items for both their immediate and extended family relations.

Another way by which family exchanges of consumables retained a modicum of ordinariness was through member’s expressions of gratitude and sentimentality upon receiving them as gifts. For instance, in a letter Ann Rawle writes to her mother, “ Aunt B said one day . . . she would like Sally to knit daddy a purse, as he had sent her a pair of gloves, and she wanted to show her gratitude for them.” In another letter received from her mother, Mrs. Shoemaker stated, “In this little parcel is 2 or 3 trifles, which are hardly wont sending--If my daughters will accept them as tokens of my remembrance I shall be glad.”

On the other hand, however, family networks assumed a greater urgency, with families and friends now depending upon one another for essential consumables. Consequently, the gratitude and sentimentality engendered by the

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120 Betsey Galloway to Grace Galloway, Jan. 3, 1781; Shoemaker Papers, HSP, Nov. 4, 1780.
121 Ibid., Given the dates of these writings, however, the fact that the war had moved to the South may have instead caused family purchasing networks to resume rather than remain much the same.
122 Mrs. Shoemaker to daughter Anne Rawle, HSP, Jan. 20, 1781, September 22, 1780.
giving of such items also became amplified in women's writings. Grace Galloway articulates to her daughter, "The gauze came to hand but the silk is not yet come. I am delighted with your present, everything from you I keep like Sacred Relicks even to the paper and pins, which makes the fastens for the parcel." Several months later she pens, "I thank you dear for your care of me & I value everything that comes from you as holy pilgrims value their choicest relics, should I lose those things it will put my philosophy at a stand." 123

In addition, this sense of urgency is expressed in the following statement. In her letter of September 1778, Betsey Galloway cautions her mother "for God's sake do not fall a sacrifice to too strict economy. We sent some things out in spring which I hope you have received, among them was 20 yards of satin for a gown and coat." Almost a year later, she writes "I fear you go with out things that are necessary for you, pray do not deprive yourself of the comforts of life." Grace Galloway's husband also expressed concern over his wife in language with a consumer cast to them. He wrote "We hear there is a scarcity of everything in Philadelphia. Let me entreat you to want for nothing, necessary to your comfort during our -- unfortunate separation." 124

The effect of war upon sending items was also evidenced by women's writings. In 1781, for instance, Mrs. Shoemaker advised her daughter that "it is very difficult to meet with a person going that is suitable to send by as they are so strict in searching for goods in the Jerseys. I have not yet found a proper conveyance for Aunt H's things, but shall keep a lookout." A little less than a

month later, she wrote to her daughter that "I am anxious to send you what little matters I can without much risk, for I think every kind of goods will be very scarce & high in Philadelphia. Finally, on another date, Shoemaker added the note that she hoped "to send a pound of tea" for other family members, but she was "afraid to venture it all by the same person." 125

Perhaps the most significant consumer change accompanying the war was the scarcity of consumables that women deemed essential for the maintenance of their families. In particular, women with absent husbands assumed great responsibilities to provide essentials for their children. Sally Fisher expressed this most poignantly in her recording for November 1, 1777: "I have to think & provide everything for my family, at a time when it is so difficult to provide anything at any price, & cares of many kinds to engage my attention." Nevertheless, despite this profound need, women quite often dismissed their own needs to help one another, sharing scarce provisions, while taking sometimes great risks to deliver aid to family and friends in need. The courageous aid between friends and neighbors, in spite of the very human fear to hoard for themselves and their own families, exhibits vast generosity and heroism which are not normally considered part of the narrative of the Revolution where bravery is largely limited to men or to women assuming male roles. 126

Indeed, Sally Fisher wrote with great relief how her concern was alleviated through the assistance of friends. In 1777, she recorded the depth of dread raised by scarcity: "feeling & being very much discouraged at the prospect

125 Mrs. Shoemaker to daughter Anne Rawle, HSP, March 28, 1781, April 19, 1781, April 12, 1781.
126 SLF Oct. 23, 1777, p. 454.
of want, & having lost our cow & no milk scarcely to be procured, not any butter
or eggs at any price & the prospect of my little children having nothing to eat but
salt & biscuit, & but very little of that, sunk almost below hope.” However, the
same entry in which she confided her fear, she expressed her elation upon
receiving aid from a friend: “I say after being in this situation, Neida Preston
came almost at the risk of her life (she living several miles without the lines) with
3 pounds of butter & 3 dozen eggs, and some salt and sugar. My heart revived at
the sight of them, & I could not but think it was an encouragement to me not to
distrust the care & kindness of Providence.” On another occasion she notes that
“in the evening Henry [came] from Stenton & brought me 3 large jars of honey
& a pot of butter which was very acceptable indeed, & if we can be favored to
get flour, bread & honey will be an excellent substitute for many other things that
we have been used to.”

Sally Fisher also noted her aid to other women. In December of 1777,
she writes “Cousin Polly Pleasants sent to borrow our chaise to go out to John
Shoemaker’s to endeavor to get some flour & c. for her large family of little
children. A very great scarcity of that & everything else in town.” Fisher’s
remarks demonstrate that even when they were given help by others, they did not
keep all it for themselves but instead shared with relatives and friends. “Had in
the evening three barrels of flour from John Shoemaker, one of which I spared
Sister Fisher.” In a similar vein, following Margaret Morris’s dispensing of
medicine and health care to a poor soldier’s wife, he returned the favor by asking
if she wanted him to carry anything to family she had in Philadelphia. Upon
sending some consumables, the soldier, whom Morris gave the sobriquet “our

127 Ibid., Nov. 1, 1777, Dec. 8, 1777.
honest Gondola Man," returned with "a letter—a bushel of Salt—a Jug of molasses—a bag of Rice—some tea coffee & Sugar & some Cloth for a Coat for my poor boys—all sent by my kind sisters." She recorded their great gratitude: "how did our hearts & eyes overflow with love to them & thanks to our heavenly Father for such seasonable supplies." In addition, so that we "may...never forget it—being now so rich, we thought it our duty to hand out a little to the poor—around us—who were mourning for want of salt—so we divided the bushel—& gave a pint to every poor person that came for it, & had great plenty for our own use." 128

Thus, women appeared to have been generous to others in need, even in the face of limited consumer resources for themselves and their families.

**Economic Implications of the Revolution for Women's Consumerism**

Along with the scarcity of consumable items, women carefully chronicled the economic effects of the war upon their daily lives. For instance, they meticulously noted the prices of what they apparently deemed the most important consumables affected. Sally Logan Fisher recorded on May 11, 1777 that "tea, a very scarce article, sold at 14 shillings a pound, loaf sugar 8 shillings a pound, brown sugar 12 shillings per hundred, coffee 6 shillings per pound, chocolate 5 shillings per pound...one instance among many of the wretched situation we are in." She indicates that this was but "one instance" of the terrible circumstances of the war, which affected her directly in her daily living patterns. This illustrates how abstract ideas and decisions far distant from the powers that

128 SLF, Dec. 6, 1777; Feb. 21, 1778; MHM June 14, 1777.
be in revolutionary America crystallized in the daily lives of women in the prices for commodities. On yet another occasion, she notes that “Bohea tea 2/15 per pound, green tea 16/ pound, loaf sugar 10 s[hillings] per pound, chocolate 6 s[hillings] per pound, coffee 6 s[hillings] per pound, & everything else in proportion, common linen 38 shillings per yard, a house cloth a dollar per yard . . . Similarly, Elizabeth Drinker accounted that “Chocolate 4/6--Brown Sugar 6/-candles 2/6” 129 Since women were often responsible for supplying the household needs of their families, such exorbitant prices deeply informed their daily activities during the Revolutionary war.

Astronomical prices for goods of daily living also caused women of the “better sorts” to think in terms of concern for others in lower economic positions. Sally Logan Fisher recounts that “Not any wood to be had at any price. Many families of the first rank have not half a cord in the world & know not where to get more.” She further sadly relates that “such is the lamentable prospect of distress that the rich have not for themselves, nor have they it in their power to relieve the cries of the poor, for money will not procure the necessaries of life.” On another she told her diary that another problem which hurt the poor with purchasing required consumables was that “no money likely at present to pass but hard money, & few, very few, families of the first rank have much of that & the poorer kind of people are likely to be in a more distressed situation.” Thus, the economic distresses wrought by war enabled women to identify with other social groups to a greater degree than they might have under normal circumstances. 130

On the other hand, however, ordinary elements of family and friends

129. Ibid., May 11, 1777, July 24, 1777; ED November 12, 1777.
130. SLF Dec. 6, 1777; Oct. 23, 1777.
purchasing networks retained even during the war at different moments and involved less essential items. Nevertheless, women were still concerned with the cost of the items they bought for themselves and through means of others' aid. On another occasion, Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson's attorney wrote to her, “I have purchased two quire of the best common folio paper, at 3/3 to quire. I shall send it by the first opportunity.” In a similar letter from Hannah Pemberton to her sister Sarah she queried, “H. Wharton told me her brother Jones, has some black satin, fit for bonnets, I should be glad if thee would look at it, and get me one if it be at a fair price.”

Women continued to employ purchasing strategies in order to obtain the optimal prices for goods. Mrs. Shoemaker wrote to her daughter requesting that she send her “word of the price of Manchesters, they are 3/4 pounds here.” On another date she scried the following directions to her daughter: “Do let me know what you give for chintz & contrive to send me a little pattern. I have bought one piece & intended another ready for you in spring, but if you can buy as pretty & cheap, there will be no risk in doing it there.”

131 J. Abercombie to Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, June 20, 1780, Gratz Collection, HSP; Hannah Pemberton to Sarah Pemberton, June 17, 1780, Sept. 7, 1780, Pemberton Papers, HSP.

132 Mrs. Rebecca Shoemaker to Ann Rawle Clifford and Margaret Rawle Wharton, August 21, 1780, Sept. 5, 1780, The Shoemaker Papers, HSP. Mrs. Rebecca Shoemaker was the daughter of Edward Warner of Philadelphia and Anna Coleman. In 1756, she married first, Francis Rawle of Philadelphia, merchant, who died June 7, 1761, leaving three children, one, Anna Rawle who married in 1783 John Clifford of Philadelphia, merchant, and Margaret (Peggy) Rawle, who married in 1786, Isaac Wharton of Philadelphia, merchant. They were deemed a Loyalist family during the Revolution, however, they were Quakers and hence they may have been attributed Loyalist due to their pacifism; Letter of Mrs. Rebecca Shoemaker to her daughters, Jan. 20, 1781, The
Likewise, women often kept accounts of goods and services purchased for their households. Elizabeth Drinker listed portions of these accounts in her diary. For the year 1776 she recorded what she paid for a teapot, silk, coffee, and a bottle of snuff. She further recorded the financial outlay she made for doctor’s services and medicines for the family. Margaret Hill Morris also assiduously recorded an account of her family expenses during the Revolution. As a destitute widow with children, she felt even further obligation “to minute down every article,” because it was “not my own money I spend, but the gift of charity.” Accordingly, she did not want to be accused of “prodigality in the manner of laying out my small income, which I am well assured could not support such a family as mine, unless managed with economy” 133

Therefore, although the Revolution ushered in a myriad of changes in its wake, many elements of women’s daily lives remained constant, particularly the social enjoyment of consumption. Moreover, many altered circumstances of women’s lives induced them to assume new or greater responsibilities. However, as historians Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton emphasized, in regard to the segregation of female and male spheres, when women participated in boycotts, for instance, they simply made different decisions about purchases without moving “beyond the boundaries of the feminine sphere.” Women still remained largely circumscribed within the private, domestic sphere, whereas men acted freely within the public sphere of political citizenship and business. Indeed, the Revolution brought only modest change in women’s status or men’s attitudes

Shoemaker Papers, HSP.

133 MHM, 23.
towards them. 134 Men continued to view consumerism in relation to women in an unfavorable light. Male criticism gained greater urgency, however, due to the Revolutionary cause's dependence upon the curbing of British imports and encouragement of American manufacturing within the home. Women, nevertheless, generally continued to envision consumerism in a more favorable light as a vital part of their social existence. Although their conception of their role in consumerism may have become more complicated, particularly due to the sacrifices they were forced to make during the Revolution, they still envisioned and experienced the many benefits that consumer goods bestowed upon their own lives as well as upon those with whom they shared their days.

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Chapter 4
“A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”
1784-1800

During the post-Revolutionary period, the United States opened direct trade with other nations, which served to further increase the availability of various consumer goods. For instance, the popularity and availability of the Chinese export, porcelain, grew when Americans were at last free to engage in direct commerce with East Asia, even though porcelain had long been a part of China-trade cargoes to Europe and from there to America. As Eliza Farmer related in a 1785 letter to her nephew: “We have a great plenty of all sorts of goods and believe most of them as cheap as in London and a great deal at vendue for less than the prime cost.” In addition, other consumer goods became widely available, including magazines and books aimed at the female reading market, such as the treatise after which this chapter is entitled. Indeed, Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” constituted her generation’s most coherent statement of what women deserved and what they might become, and the first publication of its kind to be disseminated to such a widespread female reading population. 135

The primary national concern was the building of a new independent nation, which would unite the disparate states and their peoples and at the same instant preserve the republican promise of the Revolution itself. Notwithstanding

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135 Roth, “Tea-Drinking,” 451-452; Eliza Farmer to [her nephew] Jack [who was working for the East India Company in England], May 21, 1785, Eliza Farmer Letterbook, HSP.
the ideals of the Revolution, as Linda Kerber’s studies have shown, few men were prepared to agree that a wife and mother could also be an independent political being. Those who did believe that women could play a salient political role in the new nation, would have to persuade a hostile public that expressive political behavior by females did not threaten the traditional domestic domain. Such means came by way of adopting the ideals of what may be called “Republican Motherhood,” a banner under which a patriotic woman could unite her seemingly contradictory loyalties to the home and to the state.136

Since political theory of the age taught that a republic rested on the virtue of its citizens, American women would need to be educated in matters other than merely fashion and manners. A desire to explore the possibilities that republicanism now opened for women were articulated by luminaries like Benjamin Rush, Susannah Rowson, and Judith Sargent Murray. If the republic were to fulfill its generous claims for the liberty and competence of its denizens then the education of young women would prepare them to support themselves if the need arose rather than the single-mindedly pursuing an upwardly mobile marriage. In fact, the new periodicals flooding the market were full of attacks on fashion, taking it for an emblem of superficiality and dependence on the part of women. For instance, the *Philadelphia Lady’s Magazine* castigated a father who prepared his daughters merely for the marriage market: “You boast of having given your daughters an education that will enable them to ‘shine in the first circles’... they have just as much knowledge of dress as to defile their persons by an awkward imitation of every new fashion which appears.” Teaching young

girls to dress well was part of a broader message that their primary lifetime goal must only be that of marriage. The essay argued that the real danger of a lack of a republican education ensured that if his daughters were “placed in a situation of difficulty, they have neither a head to dictate, nor a hand to help in any domestic concern.” Thus, if women encountered any problems in their marriage, either through marital discord or the death of their spouse, they would be ill-prepared to deal with the consequences unless they were better educated.

In his “Thoughts Upon the Female Education,” Benjamin Rush similarly asserted that he had “sometimes been led to ascribe the invention of ridiculous and expensive fashions in female dress entirely to the gentlemen in order to divert ladies from improving their minds and thereby to secure a more arbitrary and unlimited authority over them.” He further advocated that female education should include bookkeeping, because women would expect to be “the stewards and guardians of their husbands’ property.” As he further pointed out, beauty and charm were at a premium in the marriage market; intelligence, good judgment and competencies (in short, the republican virtues) were unfortunately at a discount. The republic did not need fashion plates, but rather it needed citizens, women as well as men, with self-discipline and strong minds. The model republican woman would have to be educated so that she could be both capable and confident. She could readily ignore the vagaries of fashion; she was rational, benevolent, independent, and self-reliant. The stark contrast between the marriage-oriented advice and the education-oriented advice given to young girls concerning their service to the republic appeared all too obvious. To some individuals, the marriage market invariably operated to undermine the new
republic. Indeed, Rush deplored “the dependence for which women are uniformly educated,” for he pointed out that the unhappily married woman would quickly discover that she had “neither liberty nor property.” 138

Moreover, Linda Kerber asserts that “the vision of the Republican Mother” required women to be informed and virtuous citizens, in addition to their traditional responsibility for the maintenance of the household economy. She was to view the political realm with a rational eye, so that she would be able to guide her husband and children in making their way through it. In addition to being a mother, she had to be a teacher to her children, particularly to raise her sons to be good republicans. Therefore, those who shared this vision of the Republican Mother usually demanded improved education for women, a clearer acknowledgement of women’s economic contributions to their country, and a stronger political identification for women with the new Republic. 139

Social Implications of Consumerism for Women in the Early Republic

Overall, upper and middle class women’s perceptions of consumerism within their lives remained largely positive during the period of the early Republic. Despite the prescriptions of “Republican Motherhood,” female writings regarding the value of consumer goods within their social worlds appeared largely unaffected by the new ideology. Their worlds still revolved around the same social activities


of shopping, tea-drinking, reading, and taking care of their families that intimately involved consumer goods.

After the Revolution, women continued to shop to provide the necessities for their families while also enjoying this activity as a vital social outlet in their everyday lives. In a typical entry, Nancy Shippen told her diary that she “passed almost all this morning in shopping, & made several pretty purchases.” Similarly, on September 19, 1794, Elizabeth Drinker wrote that she “called at two shops for a little book and some cotton.” In the following year, Drinker recorded that she and her daughter Nancy Skyrin had gone on a shopping trip, during which time she had “purchased three glass mugs, one for each of my daughters.” Hence, family networks of purchasing were also carried forward, albeit without the urgency that attended many of these networks during the Revolution. On another occasion, Elizabeth noted that her husband had “set off around ten o’clock for Clearfield, with sundries for our children.” Nancy Shippen penned that her brother Tommy sent her a fashionable “balloon hat,” which he had forwarded through their Uncle, Arthur Lee. Nancy’s uncle enclosed a correspondence with the hat which stated “It is in my opinion -- an absolute fright -- but what is my opinion to the fashion -- a dear, fascinating word, that renders every thing charming.” It is clear, therefore, that women cherished relationships with families and friends through the means of consumer goods. 140

Tea drinking also continued to occupy a preeminent place in women’s

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140 Ann Head Warder Diary, QC, HC, 1786-1789 (hereinafter AW); Nancy Shippen: Her Journal Book, ed. Ethel Armes (Philadelphia, 1935), October 20, 1784 (hereinafter NS); ED Sept. 19, 1794, October 19, 1795; ED, August 15, 1795, NS, May 16, 1786.
lives. Indeed, tea served as the beverage of courtship as well as of marriage. During this period, foreign visitors like Ann Warder reported the Philadelphia custom of expressing good wishes to a newly married couple by paying them a personal visit soon after marriage. It was the duty of the bride to serve wine and punch to callers before noon and tea and wine in the afternoon. Bridal tea visits between female relations and friends were also customary. Warder noted on January 10, 1787, that she had “to prepare for drinking tea with the Bride Polly Griffith.” Likewise, Nancy Shippen wrote that she began to dress “for a Bride’s visit” after dinner. She described it as “a tedious employment this same dressing. It took me 3 hours at least, what a deal of time to be wasted! but custom & fashion must be attended to.” After making her visit Nancy recounted that “the Bride looked beautiful, & I judged from the looks of the Company towards me that I looked tolerable; I was dressed entirely in white except a suit of pink Beaus & had on a new Balloon Hat.” Finally, consumer goods also played an integral part in weddings. Elizabeth Drinker recorded on her son’s wedding day, December 11, 1794, that “A very plentiful and elegant dinner [was] well served after three o’clock, supper at nine, with tea.” It is quite clear then that at the end of the eighteenth century, consumer goods were firmly bound up in the process of tying the knot.\textsuperscript{141}

Women, however, recognized that excessive consumerism could lead to problems in their lives. For instance, Annis Boudinot Stockton, of New Jersey, through a verse she had penned cautioned her niece upon her marriage. In this verse, Annis warned that “there are lurking evils that do prove/ Under the name

\textsuperscript{141}Roth, “Tea-Drinking,” 445; AW, January 10, 1787; NS, October 20, 1784; ED, December 11, 1794.
of trifles, death to love/and from these trifles, all the jarring springs, /and trust me child, they're formidable things." One of these formidable things was a wife complaining to her husband about his inviting friends for her to entertain. The wife bemoaned the fact that "If I had the things to entertain genteel;/ And could but make my table look as well/ As Mrs. A. and Mrs. B can do;/ I'd be as fond of company as you." Annis surmised that while "a richer [tea] service bribes the feast, than suits his purse," may make your husband "jest" at first, inevitably it would "dampen convivial mirth, and poison the repast." She cautioned her niece against making such demands upon her husband for consumer goods that would not "suit his purse," because it would eventually cause problems in their relationship. 142 Although Annis recognized that women apparently rendered such claims in connection to their social status; or in other words, to make their tables "look as well as Mrs. A and Mrs. B can do," she envisioned the problems of marital discord as outweighing the social need for genteel accoutrements.

Sharing tea with family and friends continued to occupy a central place in women's daily lives. Sarah Cresson, for instance, indicated in her diary on March 6, 1795, that "unexpectedly this afternoon my dear cousins came and drank tea with us." In a similar fashion, Ann Warder noted that "at tea we had a good round party of the cousins." 143 Likewise, Rebecca Wright said that she "went to see a friend in the afternoon and drank tea," as a highlight of her day. Indeed, women still noted when they partook of tea alone, as an unusual

143 Diary of Sarah Cresson, March 6, 1795, QC, HC, 975 A; AW, June 7, 1786; Rebecca Wright, "Some Accounts of Rebecca Wright's Travels in Great Britain and Ireland, 1784-1786," QC, HC, n.d.; AW, HC., QC., June 10, 1786.
circumstance. Ann Warder, like other women diarists, recorded on June 10, 1786, that she had "no company at tea." More often than not, at least two or more family members and friends gathered at tea.

Women still utilized tea as a time reference throughout their writings, thereby attesting to its common presence. Ann Warder recorded that the poor weather while she was sailing "induced me to continue my berth till tea time." Elizabeth Drinker recorded that "no body dined her but the two Elizabeths—heavy rain about tea time." Nancy Shippen also treated the event of tea as a time reference in describing the events of her day. "After tea, I paid a short visit to Mrs. Stewart."144

Statistical evidence substantiates contemporary impressions of the centrality of tea-drinking in not only elite women's lives, but also those of the middling and lower ranks (Table 1).145 Judging from an examination of colonial probate records of Philadelphia women after 1780, three-quarters of the city women who left inventoried estates owned tea equipage. Those tea accoutrements could range from plain teapots, kettles, and cups to elaborately adorned tea trays, tables, cream pots, or complete sets of tea services. Less expensive tea items were often locally produced earthenware, while more costly equipage included imported china and mahogany tables and trays. In 1791, for instance, Susannah Cumming owned quite an array of tea accoutrements including tea pots, tea tongs, tea spoons, a cream pot, all made of silver, as well as complete set of tea china, a copper tea kettle, tea chest and mahogany tea table. In total, her consumer goods were valued at approximately 121 pounds of her estate of 141 pounds. In

144 AW, April 29, 1786; ED, March 15, 1799; NS, October 21, 1784.
145 See Appendix.
comparison, Margaret Hunt’s estate was valued at 52 pounds in 1780, with 17 pounds or approximately one-third of it laid out in consumer goods. She had a tea kettle, a silver cream jug, six teaspoons, a pair of tea tongs, and a tea table. Similarly, Mary Forrest in 1785 with a personal estate of 62 pounds, composed entirely of consumer goods, had eight silver tea spoons, a pair of silver tea tongs, a walnut tea table, and sundry chinaware. The many city women who owned tea equipage, did not possess merely one or two items, but rather a more complete tea service, with many of their tea items imported or made from expensive materials such as silver, china, or mahogany. Moreover, these women did not necessarily have to be part of the higher sort to participate in the tea-drinking culture, as they were able to afford at least some of its trappings with their relatively modest estates.

In addition, twenty-seven percent of these Philadelphia women made a specific bequest of tea equipage in their wills (Table 2). Mary Porter in 1795, for instance, left to “her dear daughter Mary Galloway five silver tea spoons and one silver cream jug” which were all marked with her name. By the same token, Hannah Elfreth provided that her “silver tea pot, marked with my maiden name” be given to her granddaughter and namesake in 1791. City women were more likely to grant tea accoutrements to their female relatives and friends rather than

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146 While silver could be produced locally as well, it still constituted an expensive material for production of consumer goods. Accordingly, city women were more likely to have silver tea implements than rural women due to greater availability in urban areas. Susannah Cumming (1791) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Margaret Hunt (1780) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Mary Forrest (1785) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP.

147 Mary Porter, (1795) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Hannah Elfreth (1791) Philadelphia Wills, HSP.
to males. Indeed, two-thirds of such bequests prior to 1780 and three-quarters after 1780 were made to women. Perhaps women believed that other females would cherish or make use of the tea equipage to a greater degree than males.

In contrast, women's estates from Northampton County, which was still considered a frontier region throughout the revolutionary period, yielded a similar incidence of ownership of tea implements as Philadelphia following the year 1780. The number of frontier women who owned tea equipage jumped from 27 percent to 78 percent after 1780. However, rural women's tea equipage still differed in quantity and quality from that of their urban counterparts (Table 3). Seventy-eight percent of Northampton women owned at least one tea item, compared to 75 percent in the Philadelphia sample after 1780. For instance, in 1798, Maria Warmkessel of Northampton owned a teapot and three tea dishes. Her estate was valued at 140 pounds, with consumer goods accounting for only one-fifth of her estate. Likewise, Barbara Betzel in 1793 had a teapot, out of her estate valued at 59 pounds, of which approximately one-sixth was in consumer wares. Indeed, this teapot was valued at merely nine pence, which suggests that it was most likely locally produced and was of an inexpensive material like earthenware.\textsuperscript{148} Moreover, only eight percent of them, compared to one quarter in Philadelphia, specifically bequeathed tea equipage to a loved one who were all females (Table 4). Anna Maria Franck, for example, bestowed some of her few tea implements, three tea cups and saucers, to a female friend in 1798. In a similar fashion, Barbara Fenstermacher in 1790 left her tea chest to her daughter,

\textsuperscript{148} Maria Warmkessel, (1798) Northampton County Inventories, RW; Barbara Betzel, (1793) Northampton County Inventories, RW.
Mary. Clearly, therefore, some rural women deemed their tea utensils worthy of particular mention in their wills.

As a native Englishwoman from London, Ann Warder revealed once again that when women encountered cultures distinct from their own, they often noted consumer behavior. In particular, she used her journal to record the American customs for the benefit to her sister in England, with many of the customs she recorded reflecting consumerism to a significant degree. Warder, for instance, often commented on the unusual "sociability" of her new acquaintances: "It is the custom to visit here more than with us [but] they destroy the social freedom of it by too much dressing." On another occasion, she noted how ornately Americans dressed "for not a woman has visited me but was elegant enough for a bride." She also criticized them for other points of disparity with Britain. She remarked about one family that "their dress was ugly though I doubt not, by themselves, reckoned smart, having such rolls as were used with us to be worn half a century ago." Soon thereafter, she commented on a woman's dress, "it is what we should esteem vulgar than genteel being old-fashioned." Hence, she criticized Americans on one hand for dressing too fancily, and on the other for dressing in an old-fashioned manner and being behind the current fashions of England.

As to similarities between American and English cultures of which she approved, Ann Warder chronicled that her acquaintances in Philadelphia possessed "furniture [that was] neat" and that her "Brother Jerry’s resemble[d] Bury Street for size, ha[d] no superfluities or extravagance to complain of."

\[149\] Anna Maria Franck, (1798) Northampton County Inventories, RW; Barbara Fenstermacher, (1790) Northampton County Inventories, RW.

\[150\] AW, June 10, 1786; May 27, 1786; May 30, 1786.
Likewise, as to their eating habits, she penned that when they breakfasted the "table [was] set out with stores of . . . coffee, tea, chocolate." ¹⁵¹

Reading opportunities among women also increased with the ever-greater availability of published works, particularly those targeted at a female audience. Women expressed in their diaries opinions and judgments of their reading materials, with such opportunities serving as an important intellectual outlet for women. On the one hand, reading endured as a social activity with one or more family members or friends engaging a text at the same time. On the other hand, it remained an important solitary activity for women.

To more fully comprehend the role of reading in one woman's life, we can turn to the instructive diary of Elizabeth Drinker. "It looks as if I spent most of my time reading, which is by no means the case," she confessed to her diary in 1795. Elizabeth recorded to the contrary, that she "was never an indolent person, or remarkably bookish," despite the fact that she "seldom [made] mention of any other employment." She explained, however, that "more so for 5 or 6 years past, than at any other period since I was married," she had "more leisure" now, as a grandmother with fully-grown children. "[W]hen my children were young," she asserted that she "seldom read a volume." During the last two decades of the century, Elizabeth did read much more prolifically, and chose a wide variety of works, ranging from religious and classical works to popular fictional and entertaining works. She always appeared to feel guilty about reading fiction, consistently finding some justification for it. On March 30, 1795, Elizabeth had "read a romance or novel, which I have not done for a long time before." She

¹⁵¹ Ibid., June 12, 1786; May 28, 1786.
commented further that the romance in question contained “some good sentiments, and many more moral reflections, some of them very good,” even though at the same time she dismissed the work as being of “no very great affair.” Indeed, over the course of that same month, she chronicled her activity of reading on ten occasions, or in other words, 32 percent of her entries. The books she read included only one romance; the rest of her reading included such topics as religion, science, medicine, poetry, and biography. On another date, she enjoyed the sociability of a romance because her married daughter read it aloud to her while she did her needlework. In conjunction with her reading, indeed, Drinker felt the need to list the housework she had also been engaged in that day.\textsuperscript{152}

Elizabeth Drinker’s unease in recording romance reading suggests the possible impact of the prescriptive literature that advised women against reading novels. In particular, women were deemed to be most susceptible to the attractions of irresponsibility and passion as portrayed in novels. It is even less clear, however, if her self-consciousness can be attributed to republican ideology of the era, which emphasized the civic virtue of women as mothers, rather than romanticism. In fact, she appeared to be concerned about maintaining her household industry throughout the entirety of her diary.

As the century drew nearer to its close, Elizabeth increasingly read works targeted especially at women. On May 18, 1797, she noted reading “the \textit{Lady’s New-Years Gift: or Advice to a Daughter}. By the most noble George Lord Saville, late Marquis and Earl of Halifax, there are some very good sentiments in this little old book.” In the year 1796 she read Mary Wollstonecraft’s

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{ED}, May 22, 1795, March 30, 1795, June 20, 1795.
Vindication and rendered her well-known reaction that “in very many of her sentiments, she . . . speaks my mind.” Around the same time, however, she noted that she had perused a pamphlet entitled “A Kick for a Bite.” This work was written by Susannah Rowson under the alias of “Peter Porcupine,” which Drinker found to be “rather scurrilous.” Thus, Elizabeth Drinker recorded that she was able to identify with some, but not all works primarily marketed for a female audience in the late eighteenth century.

Without the greater educational benefits afforded men, even after the reformation of women’s education, private reading served as a vital intellectual outlet open to women. Indeed, women expressed an almost affectionate familiarity with the books they read. In Nancy Shippen’s diary, for instance, she recorded on June 27, 1784 that she had “spent this day entirely alone, except having the company of books . . . & upon the whole spent the day much to my mind.” On another occasion she penned that she had dined alone and “then took my book & went to stroll in the orchard.” In a similar vein, Ann Warder wrote of her daily routine on her voyage to Philadelphia that her “husband rises about six o’clock after which the Sacred History & Jerry [her son] are my only companions till about nine.” On that same date, she recorded having the company of “An Essay on Old Maids,” which she found “not very interesting to one who is a great enemy to that state, but might be perused with the greatest pleasure by a person desirous of enlisting under their Banner.” Based on their writings, women appeared to have envisioned books not as merely edifying and instructional tools, but also as important “companions” in their daily routines.

153 Ibid., May 18, 1797, September 2, 1796, March 20, 1795
154 NS, June 27, 1784, July 18, 1784; AW, April 25, 1786.
Women's private recordings also afforded them an important outlet for expressing their opinions on the works that they had read. Most likely, being able to express their thoughts and ideas, even if privately, must have been edifying to them. On March 28, 1795, Elizabeth Drinker recorded that she had finished reading an epic poem entitled "Aristocracy." While she began her comment on the poem in a self-deprecating manner, admitting that it was "lost upon men, as my dull brain could not comprehend it," she immediately went on to write "perhaps this piece itself is not very comprehensible." From placing the fault of the work first on her own reading comprehension to, in the next instance, on the work itself, Drinker gave herself well-deserved credit for being an intelligent reader. On another occasion she recorded in her diary her reaction to one of John Woolman's writings, "A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich." On April 9, 1795, Drinker wrote that she believed "there are few, if any, who live up to JW's plan or rule," yet she thought "there are some who go a great way towards it." By "JW's plan or rule," Drinker most likely meant his conscientious refusal of "every accommodation both in diet & apparel which was produced by their [Negro] labor," because of "his feelings for the bondage & oppression of the poor enslaved Negroes." While Woolman had gone further than others in protesting the institution of slavery through his personal boycott of all consumables produced by African American labor, Drinker recognized that other individuals adhered strongly to their beliefs against slavery without going that far.\footnote{ED, March 28, 1795; April 9, 1795.}

Further statistical analysis of wills and inventories confirm the increased
opportunity for women to acquire published works for their individual use, particularly for city women. In Philadelphia, seventy-five percent of the post-1780 inventories included books (Table 5). Of these inventories, only two recorded a single book, the Bible. The rest, recorded at least several other books or periodicals, with the description of “a lott of books” or “sundry books” being typical. Susannah Cumming, for instance, owned “Bailey’s English Dictionary” and “sundry volumes of the London Magazine.” Some of these women also made a specific bequest of their books in their wills. In 1782, for instance, Eleanor Loardon of Philadelphia directed that “all the books that belonged to their father” were to be equally divided between her two sons, while Susannah Cumming granted her dictionary to an “esteemed friend.” By contrast, in Northampton County after 1780 book ownership had decreased to 39 percent from the incidence of 60 percent in 1752-1780 (Table 6). Nevertheless, the majority of these women in the later period owned more than one book. For example, Catharine Brauss owned “sundry books” in 1796, while Elizabeth Lattimore had five books listed in the inventory of her estate in 1792. Mary King of Northampton gave a book to each of her grandchildren in 1790.156 These figures indicate that urban women (or possibly other members of their households) took the fullest advantage of the greater number of books available on the colonial market. However, the statistics also indicate that if rural women did own books, they now had greater quantities and varieties of them than they

156 Susannah Cumming (1791) Philadelphia Inventories, CAP; Eleanor Loardon (1782) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Susannah Cumming, (1791) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Catharine Brauss, (1796) Northampton County Inventories, RW; Elizabeth Lattimore, (1792) Northampton County Inventories, RW; Mary King (1790) Northampton County Wills, RW.
had prior to 1780. Indeed, particularly for country women Bibles and other religious works had been the most common books owned and bequeathed to loved ones.

Despite the educational reforms for women in the late eighteenth century, the question remains whether women of this time period had acquired sufficient education to be able to read the books in their households. Literacy rates, as measured by women's ability to sign their wills, continued to differ dramatically in urban and rural areas of Pennsylvania even though their incidence of book ownership was more approximate. Philadelphia women's literacy rates were still significantly higher than those of Northampton women (Tables 9 and 10). Whereas in the post-1780 period almost 80 percent of city women could sign their names, less than 30 percent of rural women could. This disparity indicates that women enjoyed greater opportunities for education in the city than the country. The difference in literacy levels were also probably influenced by the lesser wealth of residents in the less-established rural area. Whereas almost three-quarters of the rural women's inventories after 1780 fell under 100 pounds, only one-half the urban inventories did (Tables 11 and 12). At first glance, therefore, it appears that the education reforms of the day had little effect upon increasing women's literacy rates. The women testators studied, however, were part of the older generation who were much less likely to be affected by the new reforms than their daughters or granddaughters.

Although male doctors assumed greater health care responsibilities for elite families by the end of the eighteenth century, women continued to provide the bulk of care to their families and friends. And they still provided that assistance with the aid of consumer goods. Elizabeth Drinker wrote that she
“applied spice and brandy in a flannel bag” to her daughter’s “stomach.” On another date, she dispensed “Norris drops,” which was an English patent medicine, to her husband. Her friend “sent a young woman with a note desiring some black Currant Jelly” for a sore throat, which Elizabeth shared on yet another occasion. Evidently, women still utilized consumer goods to prepare their own remedies. Drinker’s diary, nonetheless, offers some evidence that they purchased some ready-made medicines, like “Norris drops,” with greater frequency in the last decades of the century.

Economic Implications of Consumerism for Women in the Early Republic

From an analysis of early American probate records, it is evident that women increasingly took advantage of the greater variety of market commodities as they became available. When comparing the city of Philadelphia with rural Northampton County, the inventories from the city continue to demonstrate a much greater abundance of consumer items. Nonetheless, rural women’s inventories had made substantial gains by the close of the century. Urban inventories, as expected, illustrated a greater incidence of luxury goods than their rural counterparts. On the one hand, after 1780, the proportion of city women who owned looking glasses decreased slightly to 67 percent. On the other hand, the percentage of country women who possessed looking glasses more than doubled to over 40 percent (Tables 1 and 3). Clock ownership had decreased in Philadelphia inventories to twenty-five percent, while increasing in Northampton to approximately 40 percent. This difference is highlighted when examining

157 ED, October 25, 1794, December 16, 1794, May 25, 1800.

113
which women owned both a looking glass and a clock. Whereas forty percent of Philadelphia women owned both prior to 1780, only seventeen percent did after 1780. In contrast, while no Northampton women owned both prior to 1780, twenty-two percent did after 1780. However, a difference in quantity remained, with urban inventories recording, for instance, two or three looking glasses in each inventory recording such items, whereas rural inventories most often contained only one of any luxury good. Correspondingly, almost the same percentage of Philadelphia and Northampton females owned both pewter and brass after 1780, approximately one-third.

However, as consumers, women did not merely purchase what we commonly think of as colonial luxury items, such as silk, looking glasses, and pewter, but also household items that we today envision as essential household furnishings. As to beds and bedding, almost two-thirds of Northampton women had both of these articles in their households in this period (Table 13). But many of these women did not own items that we consider the most basic furniture today. For instance, only thirty-five percent possessed both tables and chairs subsequent to 1780. This finding is even more stark when looking at the fact that none of these rural women appear to have owned both prior to 1780. None of these women had bookcases or sideboards recorded as part of their personal possessions over the entire period. Chests, however, were the most common piece of furniture owned, with over two-thirds of the inventories recording them over the entire period. Nevertheless, these findings do not necessarily reflect that rural widows did without these items altogether. Such basic goods for daily living may have been part of the households in which they resided, owned by their children or other relatives.
Common goods for daily living also increased in rural women’s households from 1752-1800. Whereas no Northampton women owned curtains or napkins prior to 1780, twenty-six percent owned curtains and thirteen percent owned napkins by the last two decades of the century (Table 13). Moreover, dishes had increased from 40 to 57 percent. As to knives, forks and spoons, sixty-one percent of these women now had the benefit of these utensils as part of their households. Although in twentieth-century terms these figures appear stark, it must be remembered that Northampton County was a less-established rural community. These frontier women, nevertheless, clearly owned a wide variety of consumer goods, in contradiction to James Henretta and other historians who argue for a subsistence agricultural economy in early America. Indeed, if Henretta was fully correct in his arguments, then most of these women’s inventories would reveal all the necessary equipment to produce cloth, just as they would not show imported luxuries such as tea equipage, looking glasses, and clocks. The incidence of spinning wheels and other cloth-manufacturing items had decreased in rural women’s inventories by 1800, from 46 percent to only 35 percent (Table 15). This suggests that more women may have been purchasing ready-made cloth by the end of century than in previous decades. Further, because only one Northampton woman’s inventory recorded a loom in addition to a spinning wheel, few women were able to produce homespun cloth in their own homes without functioning in an informal neighborhood economy.  

Nevertheless, during this time period, other home manufacturing items increased over the span of approximately fifty years. For example, dough or kneading troughs for making bread increased two-fold, and beehives more than doubled.

Likewise, the incidence of spinning wheels had decreased in city women’s inventories by 1800, from twenty percent to zero (Table 16). The ownership of most imported luxury items had increased by more than half in Northampton estates. Thus, although the inventories of frontier women bore a lower incidence of ownership of certain goods, which are quite commonplace today, the incidence of most goods as well as the value of women’s personal estates increased over the eighteenth century.

A direct comparison of consumer goods utilized on a daily basis between urban and rural women is perhaps even more revealing of their disparate worlds, even though those worlds were drawing closer together. Whereas over two-thirds of Philadelphia inventories manifested both a bed and bedding, less than a third of the Northampton inventories still had only a bed or bedding. This trend was comparable for other pieces of furniture. In Philadelphia 67 percent of women owned both tables and chairs following 1780, whereas only thirty-five percent of Northampton inventories listed both. Household linen also marked a disparity, with only 4 percent of rural estates revealing all types of linen in the years after 1780, whereas twice as many urban estates held all of them. Notwithstanding the above differences, town and country were coming closer together by the close of the eighteenth century.

Philadelphia women’s wills further testified to the enhanced availability of consumer goods in densely settled regions as compared to rural ones. For instance, city women were more likely than their rural counterparts to bequeath imported luxury goods to their family and friends. Approximately one-fifth of urban women’s wills designated a looking glass or tea equipage, as compared to less than one-tenth of rural women’s wills (Tables 2 and 4). About 20 percent of
urban women left china and glassware to others, while only 4 percent of rural women did. As to other luxury items, thirteen percent of Philadelphia women gave jewelry to loved ones, while one-fifth of the same city testators granted silver items (Tables 2 and 8). Moreover, urban women also appeared more likely to entrust basic household goods, including bed, bedding, and chests of drawers to loved ones, most likely because greater numbers owned them. (Tables 19 and 20). About twenty percent of these women passed on eating utensils. They were also more likely than their Northampton counterparts to pass on ironware.

Moreover, 60 percent of these women bequeathed wearing apparel after 1780. When looking at the language employed by testators in their wills, it is clear that many city and rural women believed that their consumer items constituted precious heirlooms worthy of a bequest to loved ones. Catharine Wistar passed on to her daughter, Sarah, her “clock and writing desk.” Susannah Cumming gave to her “dear and well beloved friend” her “black satin cloak and fan.” To Susanna Augustus, “being a free woman” and a widow meant that she could direct that all her wearing apparel would be “equally divided” between her sister and sisters-in-law. Anna Maria Franck granted to her friend her “best feather bed, case, bed curtain, and blue and striped petticoats.” Margaret Schloesser left her “silver snuffbox and a silver teaspoon” to her sister Judith.

Moreover, Elizabeth Lattimore left “one walnut chest” to her beloved granddaughter.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Catharine Wistar, (1787) Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Susannah Cumming (1791), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Susanna Augustus, (1783), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Anna Maria Franck (1798), Northampton Wills, RW; Margaret Schloesser, Northampton Wills (1785), RW; Elizabeth Lattimore, Northampton Wills (1792), RW; Elizabeth Kemble, Northampton Wills (1789), RW.
Just as Suzanne Lebsock found, Philadelphia and Northampton females generally did not divide their estates equally among their heirs, but rather favored some heirs over others. The heirs most likely to be favored by women were those of their same gender. Mary Porter designated certain funds and goods in her will to ensure that her “dear daughter Mary” be given a “proper education.” To Elizabeth Kennard, the primary purpose of her testamentary provisions was to ensure that none of her young daughters would be “bound out.” Moreover, Elizabeth Lattimore marked funds in her estate “to support her sister,” who as a singlewoman may have had difficulty earning her own income with women restricted from many kinds of work or provided inadequate remuneration. Elizabeth Kemble, bequeathed certain items to her daughter “for her sole use so long as she lives.” The items she granted her grandchildren, including such items as “a red sea chest,” her “silver punch strainer,” and her “spice box,” were to be held in trust by their mother until they came of age. However, Elizabeth directed that “in case she [her daughter] becomes a widow & be necessitated & becomes in straits or any accident should happen,” then she gave “her absolute power & authority to use & dispose with the same after her best knowledge & judgment & to use for her own benefit.”160 Indeed, these wills attest to women’s particular concern to provide support for female members of their family.

Women’s wills also reflected their benevolence toward other women. In addition to bequests to family and friends, women testators in the Philadelphia sample continued to direct that a portion of the estate be utilized for charitable

160 Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg; Mary Porter (1795), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Elizabeth Kennard, (1792), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Elizabeth Lattimore (1768), Northampton Wills, RW.
purposes. Margaret Hunt, for example, designated certain funds to aid fifty poor housekeepers of her parish. Moreover, Anna Seidel ordered that fifty pounds be distributed “to the widow’s house in Bethlehem.” Furthermore, Judith Edmunds provided for “the poor sisters of [the Moravian] sister’s house.”

Women also appeared to have attempted to reward others for services that they had performed during their lifetimes or after. Margaret Thomas, for example, granted “the rest of” her estate to her executors “as compensation for all my executors’ trouble” in handling her estate. Likewise, Anna Seidel instructed that certain funds pass “to her maid at the time of her death,” presumably in return for the services she rendered. Therefore, some women felt an obligation to further compensate those who afforded them valuable assistance during their lifetimes and thereafter.

During the Early Republic, Quaker women also began to develop their own benevolence organizations. In 1795, for instance, Ann Parrish of Philadelphia gathered a group of friends at her home and organized a committee that was later formally known as the Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Help of the Poor. This effort constituted the first charity organized by women and for women in the United States. Within a few years of its founding, they had established a House of Industry where women were employed to spin flax and wool.

Throughout the Early Republic, therefore, women generally viewed

\[161\] Margaret Hunt (1781), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Anna Seidel, (1795), Northampton Wills, RW; Judith Edmunds, (1796), Northampton Wills, RW.

\[162\] Margaret Thomas (1797), Philadelphia Wills, HSP; Anna Seidel (1773), Northampton Wills, RW.

\[163\] Hope-Bacon, 80.
consumerism in a positive light. Most personal writings by women seemed
unaffected by the republican ideology being espoused. Instead, women's daily
experiences with consumer goods attested to the importance of consumerism
within their social lives. Not only did these female writers conceive of consumer
goods as strengthening their social relationships, but also as making their own
personal lives more pleasant. Consequently, these women did not practice
"mindless materialism." To the contrary, these elite women's writings testified
that they possessed a definite ideology regarding the benefits of consumerism to
their worlds. Indeed, they utilized consumer goods to render the lives of their
families, friends, and neighbors more "convenient and comfortable."
Conclusion

Ultimately, the sum of the evidence put forth in the foregoing analysis tends to confirm the salient role that consumerism played in many women’s lives in colonial America and the early Republic. These women’s writings, as well as their actions, point to the fact that they did not merely “mindlessly” make the decision to purchase consumer goods, but rather had social, political, or economic ends within their purview. Likewise, women did not dispose of their goods haphazardly, but rather contemplated to whom such items would provide the greatest benefit, which often translated into others of the same sex.

Samples of both urban and rural women’s inventories and wills, compiled from Philadelphia City and Northampton County, Pennsylvania, clearly indicate that female owners viewed their consumer goods as more than mere possessions. Both before and after the Revolution, Philadelphia women consumed on a greater scale in quantity and kind than did their country counterparts largely due to the greater availability of goods in the port city. Despite living on the frontier, however, Northampton women owned a significant number of consumer goods prior to the Revolution, which further increased following the war. In addition, some of these articles women deemed worthy enough, whether because of sentimental or pecuniary value, to grant to loved ones of the next generations. Indeed, women used consumables to strengthen bonds with family and friends even after they had departed the world. By bequeathing consumer items to succeeding generations of females, women ensured that such family heirlooms would continue to be cherished and enjoyed by their legatees for many years to come. Thus, women’s behavior, both in acquiring and passing on material possessions, tends to substantiate their positive conception of consumerism.
Moreover, women's writings and actions seem to indicate that their ideas of consumerism were not merely static during the course of the eighteenth century. Instead, their consumer ideology evolved over time from the 1740s in the colonies through the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath. This evolution transpired due to the intimate connection between consumerism and the ever-changing political, social, economic, and gender aspects of society with which it constantly interacted. For instance, while women prior to the revolutionary protest rarely perceived of their consuming as political in orientation or directly influenced by politics, during the Revolution it became quite difficult for them to conceive of their consumption as separate and distinct from the political realm. Indeed, women's political participation in the Revolution most often implicated consumer goods to some degree or other. In the post-revolutionary era, nevertheless, women's writings appeared unaffected by the republican ideology against imported products.

However, while some elements of women's ideology did evolve over time, others remained largely the same. The elements that endured were women's gendered views of consumption. Overall, women continued to envision consumerism in a more favorable light, as beneficial to the integral elements of their everyday life: their relationships with their family, friends, and community. Nevertheless, this ideology should not be contemplated as monolithic in its dimensions, or in other words applicable to all early American women living in the Middle colonies. Just as these colonies evinced a great deal of diversity, so too did the women who lived there. Thus, much research remains to be conducted in order to do justice to the diversity among women.

By the same token, men appeared to continue to view female consumption
primarily in negative terms. Although their ideas altered in relation to the social, political, and economic milieu of the day, men continued to hold unfavorable and often contradictory views of women’s abilities to consume intelligently. For example, despite their calling on women’s aid during the Revolution to stem consumption of foreign imports and to produce their substitutes, many men continued to denigrate female intellectual abilities to become better educated in matters other than the newest fashions. Indeed, men’s conception of female consumption often tended to reinforce traditional views and stereotypes of women and their status in society. Although early American women’s experience with the “consumer revolution” may have extended the ambiits of their private world to some degree, it did not fundamentally change embedded societal views about women. Instead, as we have seen throughout this study, the “consumer revolution” wrought a more ambiguous effect upon women’s status in American society.

Despite the fact that consumerism failed to substantially alter entrenched gender views, nonetheless, it still held vital implications for women and their conceptions of themselves and their society. By studying these implications, we as historians have another significant window through which we can behold the ever-fascinating and consuming narrative of early American women through their own words and actions. Ultimately, by continuing to avidly examine the consuming history of women we can better ensure that women may never again be viewed as merely consumed by the historical events and processes around them, but rather as “consuming women,” who, in turn, vitally shaped those same events and processes.
Selected Bibliography

**Manuscript Sources**

Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Allinson Family Papers
Eliza Farmer Letterbook
Gratz Collection
Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection
Norris of Fairhill Papers
Pemberton Papers
Philadelphia Wills and Estate Papers
Shoemaker Papers

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division
Galloway Papers

Quaker Collection, Haverford College
Diary of Ann Head Warder
Journal of Rebecca Wright

Philadelphia City Archives
Philadelphia Inventories
Northampton County Register of Wills

Wills and Estate Papers

Newspapers and Magazines

The American Museum or Universal Magazine (Philadelphia), 1787-1798

Columbian Magazine (Philadelphia), 1786-1792

Philadelphia's Ladies Magazine (Philadelphia), 1792-1793

New Jersey Gazette (New Jersey), 1780-1786

New Jersey Journal (New Jersey), 1798-1800

Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser (Philadelphia), 1767-1774

Pennsylvania Evening Post (Philadelphia), 1775-1784

Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), 1745-1800

Pennsylvania Journal (Philadelphia)

Pennsylvania Packet (Philadelphia), 1771-1790

Philadelphia Minerva (Philadelphia), 1795-1798

Articles and Essays


"How Self-Sufficient was Early America?" Journal of Interdisciplinary History 13 (1982): 247-72.


Books


**Dissertations and Papers**


Appendix

The inventory samples that I submitted to statistical analysis came from data I amassed from various record offices and repositories, including the following: Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Quaker Collection, Haverford College; Philadelphia City Archives; Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills; David Library of the American Revolution and the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. For Northampton County, I utilized all women’s wills that were in English for the years 1752-1800, as well as all women’s inventoried estates for those years. The years for my quantitative analysis differed from the years studied qualitatively in my work because Northampton County was founded only in 1752; therefore, I could not gather data for the years 1740 to 1751 as I had initially wished. Because of the relatively small number of women’s estates before 1780, I divided the sample into two periods: 1752-1780 and 1781-1800. For Philadelphia County I utilized the same years as Northampton for my sample. Due to the large number of Philadelphia estates, I limited my sample to 30 women’s wills from the period 1752 to 1800, randomly selecting 15 from 1752-1780 and 15 from 1781-1800. Of these 30 testate estates, only 27 had inventories.

Probate inventories and wills constitute valuable sources with which to illuminate patterns of consumption in early America. These sources have their flaws as well, containing various omissions and biases. One problem arises from the fact that the probate population is generally not the same as the general population. The estates of affluent people are more likely to have gone through probate than the estates of poor decedents and are therefore over-represented in inventory samples. In addition, the inventoried, as well as the testate, were most likely older than the wealth holders in the general population. Yet another problem, if one is comparing inventories from different time periods, is the effect of inflation on currency values. Furthermore, particularly for
studies of women, a problem exists in being able to gather a large enough sample (in English) to be statistically significant, as only widows, single women, and wives who gained their husband's permission could write wills under the laws of eighteenth-century America.

Unless otherwise specifically stated, all of the values of the inventories utilized for my study were converted to pounds sterling before being recorded in the tables. This involved two procedures: 1) adjusting colonial pounds current to British pounds sterling employing the conversion rates in John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775*, Chapel Hill, 1978; and 2) adjusting the values from the years following 1775 up to 1800 for inflation over time by using the inflation information in Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort:" Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800*, Ithaca, 1990. By examining the values of spinning wheels, cloth, and cows over time, I found that the value of these items in the inventories did not appear to reflect dramatic inflation for periods of marked inflation during the Revolution.

In Tables 11 and 12, I have divided the inventory samples into low, medium, and high wealth groups. The wealth measured here is personal wealth or personalty. Realty is excluded from these figures, as few probate inventories from this period include real estate. The low-wealth group does not necessarily include destitute and poverty-stricken individuals, since the poorest sort did not leave estates large enough to warrant a will or an inventory.
Table 1 Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Philadelphia Women’s Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number *(%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass</td>
<td>12 (80%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>20 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass and Clock</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Equipage</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td>22 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tea and Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>13 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewter</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>19 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>16 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Pewter and Brass</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>13 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inventoried Estates:</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Table 2 Imported Luxury Consumer Goods, Philadelphia Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780 Number (%)</th>
<th>1781-1800 Number (%)</th>
<th>1752-1800 Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass and Clock</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Equipage</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tea and Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewter</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Pewter and Brass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Glassware</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Wills:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total wills.

Source: A sample of 30 testate estates of women, City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Historical Society of...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>13 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass and Clock</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Equipage</td>
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<td>18 (78%)</td>
<td>22 (58%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>12 (52%)</td>
<td>15 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tea and Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewter</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>11 (48%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Pewter and Brass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inventoried Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: All inventories of women's estates in English, Northampton County, 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
Table 4 ImporteLuxury Consumer Goods, Northampton County Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Glass and Clock</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Equipage</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tea and Coffee Equipage</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewter</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Pewter and Brass</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Glassware</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Testate Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of total testate estates.

Source: All testate estates of women in English, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania.
Table 5  Miscellaneous. Philadelphia Women's Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Number* (%)</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman's Saddle (or Side Saddle)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Riding Items</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(saddle, riding safeguard, riding coat, wagon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books: All Estates listing books</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td>18 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious books</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inventoried Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Table 6 Miscellaneous, Northampton County Women’s Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman’s Saddle (or Side Saddle)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Riding Items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(saddle, riding safeguard, riding coat, wagon)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>15 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books: All Estates listing books</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>18 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious books</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inventoried Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: All inventories of women’s estates in English, Northampton County, 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
Table 7 Miscellaneous, Northampton County Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman’s Saddle</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or Side Saddle)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Riding Items</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(saddle, riding safeguard,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riding coat, wagon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Testate Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of total testate estates

Source: All testate estates of women in English, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania.
Table 8 Miscellaneous Items, Philadelphia Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman’s Saddle (or Side Saddle)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Riding Items (saddle, riding safeguard, riding coat, wagon)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books:</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Wills:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total wills.

Table 9  Signature or Mark in Wills, Philadelphia Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>14 (93%)</td>
<td>12 (80%)</td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Testate Estates: 15 15 30 (100%)

### Table 10 Signature or Mark in Wills, Northampton County Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>4 (24%)</td>
<td>10 (29%)</td>
<td>14 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>13 (76%)</td>
<td>25 (71%)</td>
<td>38 (73%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Testate Estates: 17 35 52 (100%)

Source: All testate estates of women, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
Table 11  Estate Values based on Inventories (Converted to Pounds Sterling),
Philadelphia Women's Inventories

Low Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>under £100(%)</td>
<td>under £100(%)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medium Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£101 -200(%)</td>
<td>under £101-200(%)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>over £200 (%)</td>
<td>over £200 (%)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(67%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 15 12 27

Mean values of inventories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£273</td>
<td>£320</td>
<td>£295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: See Appendix
Table 12 Estate Values based on Inventories (Converted to Pounds Sterling), Northampton County Women’s Inventories

Low Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number under £100* (%)</td>
<td>Number under £100 (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(73%)</td>
<td>17 (71%)</td>
<td>28 (72%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medium Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number £101 -200 (%)</td>
<td>Number under £101-200 (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>5 (21%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Wealth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>Number over £ 200 (%)</td>
<td>Number over £ 200 (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 15 24 39

Mean values of Inventories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£64</td>
<td>£69</td>
<td>£67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: See Appendix
Table 13  Consumer Goods for Daily Living, Northampton County Women's Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number <em>(%)</em></td>
<td>Number <em>(%)</em></td>
<td>Number <em>(%)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and Bedding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed only</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>14 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedding only</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and bedding</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables only</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs only</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tables &amp; Chairs</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>16 (70%)</td>
<td>27 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sideboard</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookcase</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of Drawers/ Dresser</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (trunks, Closet, cradle)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>11 (48%)</td>
<td>14 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Linen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablecloth</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Estate 1</td>
<td>Estate 2</td>
<td>Estate 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtains</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napkins</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the Above types of Household Linen</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eating Utensils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estate 1</th>
<th>Estate 2</th>
<th>Estate 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plates, Dishes, and/or Bowls</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives, Forks and/or Spoons</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>14 (61%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups and/or Tankards</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the above types of Eating Utensils</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironware</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>18 (78%)</td>
<td>28 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stove</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>16 (42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Inventoried Estates: 15  23  38

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: All inventories of women's estates in English, Northampton County, 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bed and Bedding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedding only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and bedding</td>
<td>14 (93%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>22 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Furniture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs only</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tables &amp; Chairs</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>21 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>12 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>9 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookcase</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of Drawers / Dresser</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (trunks, closets, cradle)</td>
<td>13 (87%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>21 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Linen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablecloth</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>11 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Towel</strong></td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curtains</strong></td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Napkins</strong></td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estates with all the above types of Household Linen</strong></td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eating Utensils**

| Plates, Dishes, and/or Bowls | 10 (67%) | 7 (58%) | 17 (63%) |
| Knives, Forks, and/or Spoons | 9 (60%) | 8 (67%) | 17 (63%) |
| Cups and/or Tankards | 8 (53%) | 4 (33%) | 12 (44%) |
| **Estates with all the above types of Eating Utensils** | 4 (27%) | 1 (8%) | 5 (19%) |

**Ironware** | 12 (80%) | 8 (67%) | 20 (74%) |

**Stove** | 3 (20%) | 2 (17%) | 5 (19%) |

**Total Inventoried Estates**: 15 12 27

*Percentage of total inventoried estates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Spinning Wheel &amp; other Cloth Manufacturing items</td>
<td>7 (46%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>15 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Wheel only</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cloth Manufacturing items (yarn, linen cloth, flax, loom, other), but no spinning wheel</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Cloth Manufacturing items</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dough / Kneading Trough</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churn</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehives / Swarm of Bees</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inventoried Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: All inventories of women’s estates in English, Northampton County, 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Spinning Wheel &amp; Other Cloth Manufacturing Items</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Wheel only</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cloth Manufacturing Items (yarn, linen cloth, flax, loom, other), but no spinning wheel</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Cloth Manufacturing Items</td>
<td>7 (46%)</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td>16 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dough / Kneading Trough</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churn</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehives / Swarm of Bees</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Inventoried Estates:</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total inventoried estates.

Source: A sample of 27 inventoried estates of women, City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Philadelphia City Register of Wills Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

154
### Table 17 Women and Home Manufacturing, Philadelphia Women’s Wills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1752-1800 Item Number* (%)</th>
<th>1752-1780 Item Number (%)</th>
<th>1781-1800 Item Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Wheel &amp; other cloth manufacturing items</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Wheel only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cloth manufacturing items (yarn, linen cloth, flax, loom, other), but no spinning wheel</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dough / Kneading Trough</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churn</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehives / Swarm of Bees</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Wills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1752-1800</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of total wills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Spinning Wheel &amp; Other Cloth</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing items</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Wheel only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cloth manufacturing items (yarn, linen cloth, flax, loom, other), but no spinning wheel</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dough/Kneading Trough</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churn</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehives/ Swarm of Bees</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Testate Estates</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of total testate estates.

Source: All testate estates of women in English, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
<th>1752-1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>Number (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bed and Bedding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed only</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedding only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and bedding</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Furniture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs only</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tables &amp; Chairs</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookcase</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of Drawers/Dresser</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (trunks, closets, cradle)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Linen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablecloth</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Will 1</td>
<td>Will 2</td>
<td>Will 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtains</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napkins</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the above types of</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Linen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Utensils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates, Dishes, and/or Bowls</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives, Forks, and/or Spoons</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups and/or Tankards</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the above types of</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
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<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Utensils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironware</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming Pan</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stove</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing Apparel</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Wills:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

* Percentage of total wills.

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<th>Items</th>
<th>1752-1780</th>
<th>1781-1800</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bed and Bedding</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedding only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and bedding</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture (in general)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>10 (42%)</td>
<td>12 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs only</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Tables &amp; Chairs</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookcase</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of Drawers/Dresser</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (trunks, closets, cradle)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Linen</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablecloth</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Estate 1</td>
<td>Estate 2</td>
<td>Estate 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtains</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napkins</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the above types of Household Linen</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Utensils (in general)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates, Dishes, and/or Bowls</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives, Forks, and/or Spoons</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups and/or Tankards</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates with all the Above types of Eating Utensils</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironware</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming Pan</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stove</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing Apparel</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (42%)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Testate Estates:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Percentage of total testate estates</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: All testate estates of women in English, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 1752-1800, Northampton County Courthouse, Register of Wills, Easton, Pennsylvania.*
Vita

Susan Hoffman was born in Danville, Pennsylvania on January 17, 1968. She is the daughter of Russell and Florence Hoffman. She graduated from Albright College (magna cum laude) in Reading, Pennsylvania in May of 1990 with a B.A. in Political Science. After attending Villanova Law School for three years, she obtained her J.D. in May of 1993. She practiced law for several years prior to returning to graduate school at Lehigh University in August 1996. She lives in Perkasie, Pennsylvania, with her husband, Richard C. Howard, Jr.
END OF TITLE