A History of Women in America: From Founding Mothers to Feminists-How Women Shaped the Life and Culture of America

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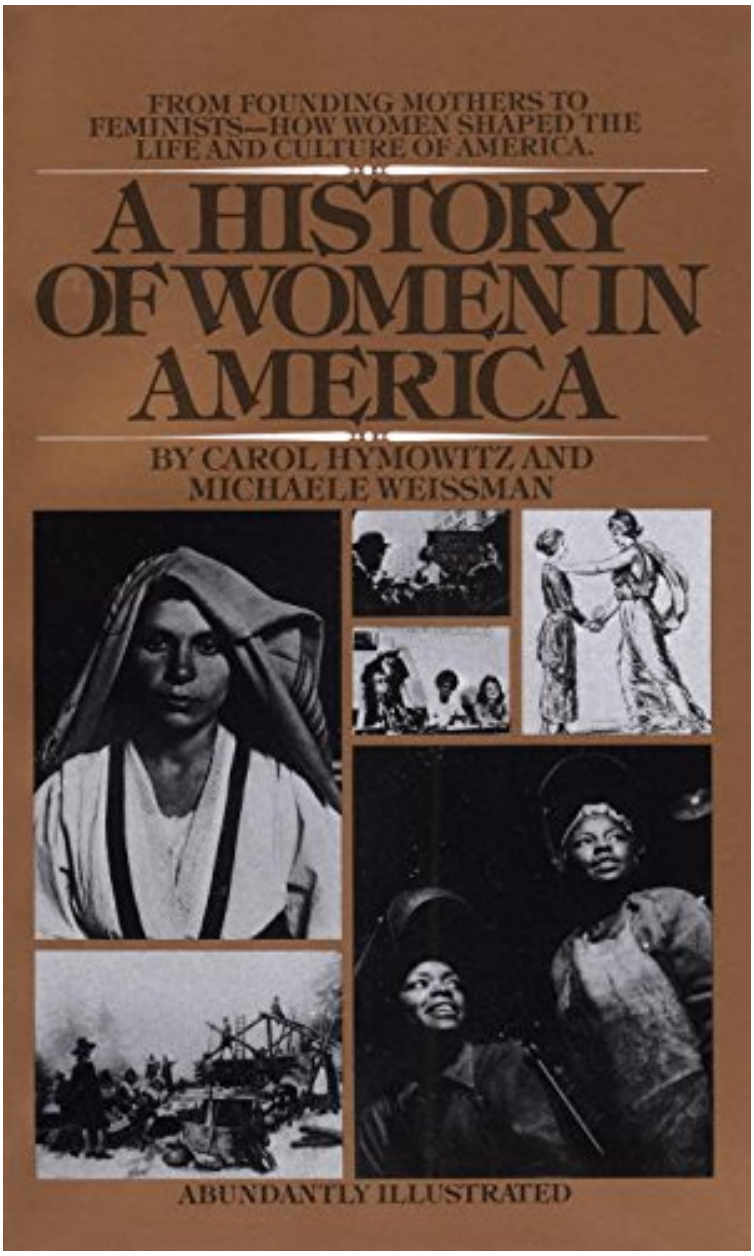

#82506 in Books Carol Hymowitz 1984-09-01 1984-09-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.90 x .90 x 4.20l, .53 Binding: Mass Market Paperback416 pagesA History of Women in America | File size: 21.Mb

Carol Hymowitz, Michaele Weissman : A History of Women in America: From Founding Mothers to Feminists-How Women Shaped the Life and Culture of America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it

would be worth my time, and all praised A History of Women in America: From Founding Mothers to Feminists-How Women Shaped the Life and Culture of America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for All US Women and Men!By Book Babe4.5 StarsHave you ever considering that using your brain dries up your ovaries? Well in 1874, Harvard Medical School professor Dr. Edward Clarke certainly suggested that education was detrimental to womens reproductive health. (My two children conceived years after obtaining my Masters degree got quite a laugh out of that.)Sadly a similar mentality may be to blame for robbing courageous women of their accomplishments. It would certainly explain why most students are taught the famous ride of Paul Revere, but not the successful ride of twenty-two year old Deborah Champion who made the same trip without getting caught!Heres the lowdown on this informative text on US history for women from the founding of the nation to the bra burning days of the 1970s. Why this text is still relevant: stop giving lip service to the ideas that there are no battles left to be fought for women in America (341).Betty Friedan said it in 1963, but I know many women, myself included, felt it in January 2017 when uninformed women took to social media to criticize and chide three million other women who took to the streets to participate in the womens march. So yes, the answer is pretty clearthis text is still very relevant and would do well to be required reading for all US students. History text books are far from universal, meaning they dont equally depict both sexes. Its books like this one that are needed to know and understand what the women of American were doing and feeling while the men were carving out rights for themselves and making laws that benefited only one gender; how women participated in the founding and expansion of this country; how women contributed to winning wars while the men touted the victories; how women stood up for not only their cause but the plight of other disadvantaged as well.I also think that modern women whether stay at home mothers, working mothers, or single career women will find places where they are able to relate to the various struggles depicted here.What does this book cover?This book provides a detailing of the oppositionphysical and ideologicalagainst equality for women alongside the biographies of notable women suffragists. The authors state in the introduction that they hoped to balance the lives of ordinary women and extraordinary women. They also aimed to show both the oppression women faced as well as how they overcame it.This book is organized into 19 chapters under four subsections. Topics addressed include:Life for women in the early colonies (Ch.1); religion law (Ch. 2); womens roles in the American Revolution (Ch. 3); the conditions of life of slave women and roles of white women during slavery (Ch. 4); 19th century new roles attitudes towards women (Ch. 5); notable early feminist (Ch. 6); the lives of notable early movement organizers alongside the struggles they faced (Ch. 7); the life and conditions for women in the factory system of the 1800s (Ch. 8); womens roles and contributions to the Civil War as well as the injustices suffered by black women after the war (Ch.9); the complicated relationship feminist experienced with abolitionists during Reconstruction as well with proponents of controversial and progressive ideas regarding free love and sexual freedom (Ch. 10); womens lives in the West and its effect on suffrage (Ch. 11); life for immigrant women and families (Ch. 12); womens involvement in social reforms including some of the ironies of their organizations causes (Ch. 13); womens labor force the conditions thereof in the suffrage fight years (Ch.14); the final organization of women leading up to the right to vote, varying attitudes surrounding it, and interest groups against it (Ch. 15); changes in sexual attitudes post suffrage and the birth control movement (Ch. 16); jobs for women in the post suffrage years and the effects of the Great Depression and the world wars on that (Ch. 17); social roles of womenmiddle class, working class, and African Americansin the 1950s (Ch. 18); and new goals and attitudes towards womens liberation in the 1960s and 70s (Ch. 19).Shortcomings:The authors acknowledge in the introduction that there are omissions in the text as far as coverage for Native American women, African-American women from 1880-1920, women in the arts, and certain professions.Published in 1978, the discussion of birth control is outdated. The history of it is still important to know. Womens health care, in general, is one topic I felt should have been expanded on. Though its addressed sparsely throughout, a full chapter would have been useful. Whenever womens health care is addressed or included, its discussion is lacking. For example, S. Weir Mitchell is mentioned, but the detrimental effects of his rest cure are not adequately explained or expanded on. My womens literature studies were far more informative on this controversial treatment. In fact, while Charlotte Perkins Gilman is mentioned, her famous piece The Yellow Wallpaper isnt even named.While the book does a good job of providing the background and biographies for famous women (including but not limited to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) associated with suffrage rights, or the first wave of the womens movement, notable second wave participants (such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem to name a few) are not given the same background paragraphs.What Readers Might Find Interesting:The womens movement including the fight for suffrage was not unified front. Many women of the times didnt support it, and even the ones who did were divided on things from organization to ideology.How I felt reading this book:I nearly celebrated myself when they finally won the right to vote after roughly 75 years and many chapters of detailing their obstacles and setbacks. Every woman in the US should read this book if for nothing else than to understand the long arduous process and decades that women put into the fight allowing women today to have the rights and opportunities that they do. It should also serve as a motivation to not give up the continued fight to retain and advance womens rights.Is this a feminist text?By definition (cited here from Merriam-Webster dictionary) and largely from a scholarly theorist

perspective feminism is the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes as well as organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. This book details womens history in the US addressing the fight for political, economic, and social equality. So yes, its a feminist text.Bear in mind that over the years the term feminism has taken on a variety of negative connotations (often the work of its opposition in an attempt to discredit it). The later chapters actually touch upon those disparaging assertions that feminist are angry man haters. I think the response voiced by a feminist demonstrator aptly sums up the true position of feminist protestors and activists: What I want to cut off is the power men exercise over women. And if a man associates that power with his genitals, thats his problem. (356).Themes:Despite differences in class, race, and culture, there is a prevalent theme of loneliness and struggle for identity.Triggers:There are mentions of rape and violence against women but its not graphically described.Historical Accuracy:I am not a historian, but from my previous knowledge of the subject, the majority of the book appears sound.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Book was informative but the electronic version didn't align with ...By Anthony DeLeonBook was informative but the electronic version didn't align with the hard copy that was used in class and it was difficult to keep up0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Loved this!By book addictLoved this book when I read it years ago, and recommended it to my book club.

From colonial to modern-day times this narrative history, incorporating first-person accounts, traces the development of women's roles in America. Against the backdrop of major historical events and movements, the authors examine the issues that changed the roles and lives of women in our society. Includes photographs.

From the Inside FlapFrom colonial to modern-day times this narrative history, incorporating first-person accounts, traces the development of women's roles in America. Against the backdrop of major historical events and movements, the authors examine the issues that changed the roles and lives of women in our society. Includes photographs.About the AuthorCarol Hymowitz, born and raised in New York, graduated from Brandeis University and earned her master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. She is a freelance writer and also works part time for Time magazine.Michaele Weissman is a native of Belmont, Massachusetts. She studied history at Brandeis University and graduated in 1968. She lives in Manhattan and is employed as a newswriter and producer for WOR radio.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.1Founding MothersThe fate of the European women who came to the New World in the early days of colonial settlement was a life of nearly ceaseless hard work. Many who came were already accustomed to physical labor. Those who were not quickly adapted. In a totally undeveloped and sparsely populated land, the labor of every able-bodied settler was desperately needed, and women's traditional work--providing food, clothing, shelter, and the rudiments of hygiene--was essential to survival.The demands of the New World allowed colonial women more freedom "to do" than was often available to women of later generations. This latitude was the product not of ideology, but of necessity. Colonial society did not support the idea of equality between men and women. European men brought with them to America the tenet that woman was man's inferior. This belief in female inferiority, however, was minimized by the conditions of the New World. So long as the colonies remained relatively undeveloped, women enjoyed a limited kind of independence.Women were an integral part of all permanent settlements in the New World. When men traveled alone to America, they came as fortune hunters, adventurers looking for a pot of gold; such single men had no compelling reason to establish communities. Women acted as civilizers for men living alone in the wilderness. Where there were women, there were children who had to be taught. There was a future--a reason to establish laws, towns, churches, schools. The organizers of Virginia understood as much when they sought to attract women to their colony so that the men who came "might be faster tied to Virginia." The labor provided by a wife and children also helped transform the forest into farmland. In the early days of the Georgia settlement the proprietors advertised for male recruits with "industrious wives."In many cases women emigrated together with men. Such was the case throughout New England and the middle colonies, where whole families often came in search of religious freedom. Elsewhere, particularly in the South, women had to be lured to America. Some colonies offered women the right to own their own land. Lord Baltimore of Maryland offered 100 acres for a planter, 100 acres for a wife, and 50 for a child. Women heads of families were treated in the same way as men.Other less conventional methods were used to encourage female emigration. The British crown, which chartered the majority of settlements, allowed women convicts the option of emigrating to the colonies rather than serving out jail sentences at home. Many female prostitutes and thieves settled in the New World rather than submit to the notorious severity of English criminal "justice." (Daniel Defoe's novel Moll Flanders is about such a woman--a London prostitute transported to America--who makes good.) Many of these women convicts were brought as indentured servants; they were obligated to serve a master for a number of years, without wages, before they were allowed their freedom.Marriage was another inducement that encouraged women to come to the New World. Throughout colonial times men outnumbered women by three to one, or more. Women could be assured of finding husbands in America. One eager publicist for Carolina wrote, "If any maid or single woman have desire to go over, they will think themselves in the Golden Age, when men paid a Dowry for their wives; for if they be but civil, and under 50 years of age, some honest man or other will purchase them for their wives."In 1619 an enterprising sea

captain who had advertised for single women looking to marry transported 144 of them to Virginia. The captain paid for the women's passage and, on arrival, he sold them as "wives" for 120 pounds of fine Virginia tobacco apiece. There are reports of other captains who kidnaped young women off the streets of London rather than going to the trouble of advertising.Of the 144 women who emigrated to Virginia in 1619 looking for husbands, only 35 were still alive six years later. Conditions in the New World, particularly for the first settlers, did not encourage long life. The months-long sail across the Atlantic was perilous--epidemics often carried off half or more of the passengers. At the end of the journey, there were new dangers to be faced.What is surprising is not the number of women who died early, but the number who survived. The bravery and stamina of the women in colonial times were renowned. William Byrd described one such woman living in a back settlement of Virginia in 1710, saying she was "a very civil" woman who showed "nothing of ruggedness, or immodesty in her carriage, yet she will carry a gun in the woods and kill deer, turkeys, etc., shoot down wild cattle, catch and tye hogs, knock down beeves with an ax and perform the most manful exercises as well as most men in these parts."The lives of colonial women and men tended to center around farm and family. For the most part a traditional division of labor was observed, whereby men did the outside work--planting and harvesting crops--while women worked inside, transforming the raw products into usable commodities.All of woman's work on the farm came under the general heading of "housewifery." What it included varied somewhat from region to region. The wives of southern planters rarely did their own weaving and spinning, while in the northern colonies these tasks took up many hours of a woman's day. In the South women tended their own herbal gardens and were expected to be expert at doctoring. White southern women of means were often responsible for the health needs of their slaves as well as those of their own families.New England houses were small--one or two rooms and a loft. The houses of southern planters were larger and more lavish. The roughest living was on the frontier, where a house was often a one-room shack, sometimes even a lean-to or wigwam. William Byrd, commenting on one of these back-country homes, noted that it contained a dozen adults and children plus the household animals all "pigged lovingly together." Life on the frontier was long on mud, disease, and loneliness, short on the amenities. One historian has called the American frontier a slum with trees.Despite local variations, women's activities were much the same throughout the colonies. First came supervision of the house. Women swept, scrubbed, laundered, polished. They made their own brooms, soap, polish. They carried water and did the laundry. They made starch. They ironed. They built fires and carried firewood. They made candles. They sewed everything--sheets, clothing, table linen, diapers. Women were usually in charge of the family bookkeeping. They ordered provisions, paid bills, and made sure the books were balanced.It is virtually impossible for twentieth-century people to imagine the enormous job of food preparation in colonial times. Cooking was done on an open hearth that had to be tended constantly. Kettles, made of iron, often weighed forty pounds. Without refrigeration, meats had to be preserved by salting or pickling. Rich and spicy sauces were the style, since they were needed to preserve food or to cover the taste of food that had been badly preserved. Women kept their own gardens, every fall putting up vast amounts of home-grown vegetables and fruit. They ran home bakeries and dairies, did the milking, made butter, and kept the hen yard.Spinning and weaving cloth was another arduous job, involving more than a dozen operations from start to finish. Colonial women were also expected to be expert at knitting, quilting, and all sorts of sewing and embroidery. The following account, taken from the diary of a young colonial woman in 1775, indicates the emphasis placed on spinning, weaving, and needlecrafts. It also highlights the heavy work load colonial women took for granted.Fixed gown for Prude . . . mended mothers riding hood, spun short thread . . . fix's two gowns for Welsh girls . . . carded, spun linen . . . worked on cheese basket . . . hatched flax with Hannah, we did 51 pounds a piece . . . pleated and ironed, . . . milked cows . . . spun linen . . . did 50 knots . . . made a broom of guineau wheat straw, spun thread to whiten . . . set a red dye, spun harness twine, scoured the pewter.Colonial women also worked outside the home. In the villages, towns, and small cities of the eighteenth century they performed virtually every kind of job held by men. Women ran taverns, inns, and boarding houses. They were blacksmiths, silversmiths, wheelwrights, sailmakers, tailors, teachers, printers, newspaper publishers, and shopkeepers of every sort.Many women learned their trades from their husbands. A blacksmith, for example, would teach his wife the skill. If a tradeswoman was widowed, she frequently assumed the full responsibility for the business she had built with her husband. Many women acted as their husbands' business agents. Given the power of attorney by their mates, they were involved in all aspects of finance, including bringing debtors to court.That colonial women often participated in various sorts of legal proceedings is indicative of the colonial society's pragmatic approach toward women. Pre-Revolutionary Americans often bent the Common Law system (which in England largely excluded women) to suit their needs. Daniel Boorstin has explained this anomaly by noting that colonial America had no learned monopolies. Or, as William Byrd put it in a letter discussing the attractions of the New World, America was free from "Those three scourges of mankind--priests, lawyers and physicians." In the early days there were no bar associations or medical associations establishing proficiency requirements. In consequence, a woman with aptitude could learn a skill informally and practice a profession.One of the most interesting women to lead a public life in colonial times was Margaret Brent, often referred to in seventeenth-century records as Mistress Margaret Brent, Spinster. Margaret, her sister Mary, and two brothers emigrated to Maryland from Great Britain in 1638. Lord Baltimore the proprietor of Maryland, attracted the Brents--who were wealthy Catholics--to his colony with promises

of large land grants and the chance to live free of anti-Catholic discrimination.The Brent sisters established their own plantations, which they ran without their brothers' help. In fact, Margaret Brent often acted as her brothers' representative and business adviser. Collecting payment in those days often involving suing in court. Records show Mistress Brent participating in 134 separate court actions during the eight years between 1642 and 1650. She usually won her case.Brent's close personal friendship with Lord Calvert, Maryland's governor, eventually pushed her into the all-male world of politics. When Calvert lay dying in 1647, he called Brent to his bedside. In the presence of witnesses he made what has been called "perhaps the briefest will in the history of law": "I make you my sole executrix. Take all and pay all." As executrix, Brent assumed responsibility for Calvert's estates. Since Calvert had been granted the power of attorney for his brother, Lord Baltimore, the proprietor of Maryland, at Calvert's death the power of attorney for Lord Baltimore, then in London, fell to Mistress Brent.At the time Maryland was not a peaceful colony. Calvert's enemies hoped to take advantage of the confusion following his death to seize control, and it seemed for a time that they might succeed. The man Calvert named to the governorship, Thomas Greene, was not equal to the job. After Calvert's death the army was close to revolt; Brent appeased the military by paying the soldiers their long-overdue wages, raising the necessary funds by selling some of Lord Baltimore's cattle. She took other steps as well to stabilize the situation in Maryland. Members of the Assembly later told Lord Baltimore that "all would have gone to ruin" were it not for her actions.Brent had so far established herself as a major political figure that many in the colony believed that she, not Thomas Greene, ought to be governor. Brent, however, did not seek to unseat Greene. In January 1648 she appeared before the Maryland Assembly and asked for two votes: one as Calvert's executrix, the other as Lord Baltimore's "attorney." It was the first time in parliamentary history that a woman had sought political recognition in a governing body. Governor Greene refused to have Brent seated, and the Assembly acceded to his wishes.Subsequently Brent left Maryland and moved to Virginia, where she established a new plantation, which she called Peace. She continued throughout her life to be active in business, but she avoided politics.It seems probable that throughout most of the colonial period more women practiced medicine than did men. Women were nurses, apothecaries, unlicensed physicians, and midwives. Only surgery--which at that time meant performing amputations--was dominated by men. The kind of doctoring women did was often an extension of their work at home. A woman charged with the well-being of a family learned to care for the sick, to treat common illnesses, and to make the aged and the dying comfortable. A woman with particular skill in this area could earn money by caring not only for the members of her family but for others as well.In the same way a woman who kept an herb garden and had an interest in botany could earn a living making medicines, tonics, and syrups. These women apothecaries varied in their level of sophistication. Though some lacked knowledge beyond folklore, many others were serious scientists who devoted much time to studying the healing properties of plants. Such skill was attested to by a French visitor to Virginia who wrote of Mary Byrd, "She takes great care of her Negroes . . . and serves them herself as a doctor in times of sickness. She had made some interesting discoveries of the disorders incident to them and discovered a very salutary method of treating a sort of putrid fever which carries them off."There is evidence to indicate that the women who practiced medicine in the 1700s often did a better job than the male professionals of the 1800s. Medicine in the 1700s was very practical and down to earth. Doctoring women focused on relieving the patient's symptoms, while male doctors of the next century were far more concerned with expounding learned--though usually inaccurate--theories concerning the origin of the disease.The efficacy of the eighteenth-century brand of care was seen in the practice of midwifery, which was the only form of medicine women participated in that was often licensed. Midwives had to serve lengthy apprenticeships before being certified. As apprentices they observed hundreds of deliveries and, for the most part, learned how to let nature take its course. Midwives seem to have taken good care of their female patients and most certainly did less harm than male doctors in the 1800s, many of whom routinely infected their patients with "puerperal sepsis" (childbed fever) by failing to wash their hands.The women workers described so far were part of colonial America's pool of "free labor." As "free" workers, women had some control over their earnings and over the products of their work. Another sizable class of women workers in colonial America were not "free," however. These were the indentured servants and the slaves.It is estimated that half the migrants to the colonies came under indenture, and that a third of these were women. Most of the women who came to the New World in this situation were convicts from Great Britain. Women thieves, prostitutes, and vagrants were given the choice of emigrating or of serving lengthy prison terms. Sometimes the choice was Virginia or the noose. Depending on the crime, the period of bonded labor generally ran from four to seven years.Indentured servants were transported to the colonies by sea captains who usually landed them in the middle colonies or the South; New England had relatively few indentured servants. The ship's captain assumed the expense of the passage. In the New World the captain "sold" his cargo of female servants for somewhere between ten and thirty pounds apiece, depending on the woman's age, health, and skills.The relationship between indentured servant and master was a contractual one. Each side had legal responsibilities to the other--though, needless to say, the master usually had the upper hand. Servants had rights to food, clothing, and shelter. While masters had the right to work the indentured servant from sunup to sundown, they were prohibited from working a servant to death. In some cases masters were taken to court by their servants for failure to live up to their responsibilities. More often, however, it was the servant who was prosecuted, and indentured women tended to be punished more harshly for offenses than were

men. Punishment was usually in the form of additional years of servitude.The master was legally bound to provide certain necessities for starting a new life when the indentured servant's term of labor expired. The outfit usually included a new set of clothes, bushels of corn, perhaps tools for farming, and sometimes a parcel of land in an unsettled part of the colony. Male and female indentured servants were entitled to the same "freedom dues."Indentured women were not allowed to marry during their term of service. Sexual transgression--becoming pregnant out of wedlock--was punished severely. An indentured servant woman who bore a child was usually made to add a year onto her service as repayment for the time she could not work during and after her pregnancy.The choice of a marriage partner was probably the most important decision in the life of a colonial woman. Colonial society put great pressure on people to wed. A woman who did not marry was pitied and treated as less than an adult and, in several colonies, men who did not marry paid higher taxes than did family men. Rarely did single people run their own homes; instead, they were expected to align themselves with the family of a close relative.Throughout the colonies young people were more or less free to choose their own mates--within certain boundaries. No person, male or female, was supposed to marry without parental consent. Young people were expected to marry persons of similar background. Parents were not supposed to push young people into marriages against their will, but among wealthy colonialists, particularly in the South, parents sometimes threatened to withhold an inheritance or a dowry to coerce children into marriages based on mercenary considerations.In general, courtship customs were fairly relaxed. Young people spent much time together in group activities--skating, berrying, picnicking, riding, dancing. There were few chaperones, and courting couples usually had enough privacy to get to know one another.Marriage was treated as an important social institution rather than a purely private affair. A man or woman who broke an engagement, for example, was often called to church or court and charged with breach of promise. If no satisfactory explanation could be produced, a stiff fine was levied against the jilter, to be paid to the injured party. Legal solutions to romantic difficulties were often sought. In New England, if a man "of good character" was refused permission to court by a young woman's parents, he could sue. Often he won his case. This custom was unique to Puritan New England, however; in no other area were there legal procedures for circumventing parental wishes. (Nevertheless, throughout the colonies young people could and did elope.)Courtship customs among the Puritans were particularly interesting. Bundling was one of the most famous. Young couples who were serious in their courting spent the night in bed bundled in heavy bedclothes--with a "bundling board" between them. Apparently intercourse was not supposed to occur. What did take place, however, was considered a matter among the young woman and man and their consciences.The origin and even the point of this custom is not entirely clear. There is no doubt, however, that bundling enjoyed popular approval. New Englanders persisted in the custom for 150 years or more. It faded during the French and Indian War, in the mid-1700s, when French soldiers misused the privilege, bundling with women whom they had no intention of marrying. As late as 1770, however, John Adams, future President of the United States, wrote, "I cannot entirely disapprove of bundling." (John Adams and his future wife Abigail Smith are not known to have indulged in bundling.) The custom continued among the Pennsylvania Dutch well into the 1800s.The Puritan view of engagement as a legally binding state led to the practice of the "pre-contract." Young people who were planning to marry went to church and swore their troth. Once this ceremony was completed, they were married for all practical purposes. The commitment was considered a very serious one. If the young woman became pregnant after she was pre-contracted but before she married, no one was scandalized; the wedding date was simply pushed forward. One historian has discovered that of 200 persons admitted to the Congregationalist church in Groton, Massachusetts, between 1761 and 1775, about one-third confessed to having engaged in premarital sex. The confession was made by an equal number of men and women.Throughout the colonies sexual transgressions committed by people not planning to marry, or already married, were considered far more serious than such acts by engaged couples. Women who bore children outside of marriage could be taken into court and sentenced to public whipping, branding, or fines. If a woman could not support her child, the court might demand that she reveal the father's name to force him to support his offspring. If she refused, there would be further punishment. If the woman did not know who the father was, or if she refused to say, the child was often taken from her and apprenticed to a tradesperson until the age of twenty-one.In the view of most colonists, adultery was the worst crime a woman could commit. This attitude prevailed especially among families with property. Since men controlled nearly all property, it followed that no husband wanted a child fathered by another man to inherit his worldly goods. In strongly religious communities there was an attempt to treat male and female adulterers alike. Both were forced to go to church and confess in public. In New England confession was the only punishment demanded from those of high rank, while those of less social distinction often were branded, whipped, or dunked in a river.Though divorce existed, for the most part social pressures against it were so extreme, and grounds so difficult to obtain, that in practice it was not a real option. An unhappy couple could be granted a legal separation, but it was a precarious situation for the woman. In many areas there were no laws forcing a man to support a wife with whom he was not living. Unless she had family money or skills by which she could support herself, or unless she was separating from a generous spouse, she would find it virtually impossible to leave her husband. In a separation the woman usually lost everything; even the children stayed with the father.Rather than endure the legal formality of separation, many women simply ran away. Women on the run usually went west, where they could get a piece of land and often a new "husband." In fact such

women were bigamists, but outside the more populated centers no one really cared. Even in cities such legalities were sometimes shrugged off. There is some doubt, for instance, whether Benjamin Franklin's wife's first husband was dead when she married Franklin.Men often put items in newspapers to announce that their wives had "eloped from my bed and board." Sometimes these notices were printed to let merchants know the husband was no longer responsible for the wife's debts. Sometimes the ads were taken out in an attempt to recover the wife's belongings. Legally all property in a marriage, including a woman's clothing, belonged to her husband.Women sometimes made off with large amounts of cash, silver, and jewelry. Often these goods were part of the woman's dowry, over which she lost legal control at marriage. Usually, however, women took the bare essentials when they ran away, as the following item from the Maryland Journal indicates. The advertisement charged one Anne Campbell with "robbing" her husband "of all her wearing apparel, a fine pair of English cotton curtains . . . two pillow cases . . . and a sidesaddle." This was not a great deal with which to start a new life.For women marriage meant bearing children, lots of them. A popular colonial toast celebrated "Our land free, our men honest, and our women fruitful." Families with a dozen children were common. Martha Jefferson Randolph, daughter of Thomas Jefferson, was the mother of twelve. Another wealthy Virginia lady, Martha Laurens Ramsey, bore eleven children in sixteen years. The sister of George Washington, Betty Washington Lewis, added eleven children to the three her husband had by his first wife. Mary Heathy of South Carolina bore seven children to her first husband, seven to her second and three to her third--seventeen in all! (Many of the very largest families, with sixteen, eighteen, or more children, came from widowed men who married a second and sometimes a third or fourth wife.)Maternal and infant death rates were appallingly high. Giving birth every year was a terrible physical hardship. Infants born to mothers in weakened physical condition often did not survive their first year. A mortuary poem engraved on the tombstone of a Massachusetts woman told the all too familiar story:She'd fourteen children with herAt the table of the LordThe story of Mrs. Henry Laurens is not uncommon. Born in 1731, she married Henry Laurens, a southern planter, when she was nineteen years old. During the next twenty years she gave birth to twelve children. Seven of them were buried before her. In 1764 her husband wrote that it had been a year of sorrows. His eldest daughter had died; his wife was extremely ill. During the next four years Mrs. Laurens' health continued to deteriorate. Her husband wrote that she "suffered extremely"; nevertheless, she continued to bear children. Finally, in 1768, Mrs. Laurens, emotionally and physically exhausted by the birth and death of her last infant, gave birth to one more baby girl. Then, at the age of thirty-eight, Mrs. Laurens died. Her husband called her death a "stroke of providence." The last child she bore lived to be twenty-one years old before dying in childbirth.Colonial people lived closely with death. Women gave birth at home, and they died at home. Most families experienced the death of at least one or two children. Sometimes living so close to death added a gray pallor to daily life. The little books children read at the time seem morbid by twentieth-century standards, including such verses as the following.At night lie down, prepared to have thy sleep,Thy death thy bed--thy grave.Often, however, their familiarity with death and so many of the painful aspects of living strengthened colonial women. Whether they were bolstered by religious convictions, as so many colonials were, or a belief in what they called providence, colonial women often exhibited great fortitude and courage.For the most part colonial women were fully equal to the realities of their lives. No doubt there were frightened women unable to endure the hardships, but these were a minority. Taken as a whole, the image of themselves that colonial women left behind is extraordinary for its spirit, energy, and stamina. It is a picture later generations of women shut off from the world looked back on with great respect and not a little nostalgia.