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CONTROL, CONSUMPTION, AND CONNECTIONS: THE WOMEN OF EIGHTEENTH-
CENTURY COLCHESTER, VIRGINIA, AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ATLANTIC
WORLD OF GOODS, 1760-1761

By

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B.A. COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES, 2016

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the economic agency and participation of sixty-five women in Colchester, Fairfax County, Virginia throughout the years of 1760-1761 based on ledgers from a general store where they purchased goods on credit. To expand the view of women of different social standings in the colonial south, this study builds a more complicated picture of eighteenth-century women's scope of economic participation.

“Control, Consumption, and Connections” explores how women could acquire credit, how they used that credit to make informed consumer purchases, and how they used the extensive social networks they lived in to earn and consume. By studying their transactions at the store, it becomes clear that women had several avenues for earning credit and that they used those methods, their purchases, and their social networks to provide for their households which some of these women, as widows, maintained on their own.

This study contributes to the field of Chesapeake, economic, and gender history. Women's economic agency as consumers, producers, influential members of social networks, and providers for their households complicates the image of the Colonial South that has dominated public and scholarly discourse. Where women were primarily seen as exercising their influence in the domestic sphere and as consumers, here we see them actively using and acquiring credit and involved in different facets of the colonial economy.

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Without the incalculable assistance of Molly Kerr at History Revealed Inc. and Heather Bollinger at the Fairfax County Court Archives, this research would be impossible. They assisted me in understanding the people of my research and the place in which they lived and provided access to numerous primary sources which would otherwise remain unexamined and the stories within them hidden.

My journey as a graduate student would have been bleaker had it not been for my many colleagues several of whom are now my close friends. Special thanks to Matt Patsis, Kyle Kern, and Onyx De La Osa for being shoulders to lean on in tough times; thanks and good luck to Rhiannon O'Neil who is looking to do great research on our shared subjects; and my sentiments go out to Nick Bobertz, Sharon Rodriguez, Rachael Safra, Gramond McPherson, Samuel Ortiz, Taylor Rayfield, Walt Napier, and too many others to name whose friendship I treasure.

To my parents, Sally and Brian, and to my stepfather Randy, thank you for your constant support of my endeavors. You do not know how much your love means to me. And to my brother Keaton who is becoming a historian in his own time, good luck on your journey and never forget that I have your back.

To my fiancé, my dearest soul, Quintella Greene: You provide logic to an illogical world, and an anchor for my heart. As a partner and a colleague your advice, intellect, and compassion have always given me what I needed when I needed it. With your support and love I've achieved great successes and learned much, and I hope you find in me that same comfort and support as you progress in your own career and we build our lives together.

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INTRODUCTION

Winter had arrived in Colchester, Virginia in 1760. Mrs. Elizabeth Fallen was a widow with herself and at least two others, a young daughter and an enslaved girl named Kate, in her household to feed.¹ She also was a licensed tavern keeper for one of the ordinaries in the small riverside town of Colchester.² This meant she had to take care of herself and one of the social establishments of the community. She must have found herself in need of a significant amount of meat for her home or for the ordinary, for on Friday, November 28, she went to the general store of Alexander Henderson and purchased 83 weight (pounds) of beef from him.³ This was not the first time she visited Henderson's store, but her relationship to him was not limited to the interactions of consumer and store owner.

Mrs. Fallen purchased this large volume of beef on credit that she held with the store. Her credit had accumulated over the year and would be refilled through 1761 by the seamstress services she provided for Henderson. She repaired and made items of clothing for him and his slaves and she also made pillowcases and other furniture linings. Thanks to her earlier work from October and mid-November, when she made and mended stockings, she was able to afford the beef at thirteen shillings and ten pence. A few days later, she received one pound and ten

¹ Alexander Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 58 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).

² Court of the County of Fairfax, held April 17, 1759, in Court Order Book 1756, p 334, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia.; Edith Moore Sprouse, *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*, (Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1975), 52-54.

³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit. Weight is roughly the same as modern pounds in weight measurement. I use weight here to differentiate from pounds sterling or credit, which was the term for currency.

shillings in credit to her account from Benjamin Grayson, Henderson's competitor in town and one of the wealthy residents of the county.⁴ Grayson's contribution to Mrs. Fallen's account possibly reflected work she did for him which itself hints at her reputation as a seamstress and a tavern keeper. She likely was well known to the community of Colchester and the surrounding countryside.

Elizabeth Fallen is a unique example of an eighteenth-century woman of the Chesapeake for how much we can infer about her life. But by utilizing her store credit as a customer, she also represents a common phenomenon among her diverse contemporaries: the twenty-one account holding women and the sixty-five women total who appeared in Henderson's store ledgers in the years 1760 and 1761. During these years the accounts record hundreds of transactions that each tell a different story of the lives of women in Colonial Virginia and the significant contributions they made for themselves, their households, and their communities in the local and Atlantic economies. Because the women do not all come from a specific social class and it is difficult to organize them into clear cut categories, one of the challenges of this study is how to measure each woman's effect and place in the social world of Colchester, Virginia. Rather than strictly categorize them, this project's primary goal is to highlight the different ways women of eighteenth-century Virginia could participate in the economy and how that reflects their agency as economic actors.

The lives of Mrs. Fallen and her contemporaries, like the plantation owning widow Mrs. Sybil West and "Negro" Sue, an enslaved account holding woman, were very different.⁵ But they

⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit.

⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 79, 156 debit.

shared the potential to earn credit, make choices as consumers, and participate in social networks within their community. By examining the credit they held with Henderson and the items they purchased from his general store, this study demonstrates how the women of Colchester used their access to land and labor and their social connections within their community to provide for their households. In doing so, it provides a case study of women's agency and participation in the eighteenth-century Virginia tidewater.

Scholars who have studied women in the Chesapeake have pointed to the limit and reach of women's agency within eighteenth-century society. Using the lens of gender, Kathleen Brown offers a complex analysis of White and Black women's changing place in the social hierarchy of Virginia. She catalogued the change over time from a social order completely stratified between a male-female duality of nature from Medieval England to the racialized dichotomy of the southern colonies, where enslaved black women and free white women were assigned virtues or vices according to their race. These changes, which made the white wife good and the black woman a "wench" informed the world of colonial Virginia as it continued to develop.⁶

Vivian Conger and Linda E. Speth examined wives and widows in Virginia, and how they navigated the law and community to deal with their varying social situations. In Conger's research she found that as widows, women gained significant social influence that gave them a modicum of power in colonial society, and emphasized that widowhood was a transatlantic institution.⁷ Meanwhile, Speth argues that the realities of inheritance in colonial Virginia

⁶ Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁷ Vivian Bruce Conger, *The Widow's Might: Widowhood and Gender in Early British America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

demonstrate the dynamic ways in which families worked in and around the bounds of gender: two thirds of the widows in three counties lived alone on their own property.⁸ Cynthia Kierner focuses on the women of the planter gentry and how they maintained control of their households and their property as *femme-sole* under the law in a society where married women were legally and financially bound to their husbands. She argued that these patriarchal hierarchies would set the limits of what women could do politically during the colonial and early republic periods, but their *femme-sole* status offered them a vehicle through the domestic sphere and increased literacy to have limited but influential forms of social and political agency.⁹

Similar to Kierner's work are the projects of Mary Beth Norton and Linda Sturtz in that they dealt with the way women in the Chesapeake used their influence to govern their households and exercise private political opinions.¹⁰ Norton, Sturtz, and Kierner's studies remained centered on the gentry and consequently did not sample the social and economic realities of those outside the privileged class of the colonial and early republican South. Historians of women's history in the Chesapeake have emphasized that although legal limits existed for women in society and their ability to engage directly with the politics was curtailed by aspects of domesticity, they nevertheless had the means to create and wield social influence which could politically manifest itself within the heavily social world of the south.

⁸ Linda E Speth, "More than Her 'Thirds': Wives and Widows in Colonial Virginia," In *Women, Family, and Community in Colonial America: Two Perspectives*, eds Linda E. Speth and Alison Duncan Hirsch, (New York: Haworth Press, 1983).

⁹ Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700–1835*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 32-38.

¹⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011); Linda L. Sturtz, *Within Her Power: Propertied Women in Colonial Virginia*, (New York: Routledge, 2002).

Other scholars who studied women's economic roles have emphasized how colonial Virginia was intertwined into an Atlantic network of goods and social relationships. They have tended to focus on women as consumers and argued for serious examination of their place in the early modern economy. To evaluate women of the period as consumers, early modernists have looked at probate records and deeds to quantify what items women purchased and how they valued them. This method provides historians a snapshot of early modern people's lives, but one that reflects a single moment in an individual's life rather than the dynamic reality of accumulation which ongoing records of transactions can better reflect.¹¹

In contrast, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor reframed how she assessed market activity and social networks for urban women in Charleston, South Carolina and Newport, Rhode Island. Instead of looking at static property found in probate records, she looked at women involved in commercial transactions.¹² She argued that some women of similar or different social classes lived and worked together and used their social relationships to enhance their access to markets.¹³ Women who were not always directly related lived together and used their work to establish commercial connections. They then "used these connections to tap into chains of credit and to transform one form of money into another."¹⁴ In this thesis, I am arguing, like Hartigan-

¹¹ Some of these studies include Lois Carr, Russell Menard, and Lorena Walsh's *Robert Cole's World, Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991); John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan. *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Garrett A. Sullivan, "'All Things Come Into Commerce': Women, Household Labor, and the Spaces of Daniel Marston's 'The Dutch Courtesan'", *Renaissance Drama*, New Series, Vol. 27, Renaissance Dramatic Culture (1996), 19-46; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *Of Consuming Interests. The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va., 1994), 59-166; Cathy D. Matson. *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions*. Penn State University Press, 2006.

¹² Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and commerce in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 8-10.

¹³ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, 10, 13-15.

¹⁴ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, quotation on p. 12, 13-15.

O'Connor, that commercial connections were embedded in the everyday lives of women in rural Virginia. Similar to her idea of housefuls and the connections within them between different women, I am framing the activity of the women of Colchester through their connections, whether through their families, their business associates, or along the unequal hierarchical relationships that existed between enslaved and master, tenant and landowner in Virginia. In all these cases women were able to marshal their web of connections to access credit and the market.

While Hartigan-O'Connor's concept of women's connections is useful for examining women's place in the ledgers' accounts, Ann Smart Martin's *Buying into the World of Goods* provides a frame for understanding how the economy worked. She uses account ledgers to investigate John Hook, a contemporary of Henderson's as a Scottish immigrant and a general store factor.¹⁵ While her study focuses partially on Hook and partially on his consumers and their purchase choices, my study centers solely on Henderson's consumers-base – the women recorded in his ledger. My study also compliments Smart-Martin's discussion of Virginia consumers since she looks at the backcountry, which was rapidly developing, while I examine Fairfax County, which was well developed and heavily settled by the 1760s.¹⁶

Historians of the eighteenth-century have given much attention to the Atlantic world as a well-connected international market of goods and a communication highway between people. Smart-Martin's study shows how the trends of Europe could affect the furthest reaches of British settlement in the colonies and beyond, but the scholarship was first centered on Europe. The development of early modern consumerism in Europe was analyzed by Jan de Vries, who studied

¹⁵ Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 4-5.

¹⁶ Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 1-8.

the changes in the family work schedule in relation to the birth of consumerism in the Netherlands. He found that while in earlier periods men were the primary laborers of a household, as the seventeenth century progressed women and children began to take on jobs. This rise occurred at the same time as the general growth of the early modern consumer economy and the increased income a household brought in was being spent on consumer goods. De Vries correlates these trends to say that all members of a household became part of the workforce to supplement their increased demand for a wider variety of fine goods.¹⁷ Lorna Weatherill illuminated middle-class patterns of consumption in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain through probate inventories of family household goods. She found that the demand for more items created a desire to pass on those goods and assess their value.¹⁸

Cary Carson's and Richard Bushman's individual studies on household goods and design shifted the focus of consumption and demand to the British colonies, yet they retained the core argument that social and cultural change could be measured through early modern consumerism. Bushman was able to demonstrate a shift in popular manners, architectural taste, and ideas of self-improvement in colonial Delaware that tracked the changing social values of "gentility" and "refinement" which were physical but carried cultural implications.¹⁹ Carson's research question "Why Demand?" expanded on these ideas. He argued that in a context where people migrated far from home, the accumulation of fine goods like clothing and furniture reflected the social credit

¹⁷ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10-11.

¹⁸ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, (London; New York: Methuen, 1988) 5-10.

¹⁹ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, and Cities*, (New York: First Vintage Books, 1992), 83-99, 122-127.

of the person who adorned their body and house with them.²⁰ Carson uses these examples to show that social values held by consumers determined what choices they made. The broad scope of consumer choice and how it was influenced by social pressures and cultural trends was emphasized as a determining factor in creating economic demand. Everyone, from metropolitan London to the frontier of the North American colonies had access to the world of consumer goods which factors like Henderson or Hook were selling, and it developed as a consequence of the changing and well connected networks which the mercantile empires of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain among others used to produce and extract wealth from their colonies.²¹ Meanwhile, in the local world of Fairfax County as in many of the colonies there was a dynamic web of social networks where people used cultural signifiers laden in material goods to make good impressions on their neighbors. The aim of this study is to place the cohort of women who lived and worked in Colchester, Virginia in these broader systems of economics and in the social world of the eighteenth-century.

As a case study, this thesis complicates the picture historians writing about gender presented in their works and adds a new setting in which to discuss the bounds of women's access to the market in the British colonies. One of the challenges of working on the colonial south is the general lack of literacy, something which Kierner alluded to when discussing her use

²⁰ Cary Carson, *Face Value: The Consumer Revolution and the Colonizing of America*, (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2017), 25-36.

²¹ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, (Indiana University Press, 1982). This joint work is usually cited as the origin of the Consumer Revolution as a historiographic idea and presented some of the first arguments in favor of thinking about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century commerce from the consumer point of view. For a look at how the North American colonies were well connected see: April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and Susannah Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections, Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

of public records to inform our view of women's public roles.²² This means that outside the gentry, except in special circumstances, very few personal accounts of women survive. What has survived however are deeds and probate records and the revealing store accounts of Alexander Henderson in his capacity as a factor for the tobacco trader John Glassford. Thanks to Henderson's meticulous bookkeeping records, this study can investigate the methods local women used to earn or acquire credit, their consumer choices, and their participation in the social networks within the town of Colchester and Fairfax County. Because people of all social statuses shopped at Henderson's store, his accounts provide access to a cross-section of the women living in the region. And Colchester's location in the tidewater, in the heart of plantation country, allows this study to get at the center of Virginia's social and economic landscape during the final years of the Seven Years War and the decade prior to the American Revolution.

This study's contribution to the scholarship on women's place in the economy and consumption in the Atlantic world is its focus on credit and the ways women used whatever they had at their disposal to gain access to it. While scholars have discussed consumer choice at length, they generally have not tied it to spendable credit and to the social connections that allowed colonial Virginia's women to provide for their households. Credit also has been studied before, as it was essential to the operation of the Atlantic and early modern European economies, but few scholars have studied it in the context of women's participation in the economy.²³ This case study examines women of Colchester and their actions to draw conclusions about economic

²² Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 9-25.

²³ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy* and David Hancock, *Citizens of the World* each discuss contemporaries of Henderson and the credit heavy business practices they were engaged in but only Hartigan-O'Connor does so by studying women. David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

and social life for eighteenth-century women in the British colonies. It argues that colonial Virginia's women were able to earn credit, buy goods, and work and act within social networks to a greater degree than their legal status under eighteenth-century British law would suggest.

But who were these women? Henderson's records for 1760 and 1761, which is the period of focus for this study, included twenty-one women account holders at his Colchester store. In those same years another forty-four non-account holding women appeared at least once in the accounts of other Fairfax County residents. This means that we can trace a total of sixty-five individual women shopping in the store during these years. I have chosen to focus on 1760 and 1761 because the accounts present were some of the most complete from Henderson's collected records. These years were also chronologically close to other available sources for the women, sources that include their deeds and wills and a tithe-based map of the county indicating where some of them lived and the property they held. Likewise, Henderson's Scheme of Goods and Object Indexes are extant for these years.²⁴ These resources, analyzed in tandem with the ledgers, provide the basis for a case study that places the activity of the women as credit-earners and consumers in the larger context of the region.

Henderson's ledgers for 1760 and 1761 include 409 individual accounts; thirteen of them (John Glassford's account and the "non-person" accounts such as "Household expenses," "horse's expenses," etc.) did not belong to everyday consumers. Of the 396 accounts remaining,

²⁴ It is with great thanks to Molly Kerr at History Revealed Inc. and Heather Bollinger at the Fairfax County Court Archives that some of these resources have been made available to me. Beth Anderson Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map of Fairfax County, Virginia in 1760," ed. Donald M. Sweig, (The Office of Comprehensive Planning, County of Fairfax, 1987).

only twenty-one belonged to women. Men account holders outnumbered women significantly; women made up only 5.4 percent of the account holders in the 1760 and 1761 records.²⁵

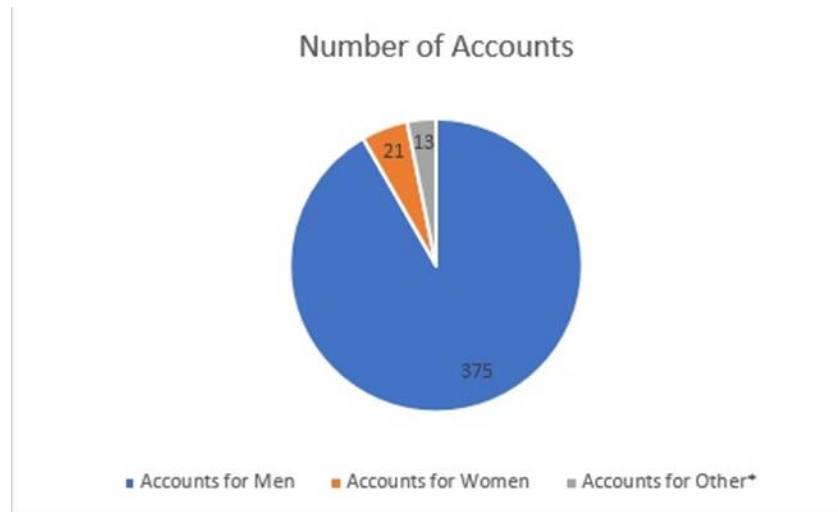


Figure 1: Number of Account Holders by Type.²⁶

The number of women present in the accounts is proportionally smaller than how many women lived in the county. According to the census records during 1760 the population of Fairfax County was 4,987 and grew to 5,226 by 1762, with the enslaved population accounting for close to thirty percent. The sixty-five women who shopped at the store therefore made up about 1.3 percent of the counties' population.²⁷ This cohort does not reflect the overall population of Colchester or Fairfax County, but it does reveal that women could become personally responsible for their credit, or that they could access someone else's credit at the store.

²⁵ History Revealed, Inc., "Person Index, 1760" (unpublished), August 19, 2018.

²⁶ Other includes different store locations, specific accounts for the use of the Colchester store, and the account of John Glassford who is excluded since he is not a resident customer.

²⁷ Donald Sweig, "1648-1800" In *Fairfax County, A History*. Nan Netherton, Donald Sweig, Janice Artemel, Patricia Hickin, and Patrick Reed, co-contributors, (Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County, Virginia, 1978), 33, 64.

Women's participation in the economy was not limited to those who became financially independent but was accessible through their households and social networks. In this context, the idea of households becomes essential. The forty-four women who shopped on other people's credit were connected to an account holder through family, household, or business ties. Take, for example, Mrs. Fallen's account at the store. On the left side in the image below, which is the debit page, Fallen paid 8 pence for a new pair of buckles on October 27, 1760.²⁸ On November 17, to the right on her credit page, she received five shillings of credit from Henderson for making a pair of stockings and a shirt.²⁹ On the left/debit page, on February 6 "Kate" – likely her enslaved woman – purchased four pounds of sugar on her account for 3 shillings per pound. Thus, Fallen used her own labor to obtain credit at the store, which Kate could access for the household's benefit.

²⁸ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit.

²⁹ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit.

Mrs. Fallon		
1760	To Balance from Libr	1.42
Oct 15	To 1st of Oct 1760	1.65
27	To 2nd of Oct 1760	0.8
Nov 28	To 28th of Nov 1760	13.10
Dec 9	To 9th of Dec 1760	3.0
1761	To 1st of Jan 1761	7.0
10	To 10th of Jan 1761	1.10
16	To 16th of Jan 1761	5.0
Feb 6	To 6th of Feb 1761	8.0
16	To 16th of Feb 1761	10.0
27	To 27th of Feb 1761	1.10
Mar 14	To 14th of Mar 1761	6.8
21	To 21st of Mar 1761	2.11
Apr 1	To 1st of Apr 1761	8.3
15	To 15th of Apr 1761	11.6
31	To 31st of Apr 1761	100.00
		<u>100.00</u>

Oct 14	By Cash	11	3.7
Nov 17	By 17th of Nov 1760	5	3
Dec 16	By 16th of Dec 1760	4	1.6
1761	By 1st of Jan 1761	4	1.6
16	By 16th of Jan 1761	4	2.11
22	By 22nd of Jan 1761	4	3
28	By 28th of Jan 1761	4	3
Nov 11	By 11th of Nov 1760	4	3
	By 11th of Nov 1760	4	6.8
	By 11th of Nov 1760	4	5.12
	By Balance to Libr	6	
			<u>100.00</u>

Figure 2: The Debit and Credit Accounts of Mrs. Fallon, 1760-1761. Alexander Henderson, et. al., Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia, fol. 42 credit, debit, from the John Glassford and Company Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 58 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).³⁰

Henderson maintained these records with detail to run his business smoothly and to communicate his own needs and the demands of his customers to John Glassford, the store's owner. Glassford was a tobacco shipping magnate who worked out of Glasgow, Scotland and who was among the joint companies of wealthy Scottish merchants benefitting from the tobacco trade in Virginia. Just as Henderson relied on Glassford to send him merchandise the colonists demanded, Glassford relied on Henderson to secure regular suppliers of bulk tobacco from among his customers.³¹ Their own histories as individuals and as businessmen are complicated, but their activities connected to the store provide the nexus for Fairfax county residents between the local and the Atlantic world.

The women of Colchester who shopped in Henderson's store, therefore, provide a case study for understanding how early American women established credit, what consumer choices

³⁰ The Debit page is on the left and the Credit page is on the right. At the end of the ledger, the totals of both pages must be equal.

³¹ T.M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c. 1740-90*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers LTD. 1975), 9, 13; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 30.

they made, why they made them, and the social networks that allowed them to provide for their households. To understand the connections between their social networks and economic behavior, this study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter discusses how the women of Colchester earned credit. Eighteenth-century Virginia's economy functioned on credit because the colonies lacked hard currency. Credit could be earned through various means such as the labor women provided for others or tobacco notes that indicated the harvest they had dropped off at a warehouse for Atlantic shipment. How the women earned credit depended on their circumstances – the land or labor they controlled and whether it was theirs or belonged to others. In some cases, women owned land outright or could control it through their husbands or children. In other cases, they controlled their own labor or that of others in their households, whether family members, tenants, or enslaved people. A careful analysis of the accounts in Henderson's store ledgers shows that women who shopped in his store had many ways to earn and access credit.

The second chapter shifts focus to the act of consumption. It explores the trends, and strategies the Colchester women used when making purchases from Henderson's store. Women bought mostly textiles, clothing, and household stores, reflecting the everyday needs of the people of Colchester and Henderson's ability to furnish his customers' needs. Women's purchases also reflected their personal tastes and their attempts to project a specific image of themselves. Henderson's notes about the quality of his products help to indicate some of those choice goods, like certain types of fabric that customers regularly purchased in high volume. Women and men alike purchased a variety of goods for different needs, and sometimes they had meaning beyond the mundane. Special items that some of the women purchased reflected their

attempts to project a sense of refinement onto themselves and their heirs. How they transferred treasured objects in their wills helps us to identify why they made some of their consumer choices.

The third chapter discusses how the social networks within which the women of Colchester lived affected both credit earning and consumer choice. The world of eighteenth-century American society was constructed in such a way that women's interactions with their families, friends, and business partners can reveal how they maneuvered to earn credit and make purchases for themselves and their households. Whether they belonged to the planter class, the middling sort, or the enslaved, the women of Colchester were not isolated and often worked within and depended on their connections to improve their lives and establish their places in society.³²

By studying their means of earning credit, how they acted as consumers to provide for themselves and their households, and how they interacted within and through their social networks, this study presents a more refined and complicated understanding of colonial women's lives and their socio-economic place. Certainly, they lived within a patriarchal society where they faced legal and social limits to their ability to provide for their households. Nonetheless, women like Fallen and her neighbors, from landowners to the enslaved, often had the means to access the growing market of the consumer revolution and establish themselves in their local communities as credit worthy. Their ability to access credit and purchase consumer goods shows them exercising personal agency within the early modern economy that gave them increased social influence and allowed them to provide for their families and households. The women of

³² Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, 13-15.

Colchester, in 1760 and 1761, exemplify on a local level the economic reach of eighteenth-century women from different social classes and their ability to be independent but connected actors in their earning and use of credit, their choice as consumers, and their place in the social networks of their communities.

CHAPTER 1: CREATING CONNECTIONS: EARNING CREDIT THROUGH CONTROL OF LAND AND LABOR

On May 11, 1761 Mrs. Elizabeth Fallen received credit at Henderson's store for a finished pair of boy's breeches that he commissioned for Glasgow, one of his enslaved people.³³ Eleven days later Henderson recorded a refund to Mrs. Jean Turley's account for a returned pair of women's stays which did not agree with her. Turley was a land owning widow who usually earned credit through her delivery of tobacco notes – the record of produce she had supplied to the tobacco warehouses for shipment across the Atlantic.³⁴ These two instances in May are small examples of the kinds of transactions through which the women of Colchester acquired credit at general stores like Henderson's. To understand an eighteenth-century woman's economic place in the Atlantic world of goods, we need to explore how they accessed credit to purchase those goods.³⁵ This is especially true when analyzing economically independent women, which was the case for most of Henderson's account holding women.

Virginians in the eighteenth century lived in a credit economy. The examples of how Fallen and Turley received credit reflects both the type of currency the Colchester women used at Henderson's store, as well as some of the ways they made purchases. Credit was essential in the mid-eighteenth-century when sterling currency was hard to come by and social standing was nearly as important as actual wealth.³⁶ Through Henderson's ledgers, we can measure how the

³³ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4 debit, 42 credit.

³⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 131 credit.

³⁵ Ann Smart Martin gets credit for that name describing the trade in consumer goods.

³⁶ Cary Carson, *Face Value*, 62. Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France*, (Duke University Press, 2013).

twenty-one women account holders in 1760 and 1761 earned credit, and how the non-account holders used the credit to which they had access.

This chapter will focus on the economic strategies the women of Colchester created to establish and access credit through the resources they could control. It examines how account holding women managed the land and labor at their disposal to provide for their households within Virginia's credit economy. The framework of land and labor is based on the economic realities within which the women lived – that of a hierarchical community whose primary source of wealth was agriculture. The forms of control through which credit was established and maintained varied between the women based on their social status and the type of work they did. For the women of Colchester that variety had considerable range.

The World of Credit: Establishing How the General Store Accounts Worked

The women of Colchester who had accounts at Henderson's store established and replenished their credit in the same manner as their male neighbors and relatives. But what is credit? In the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, it was the most readily available resource individuals had for making purchases. Understanding early modern credit is important for the context of Henderson's general store because it reflects how specie – “real” pounds, shillings, and pence – was often unavailable.³⁷ Though on rare occasions the ledgers record customers paying with cash, most people made purchases through credit they previously had established with Henderson. As Glassford's factor, Henderson purchased tobacco to ship to Britain. Planters delivered their harvests to a tobacco warehouse, where they received a “tobacco note” indicating

³⁷ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 70-74. Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 43.

the value of their delivery. They then took their notes to Henderson, who gave them credit for the note's value before he collected the tobacco at the warehouse to ship to Glassford. Thus, tobacco was a form of currency and the tobacco notes themselves became a usable form of paper money for planters.³⁸ Customers brought their notes to Henderson at harvest time. If they did not shop at the store regularly but showed up only once or twice a year, the store functioned like a modern bank, where they had an established line of credit they could access later.³⁹

Scholarly debates about women's economic agency in colonial America often focus on women's ability to own land; but some of these discussions have overlooked a crucial point: that eighteenth century households operated as units.⁴⁰ Credit, in these cases, did not belong exclusively to one individual – the account holder – but to the household. Family members or dependents could often access it on behalf of account holders; likewise friends and business associates could draw on or resupply credit on an account at Henderson's store.⁴¹ Understanding the nature of household accounts is essential for framing the ways account holding women thought of and used their credit. It also is crucial for identifying the transactions and connections of non-account holding women who appear on men's accounts, as they usually were family members or people with close connections to the account holder.

³⁸ Sharon Ann Murphy, *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

³⁹ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 96 credit, debit.

⁴⁰ Hartigan-O'Connor's work on "housefuls" is an exception. It contrasts with Cynthia Kierner's analysis about the diminishing place of women as part of the gentry in the early republican south. Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, 10, 80, 98; Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 35-42. Specifying households is important here because the household could include the enslaved and apprentices, tenants, or servants of the family.

⁴¹ Benjamin Greyson in his ledger often has items bought on his behalf by his slave "Negro Jack", who possessed his own account. Elizabeth Fallen also had her slave Kate and her daughter buy items on her account. Mrs. West's purchases were made entirely through her son Hugh jr.; Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42, 50, 96 debit.

For the eighteenth-century women, establishing social credit was at least as important as being a direct financial success. Indeed, one could not conduct commercial transactions without some social connections. Hartigan-O’Conner demonstrated this through the “houseful” connections made between women in Newport and Charleston. She argues that urban women who were not related but lived in the same physical house made up “housefuls” who relied on one another in their search for quality products or services and as they established connections for long-distance business and political connections through social credit and “book debt.”⁴² Similar connections and credit-based transactions were possible for the women of Colchester. If they could not present themselves in a socially acceptable manner, women could not access the marketplace dominated by a patriarchal social hierarchy. By making themselves “credit worthy” both in terms of currency and social standing, women could achieve greater access to the market and more variability in their economic choices. Building social credit, presenting themselves in good fashion, and the importance of a “refined” home are aspects of the consumer revolution that are especially important to scholars of material culture, and will be discussed further on in this study.⁴³ This idea of being able to present oneself in a refined fashion was especially important to the credit earning women of the Virginia gentry.

One of the legal challenges for women connected to their social status was their ability to own land. According to English law, married women were *femme couverte* – they were subsumed under their husband’s financial and legal person. All finances for the household, earned by any member of it including the wife or children was controlled by the husband.

⁴² Hartigan-O’Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, 85.

⁴³ Cary Carson, *Face Value*, 25-27; John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities & Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America*, (Baltimore & London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Consequently, married women could not freely participate in the market as financially independent actors since they could not legally own assets or property except in extraordinary instances.⁴⁴ Widows were, depending upon the terms of their husband's wills, granted *femme sole* status. This meant that unless they remarried and fell again under the rules of coverture they legally could buy, sell, own, and rent property for their own use, sometimes even during the lifetime of their male children. Unlike women tied to *femme couverte*, *femme sole* women faced no restrictions on engaging in business or interacting as producers or consumers in the British Atlantic marketplace.⁴⁵ Women who became *femme soles* upon the death of their husbands often became owners of all or part of the family property and they could then establish their own credit. Wives fully under the bond of coverture, as well as daughters still living with their parents, could establish family credit for the household at large. Therefore, the account holding women, all of whom had *femme sole* status, were not alone in being able to establish credit, but their credit was distinctly theirs. Non-account holders under *femme couverte* could do business

⁴⁴ Marylynn Salmon, "The Legal Status of Women in Early America: A Reappraisal," *Law and History Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1983), 129-134; McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300-1630," 410-438; Pearlston, "Married Women Bankrupts in the Age of Coverture," 265-268; Rosen, "Women and Property across Colonial America," 358-361; Shammas, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America," 3-6.

⁴⁵ Marjorie K. McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300-1630," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 2005), 410-438. The legal peculiarities involved in becoming *femme sole* under the law and maintaining a respectable level of feminine character has been discussed at length by authors like Karen Pearlston, Deborah Rosen, and others. Karen Pearlston, "Married Women Bankrupts in the Age of Coverture" *Law & Social Inquiry*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring, 2009), 265-299; Deborah A. Rosen, "Women and Property across Colonial America: A Comparison of Legal Systems in New Mexico and New York" *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Hereafter *WMQ*), Vol. 60, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), 355-381; Carole Shammas, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America" *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Autumn, 1980), 3-24.; Sarah Hand Meacham, "'They Will Be Adjudged by Their Drink, What Kinde of Housewives They Are': Gender, Technology, and Household Cidering in England and the Chesapeake, 1690 to 1760," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 111, No. 2 (2003), 118-122.

through the household they belonged to which limited their actions but provided them with access to the world of credit.⁴⁶

According to historians, the ideological landscape of early America was framed in a patriarchal way: men dominated the legal and financial world while women were limited. For instance, Kathleen Fawver argues that Martha Smith, a widow who lived in Maryland in 1776, successfully remained the financial head of her family and used her considerable taxable estate (a gristmill, 215 acres of land, and many head of cattle) to support her household. Fawver used Smith to explore how women straddled the line between success and poverty, which was a serious risk many Chesapeake widows faced in the fluctuating agricultural landscape in which they lived and worked.⁴⁷ The gendered division of labor, as demonstrated in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor," could have a significant influence on the kind of work women could take on and their ability to participate in the market as a whole. Ulrich argues that as weaving and homespun modified, many women in rural New England households took on the former work of a small number of skilled men. Women were initially limited to sewing and were forbidden from weaving, which was men's work. However, some like Ruth Henshaw acquired the skills at the right time and demonstrated that they could produce for a wider market which needed increased skilled labor.⁴⁸ In Colchester, Virginia, women's ability to work or their control of land as *femme sole* property owners affected their access to credit at Henderson's store.

⁴⁶ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 5, 11-23.

⁴⁷ Kathleen Fawver, "Gender and the Structure of Planter Households in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake: Hartford County, Maryland, 1776," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Fall 2006), 442-444.

⁴⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth Century New England," *WMQ*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), 3-12.

The twenty-one women listed as account holders in Henderson’s ledgers for 1760 and 1761 can be divided into several “earning categories” based on what was marked on the credit side of their accounts. Seven women simply transferred their balance from the previous year or only bought goods, meaning that they had established their “credit worthiness” with Henderson in previous years. Meanwhile five women received cash from someone on their accounts or were gifted tobacco note credit, five turned in their own tobacco notes for equivalent or calculated credit, and four produced agricultural goods or did work for which they earned store credit. Only two had credit earnings from returns of merchandise.⁴⁹ The total comes out to twenty-three as two women appear twice. Mrs. Jean Turley returned a pair of girls stays but mostly earned credit through tobacco notes. George Nickols and his wife Mary, who held a joint account, both received a gift of tobacco and grew hay for Henderson.⁵⁰

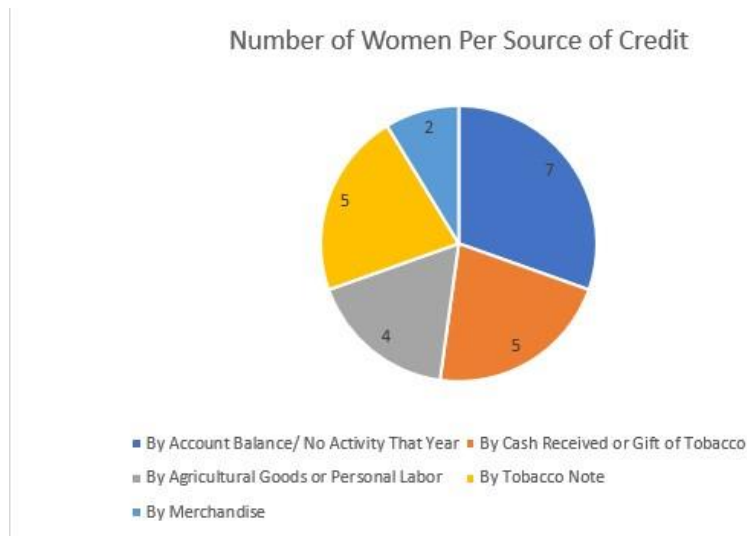


Figure 3: Number of Women According to Their Source of Credit.

⁴⁹ This chart taken from information in Henderson’s Ledgers, specifically the credit folios.
⁵⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91, 131 credit, fol. 4 debit.

While the number of women account holders is small, among those twenty-one accounts there is a close if not equal distribution of ways through which they acquired credit. Most of the account holding women were widows, and all except for Mary Nickols were legally unmarried – held *femme sole* status – in 1760 and 1761.⁵¹ For the forty-four non-account holding women in the ledger, their means of acquiring credit existed within the context of their household or other possible connections to the account holder. Some of the non-account holding women established credit on the accounts of the women listed above, who were often their mothers, while others contributed to the accounts of their fathers, husbands, or other men in the community. The women who earned credit at Henderson’s store did so either through the produce of land they controlled or through their labor or that of their household members.

Controlling Land: Credit from Land Based Produce and Estate Management

Women who had the ability to own or control land had the most readily available source of usable credit. The agricultural and social setting of Fairfax County was a landscape dominated by large plantations trading in tobacco produced by slave labor. These plantations were owned by elite families who had established themselves in the preceding century, and whose main qualifications were ownership of large tracts of land and reaping the benefits of enslaved labor. For men and women of the “better sorts,” maintaining and profiting from their landed estates was their life’s work.⁵² It is no surprise that women who belonged to this class used their estates to fund their consumption. Their property provided a source of income and credit, earned through

⁵¹ The only one who can be confirmed not a widow apart from Mary Nickols was Mary Rogers, whose appears to have separated from her husband per his deed of land to his son. Other than that, most of the account holding women appear to be widows if their records survive, with some like Sue unconfirmed; “Deed from Richard Rogers to William Rogers,” in Deed Book D-1, pages 888-890, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15, 1761.

⁵² Shammass, “The Domestic Environment,” 5-6. Carson, *Face Value*, 158-159.

their participation in the tobacco trade as producers of agricultural commodities. Their ability to control the land they used to grow produce was vital to their ability to establish and accumulate credit.

As Glassford's employee and factor, Henderson's mission was to make as many of the plantation owning men and women his clients as possible. Through him the tobacco growing members of the community could transport their produce to Glasgow and earn credit at his store where they could purchase consumer goods. Henderson was expected to deliver a certain amount of tobacco at regular intervals; he could not be too choosy about who his suppliers were during periods of bad growth.⁵³ He had local competition from two other factors – Benjamin Grayson and Hector Ross – which meant he would accept as many tobacco notes as he could from clients willing to do business with him so that he could fill Glassford's ships.⁵⁴

For tobacco growers, land management was a key aspect of everyday life. Planters needed to be innovative with the crops they grew and how they organized labor to accommodate growing seasons. Historian Lorena Walsh argued that this innovation was driven by underlying desires for financial success and high social status. But tobacco was not always a successful crop, so planters had to find alternative means for increasing credit.⁵⁵ For instance, a drought in 1755 had left many Chesapeake planters with lower yields than previous years, and many were

⁵³ Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 30.

⁵⁴ Sprouse, *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 41-54; *Virginia Merchants: Alexander Henderson, Factor for John Glassford at his Colchester Store, Letter Book of 1758-1765*, transcribed by Charles & Virginia Hamrick, (Athens, GA: Iberian Publishing Company, 1999).

⁵⁵ Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, & Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 194-210; Richard Lyman Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America" *WMQ*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), 373.

still recovering by the time of the American Revolution or had switched to food production.⁵⁶

Crop failures which crashed the market and made many merchants from London and Bristol unwilling to trade in Virginia meant that tobacco planters turned to Glasgow merchants like Glassford.⁵⁷

Several Colchester women were active in the tobacco market as confirmed account holders possessing their own tobacco marks.⁵⁸ These were symbols, usually composed of initials, that represented the planter who grew the crop. The tobacco trading women held accounts of their own, indicating widowhood and outright ownership of their property. This meant that for most of them, they were independent participants as producers in the tobacco trade. Having a tobacco mark was a sign of ownership of the crop outright. The widows Rosa Bronaugh, Valinda Wade, Elizabeth Connell, Jean Turley, and Susannah Ratliff each possessed their own marks.⁵⁹ Henderson recorded these marks alongside the tobacco notes which account holders brought to the store in exchange for credit.⁶⁰ These marks were branded on the tobacco casks themselves for shipping so the planter could be identified by the warehouse counters and the notes they turned in for credit could be confirmed. Since all five of these widows were landowners who traded their own tobacco their individual marks could be recognized by their initials and style.

⁵⁶ Emily Jones Salmon and John Salmon, "Tobacco in Colonial Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*. (Virginia Humanities, 29 Jan. 2013), accessed Web. 22 Apr. 2020.

https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/tobacco_in_colonial_virginia#start_entry

⁵⁷ Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 118-119; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 123.

⁵⁸ Beth Anderson Mitchell, "Colonial Virginia Business Records as a Genealogical Resource" *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, (Vol. 62, No. 4, Dec. 1974), 259-263.

⁵⁹ Mitchell, "Colonial Virginia Business Records as a Genealogical Resource", 259, 263.

⁶⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19, 23, 97, 131, 134 credit.

IST MRS. JEAN TURLEY

EC ELIZABETH CONNELL

R•B MRS. ROSA BRONAUGH

VW MRS. VELINDA WADE

SJR SUSANNAH RATCLIFF

Figure 4: Tobacco Marks for Five Women of Colchester.⁶¹

The tobacco notes of these five widow landowners were only moderately different from their male counterparts in terms of the yield they represented. Bronaugh, Connell, Ratliff, Turley, and Wade each delivered between 500 and one thousand weight of tobacco between 1758 and 1761. Bronaugh received the least tobacco credit through a transfer note for 630 weight of tobacco and Turley earned credit for the most tobacco at three hogsheads, or three thousand weight (for one thousand per standard hogshead).⁶² Measured against the tobacco notes of some of their neighbors - James Edwards, William Simpson Sr., and James Hardage Lane - we find men credited for equivalent or slightly larger amounts of tobacco. Edwards' note included two hogsheads while Simpson's included one large hogshead and Lane received credit for four hogsheads of tobacco.⁶³ In the tobacco market, planters were expected to provide a specific amount each growing season either to consignment merchants on a personal basis or to firms like

⁶¹ Mitchell, "Colonial Virginia Business Records as a Genealogical Resource", 259, 263.

⁶² Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19, 23, 91, 97, 131, 134 credit. Note that "Weight" was the common term for standard pounds, I will be using weight instead of pounds to differentiate between pounds sterling and credit and pounds in weight used for measuring content.

⁶³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19, 20 credit. It is important to note that while hogsheads were a standard measurement of one half ton, for the tobacco notes this was a rounded figure. The gross weight of their "1 hhgds" deliveries ranged between 1050 pounds and 1251 pounds in the case of William Simpson's note for June 9, 1761.

the one which Glassford led. For the largest planters with large tracts of land and many enslaved people to work that land, providing a consistent amount of tobacco was less difficult than it was for planters with limited land and labor. Widowed planters who had their property split and their labor reduced, they might have had bad crops in certain years and were not able to sell consistent amounts to consignment merchants. Smaller planters would have an easier time doing business with someone like Henderson who worked for a large bulk-transport firm because he wanted to gain as many suppliers as possible. He would not be picky about the consistent output of his individual clients since they could be offset by other planters who wanted to establish credit.⁶⁴ Bronaugh, Connell, Turley, Ratliff, and Wade may have stood in good credit with Henderson and other merchants at the same time, but the unpredictability of the harvest in general meant that gaining credit through Henderson who could afford to take a smaller note in exchange for credit during a poor season would make it easier for the women to access credit consistently.⁶⁵

Turley provides a useful example of how widowed tobacco planters used their land to earn credit from Henderson. Turley was a widow who lived on and owned a tract of land at least 450 acres northwest of Colchester in 1760. She also owned four slaves.⁶⁶ She had married into the large Fairfax County Turley family, many of whom had accounts at the store (including her son Sampson).⁶⁷ Turley's husband John, in his will from 1756, granted her the use of his whole estate, half of which she had full ownership of while the other half she could use but was to be

⁶⁴ Eleanor E. Breen, "The revolution before the Revolution? A Material Culture Approach to Consumerism at George Washington's Mount Vernon, VA." PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2013, 42-54, 68-70, http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/2559.

⁶⁵ Mitchell, "Colonial Virginia Business Records as a Genealogical Resource", 259, 263.

⁶⁶ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987; the figure for Mrs. Turley's land comes from a tobacco tax she paid to Robert Boggiss as Parish Collector for 450 acres. Henderson et al. *Ledger 1760-1761 Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 128 credit.

⁶⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 113 credit.

given to their son Sampson and his children. Upon Turley's death she bequeathed her remaining portion to Sampson.⁶⁸ Turley managed her land as a *femme sole* and raised tobacco on it with the help of her son and her enslaved workers.⁶⁹

Turley's account at Henderson's store provides an example of how the tobacco market worked, and how she earned credit by controlling land. Turley delivered her tobacco crop to the Occoquan warehouse twice in 1761 and dropped off the notes to Henderson on June 19 and August 28. Henderson accounted for the gross weight and the weight of the container and recorded these numbers alongside Turley's balance to determine her allotted credit.⁷⁰ Henderson noted that Turley delivered three hogsheads of tobacco that year for which she received credit in the form of five hundred and sixty three weight of tobacco; twelve pounds, nine pence, six shillings sterling; and six pounds, five pence Virginia currency.⁷¹

Three hogsheads of tobacco was a significant harvest; nevertheless, some of her neighbors who held larger estates brought in larger amounts during a good year. In Turley's own extended family, her brother-in-law Paul Turley turned in five hogsheads of tobacco and received double the credit of his sister-in-law.⁷² Sampson Turley, her son, also sold more hogsheads of tobacco for which he received 6,401 weight of tobacco in credit.⁷³ Widows with a

⁶⁸ "The Will of John Turley" in Will Book B-1, p 126-128, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 16, 1756.

⁶⁹ Henderson, *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 131 debit.

⁷⁰ A good piece of legislation on colonial tobacco warehouse regulation to review is Gooch's 1730 Act, passed only a decade later and in effect until 1775 and renewed: William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619* (Richmond: Franklin Press, 1820), p 4:247-271. Found on: *Encyclopedia Virginia*, (Virginia Humanities, first published March 29, 2012, Last modified May 17, 2012). Accessed April 25, 2020.

https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/An_Act_for_amending_the_Staple_of_Tobacco_and_for_preventing_Frauds_in_his_Majesty_s_Customs_1730

⁷¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 131 credit.

⁷² Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 21 credit.

⁷³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 113 credit.

reduced workforce and less land were able to produce similar yields to men who still owned their full estates, while Turley's relatives owned larger tracts of land compared to her.⁷⁴ While *femme soles* earned credit through control of the land and its crops, some like Turley faced logistical challenges to her ability to maintain good credit due to a reduction of the size and labor power of her estate.

Jean Turley's situation after her husband's death and her financial independence was tempered by her influence over her family – her children and grandchildren. This was true of many widows per the stipulations of their husbands will, where they retained the rights to use parts or all of the family's land during their lifetimes. In a division of land that might otherwise have set Turley back, her husband granted some of his lands along Popeshead Creek to their granddaughter Jane. Jane also received one of the five enslaved people granted to Turley during the years between 1756 and 1760.⁷⁵ Jane owned that land and one enslaved person, yet she was only twelve in 1761; therefore Mrs. Turley still held control over her granddaughter's property since she was still below the age of majority.⁷⁶ This was a form of familial control over the household's joint property, and that property could provide them with financial credit.

Mary Rogers is another example of how widows earned credit for their households by managing their husband's legacies. Unlike Turley, who was left in direct control of her husband's estate, Rogers was not granted direct ownership of the land. Rogers' son William

⁷⁴ Emily Jones Salmon and John Salmon, "Tobacco in Colonial Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, (Virginia Humanities, January 29, 2013) Accessed: April 25, 2020.

https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/tobacco_in_colonial_virginia#its2

⁷⁵ "The Will of John Turley" in Will Book B-1, p 126-127, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 16, 1756

⁷⁶ "Turley Families," *Rootsweb Blogs* hosted by Ancestry.com, updated May 1, 2005, Accessed, June 17, 2020, <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~unab22/turley.htm>.

inherited the family land, but her husband stipulated in the deed that Mrs. Rogers could use the property for her own purposes.⁷⁷ Rogers made use of her son's tract of land to grow corn and supply the family with a line of credit she held at Henderson's store which they used to purchase items like powder, shot, rum, and shoes.⁷⁸ In her case, she did not directly own the land, but the stipulation of her husband's deed gave her the right to use it.

Roger's use of land to grow corn points to another strategy widows, as *femme sole*, used to mitigate potential problems with the tobacco market. Women, like male planters, began to supplement tobacco with other crops. The corn Rogers sold to Henderson's store for credit may have been used for a variety of needs: food for humans, feed for animals like Henderson's horse, or for making whiskey for taverns.⁷⁹ There is some evidence that Rogers' corn may have travelled through Henderson to local taverns where whiskey might have been distilled.⁸⁰ Likewise, George Nickols and his wife used their land to grow hay, some of which made it to Henderson's store to feed his horse.⁸¹

Outside of produce sales, landowning women had other means to acquire credit. One was through estate management which could take several forms through renting and organization. Many of Fairfax County's landowners did not work the land themselves or with their slaves but rented out their lands to tenants who paid their rent in tobacco or labor. One example of a

⁷⁷ "Deed from Richard Rogers to William Rogers," in Deed Book D-1, pages 888-890, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15, 1761.

⁷⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 107 credit, debit.

⁷⁹ The statement about Henderson's horse comes from the fact that Henderson recorded his purchase of Rogers' corn under the "Horses Expenses" account (debit page, folio 4). This is the one piece of evidence hinting at how the corn Henderson assigned credit to her for was used. Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4 debit.

⁸⁰ Mary Miley Theobald, "When Whiskey Was the King of Drink", *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, (Summer 2008), Accessed November 2nd 2018, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/summer08/whiskey.cfm>. Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 5 debit.

⁸¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91 credit.

woman landlord was Sybil West, who was the matriarch of her family after the death of her husband. West's family was one of the more prosperous of the county's residents. The map of land properties in 1760 shows that the Wests owned vast tracts of property, including two separate land holdings held by Sybil.⁸² Two of her sons who also had accounts in the ledgers were Hugh West Jr., an attorney, and John West, the county sheriff.⁸³ The brothers, as participants in the legal and civil institutions of the colony, helped to situate their mother as a woman comfortably placed within the gentry class. Sybil West was born into the Harrison family, another wealthy clan of planters.⁸⁴ By 1782 she owned eight slaves, two horses, and eleven cattle. Her sons had larger estates, but her personal wealth is significant for understanding her own social place.⁸⁵ West's experiences with her husband and with their tenants would have given her familiarity with tobacco planting, so after her husband's death she had the tools she needed to continue making a profit from her land.⁸⁶

Following her husband's death in 1755, West supported herself and her household, in part, through the family's rental properties. In 1760, West collected 540 weight of tobacco in rent from Thomas Windsor, a landowner himself who rented land from her son William West. Sybil's son Hugh West Jr. collected the rent on her behalf and had it added to her store credit.⁸⁷ She also leased land to Benjamin Southard and sold land to William Triplett, both of whom were tenants

⁸² Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

⁸³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 96 credit, debit.

⁸⁴ Will of Hugh West" in Will Book B-1, pages 74-75, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 21, 1754; "Deed from Sibyl West to William Triplett," in Deed Book M-1, p 315-317, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded July 1, 1777.

⁸⁵ Deed book M-1 315; Patricia Duncan, *Fairfax County, Virginia Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782-1850* (Heritage Books, 2012,) p 9.

⁸⁶ Bushman, "Composite Farms", 373; "Will of Sibyl West," in Will Book E-1, p 235-236b, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 16, 1786.

⁸⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 96 credit, 156 credit.

on her properties.⁸⁸ In addition to functioning as a landlord, West oversaw the family's properties. She served as a mediator in land transactions between her children and their tenants. West also was a signatory on several deeds apportioning her children parts of their father's property when he died.⁸⁹ She witnessed the will and inventory of her son Hugh Jr. when he predeceased her in 1767, when the land was split again.⁹⁰ West's signature on these legal documents shows that as a planter widow she exercised similar legal authority to her late husband, as was her right under *femme sole* law while she remained unmarried. And later Mrs. West continued in this role as a mother and as a grandmother through her own will and bonds left for the benefit of her heirs. She left legacies to her several granddaughters and great-granddaughters of 31 pounds currency each.⁹¹ As a *femme sole* matriarch, West's good financial management was directly responsible for establishing the comfort and security of her grandchildren. West was able afford the provisions she made for her descendants by collecting credit from her tenants as a supplement to the tobacco she grew, and she could help maintain the family's prosperity by overseeing her children's use of their land.

Women like West, Rogers, Turley, and Bronaugh demonstrate how women who owned or controlled land could acquire credit through the crops they produced. They had the means and resources to turn a profit on tobacco and other crops, and through these could build their social

⁸⁸ "Lease from Sibyl West to Benjamin Southard," in Deed Book E-1, p 294-298, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded July 19, 1763; "Deed from Sibyl West to William Tripplett," in Deed Book M-1, p 315-317, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded July 1, 1777.

⁸⁹ "Deed from Sibyl West to George West," in Deed Book D-1, p 403-405, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded May 17, 1757; "Deed from Sibyl West to Hugh West," in Deed Book D-1, p 543-544, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 20, 1758.

⁹⁰ "Will of High West," in Will Book C-1, p 7-8, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded March 30, 1767.

⁹¹ "Will of Sibyl West," in Will Book E-1, p 235-236b, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 16, 1786.

and financial credit. With the help of the land they controlled, they could establish themselves as women with significant wealth in the community.

Controlling Labor: Women as Laborers in Colonial Virginia, Free and Enslaved

Women who did not own land, or those who were tenants, servants, or slaves, also acquired credit and held accounts with Henderson's Colchester store. Having customers from all social standings was a regular occurrence for a general store owner. Ann Smart Martin found similar patterns in her study of Henderson's contemporary John Hook; he also noted the lower sorts and enslaved people buying, selling, and establishing credit.⁹² Henderson's customers for whom much less was recorded than their landowning counterparts earned their credit through their labor.

Elizabeth Fallen stands out as one of Henderson's closest and most active clients. She appeared often at the store and Henderson frequently recorded her seamstress work in his record of household and "servants'" expenses.⁹³ She does not appear to have held any large plots of land in 1761 but she did have a daughter and an enslaved girl whose labor contributed to the household's credit.⁹⁴ Fallen was a widow, and the primary work which Henderson granted her credit for was mending shirts and making pillowcases and furniture linings, the work of a skilled eighteenth-century seamstress.⁹⁵

Fallen's sewing shows that working women could be paid directly for their products in credit, and in the familiar context of Colchester Fallen may have been a trusted seamstress. She

⁹² Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 2, 34.

⁹³ Both as a regular shopper and as a regular earner of credit from Henderson himself.

⁹⁴ Duncan, *Fairfax County, Virginia Personal Property Tax Lists*, pp. 2, 16, 31.

⁹⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit, 3 debit.

was paid for weaving, mending, or crafting various items of clothing or furnishings that required skill with cloth. Henderson, for example, received a set of pillowcases and sheets as well as a set of six towels from Mrs. Fallen in September 1761.⁹⁶ That same year she also made clothing for Henderson's slaves. In 1760 and 1761, one enslaved boy named Glasgow received a pair of shirts, stockings, and breeches Fallen had made. Billy and Celia, two other enslaved children, also received newly made or repaired stockings and shirts made by Fallen.⁹⁷ Sewing for Henderson provided credit at the store that she could use to support her household.

Fallen's status as a widow may have contributed to her economic independence but it also meant she needed to support her household. There is no surviving record of her owning land, but apart from her daughter who bought items on her behalf, Fallen's family also included nieces in the care of Peter Wagener and an enslaved girl named Kate.⁹⁸ Kate regularly purchased items on Fallen's account but she also appears to have done some of the work for which Fallen received credit.⁹⁹ As members of the household both Fallen's and Kate's labor contributed to supporting the whole. However, the relationship of power within the household was not equal, since Fallen controlled who did what work while Kate simply did as she was told. For example, Fallen received credit for her "Wench-washing" on one occasion in 1761.¹⁰⁰ While at first this may appear to be washing Fallen did herself, "wench" in the context of colonial Virginia meant enslaved women.¹⁰¹ This means that Kate likely did the washing work for which Fallen received

⁹⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 3 debit.

⁹⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 5 credit, 6 credit, debit, 42 debit.

⁹⁸ Court of the County of Fairfax, held August 19, 1758, Court Order Book 1756, p 289. Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia.; Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit.

⁹⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit, debit.

¹⁰⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit.

¹⁰¹ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches*, 180-185.

credit. Henderson hired slaves directly, such as Milford, an enslaved man originally belonging to Catesby Cocke. Cocke sold the service of Milford to Henderson for a specific amount of time, a common practice during the era.¹⁰² The fact that Henderson hired Kate to do his laundry for which Fallen received payment indicates the hierarchy of slavery in this society. A white woman could use an enslaved woman's work to acquire credit, assuming direct control and responsibility for her labor. Just as Henderson paid Cocke for Milford's work, he paid Fallen for Kate's laundering labor. While she may not have owned land, Mrs. Fallen relied on her work and the labor of those in her household to earn credit.

In addition to her seamstress work, Fallen was a licensed ordinary keeper in Colchester for at least one year.¹⁰³ An ordinary is a tavern with regular prices for beverages and food set by the county and colonial government, in contrast to a tavern where seasonal changes to prices occurred.¹⁰⁴ As an ordinary keeper, Fallen was responsible for the upkeep of the establishment and likely did waitressing or cooking too. Keeping up a tavern was difficult work. It was not unheard of for Virginia women to be tavern or ordinary keepers, but it was somewhat rare. George Washington frequently dined at two Williamsburg taverns owned by women.¹⁰⁵ Records do not reveal which of the several Colchester taverns Fallen ran. She is one of five people licensed to be innkeepers during the early 1760s. Charles Tyler received a license in 1757,

¹⁰² Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4 debit, 97, 138 credit.; Lorena Walsh, "The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins, and Some Implications," *WMQ*, Vol. 58, No. 1, Jan., 2001, 139-170; Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782 to 1810," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 35 (1978), 260-268.

¹⁰³ Court of the County of Fairfax, held April 17, 1759, in Court Order Book 1756, p 334, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia.

¹⁰⁴ Sprouse, *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 60.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "A Study of Taverns of Virginia in the Eighteenth-Century with Special Emphasis on Taverns of Williamsburg," *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 0164*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library, (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1990), 2-3. <https://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports%5CRR0164.xml&highlight=>

William Bayly in 1758, and William Linton in 1761. Fallen received her license in 1759 and was the only *femme sole* in Colchester to hold a license.¹⁰⁶

As an ordinary keeper and a seamstress, Fallen's labor was socially acceptable as "women's work." Also, Fallen filled an economic niche in Colchester with her labor as a seamstress. The town already had a tailor, John McIntosh who was paid comparative prices for the jackets and waistcoats he was commissioned to make.¹⁰⁷ While women were not permitted to be tailors, they could work as seamstresses.¹⁰⁸ Together, these employment options show that as a working widow supporting her family Fallen found ways to use her own labor and the labor of those in her household to earn spendable credit.

The status and workload of other women belonging to the tenant class are less apparent. According to the joint account of George Nickols and his wife Mary, they were paid credit for 1,790 weight of hay delivered to Henderson.¹⁰⁹ It is likely that Mary Nickols worked with her husband as a farmer, but because they were tenants and do not appear to have owned slaves, they relied on their own labor and, potentially, hired workers to bring in their harvest. The Nickols did not own their land but rented it from John Ford.¹¹⁰ Regardless of who worked with them, their harvests were successful enough that they could afford to pay the rent and sell a significant amount of hay to Henderson. Establishing some credit for themselves with Henderson directly rather than being beholden to Ford's generosity as a landlord gave the Nickols couple access to

¹⁰⁶ Sprouse, *Colchester, Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 61.; According to the Beth Mitchell Map of Fairfax in 1760 however, only three tavern establishments are marked. This could indicate either discrepancy of the records or use of some buildings as tavern locations not being recorded: Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

¹⁰⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 5 debit.

¹⁰⁸ Shammass, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America," 5-6. Meacham, "They Will Be Adjudged by their Drink," 118.

¹⁰⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91 credit.

¹¹⁰ Beth Anderson Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

the market and allowed them to maintain individual credit for their household. Mary Rogers, not being the owner of her land but able to use it, also fits into this labor-controlling category of credit-earners. She controlled her own personal labor to farm on the land belonging to her son to grow corn which she sold to Henderson for credit, and therefore was able to provide for her family.¹¹¹ She could also maintained credit apart from her son, meaning that she benefitted from her *femme sole* economic status without experiencing the drawbacks of not owning land. For the social norms of the day, the type of farming work Nickols and Rogers did was perfectly acceptable for women who were tenants. Without enslaved labor farmers were expected to do the work themselves, and women frequently took on these tasks.¹¹² Women of the middling and lower sorts who were tenants on the land of others, and women who became dispossessed of the outright ownership of their land had to use their own labor to build or re-establish personal credit and to maintain the credit of their households. By growing surplus hay or corn, Nickols and Rogers demonstrate that women could devote their labor toward maintaining the financial needs of their families.

The evidence becomes less clear when attempting to investigate the credit that enslaved women could have earned and used. In most cases, like that of Kate or several slaves owned by Benjamin Grayson, enslaved people made purchases on their masters' credit at Henderson's store. But they used that credit at the instruction of their master and there is no evidence of direct control over their own labor to earn credit for themselves.¹¹³ One enslaved woman, however,

¹¹¹ "Deed from Richard Rogers to William Rogers," in Deed Book D-1, p 888-890, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15, 1761.

¹¹² Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 203. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 66-68.

¹¹³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42, 50 debit; Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 180.

stands out in the records because she possessed her own account at Henderson's store and had control over at least some of her time and labor. Sue, a woman owned by Henderson's competitor Benjamin Grayson, held her own account at the store for several years. On November 22, 1760, she bought a chest lock from Henderson for one shilling and three pence. She also received credit for 16 chickens and 3 fowls that she sold to Henderson. Later she sold some cabbages to him which he bought at twelve shillings and three pence to feed his household.¹¹⁴

Sue's personal account at Henderson's store is significant. Many enslaved people, usually at their master's discretion, found time to work for themselves or raise their own crops on specified days. A system of gang labor was enforced on many plantations so that time and space to work for one's self was very limited. The harsh slave codes of Virginia meant that an enslaved person was punished for taking their owner's produce unlawfully, which made the prospect of selling goods and earning credit risky.¹¹⁵ However, for inexpensive livestock like chickens and for produce grown on non-working days in the slave quarters, enslaved people could have some control over selling or using these items.¹¹⁶ So Sue selling her produce to Henderson is within the bounds of the social restrictions of enslaved people. Henderson's record of her transactions on her separate account also shows that he valued her as a customer. If Grayson questioned her purchases, Henderson could use the ledgers to prove what she had sold to him. The fact that she was credit-worthy is notable since it indicates that Sue was trusted and recognized in the social networks of Colchester.

¹¹⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 79 credit, debit.

¹¹⁵ Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 317-320.

¹¹⁶ Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 339-340.

Sue was not the only enslaved woman in Virginia with a use for credit and refined taste. At John Hook's store in Franklin county some of his enslaved clientele made several purchases that stood out to historians as indicative of the same kind of buyer's choice and personal use of credit.¹¹⁷ Sue, however, was the only enslaved woman at Henderson's store with her own personal line of credit. Investigating the ways she and other enslaved people accessed and earned credit is necessarily limited. But what the ledgers demonstrate is that she used the resources available to her – her own labor – to earn credit at her own discretion.

Conclusion

Women in colonial Virginia were expected to fill certain social roles and to find ways to support themselves and their households within those roles. For those who were the main providers for their households, they had to find ways to earn credit. Landowning widows could continue to manage their late husband's property and collect revenue from growing tobacco or from renting that land to other planters. Their control of the land afforded them the means for earning credit. Women who did not own land were able to use their labor or the labor of others in their household to acquire credit. They could control their own labor by growing extra produce, sewing, keeping ordinaries, or selling chickens and fowl. Resourceful women of the eighteenth century found means to control land and labor to accumulate monetary credit, which they could then spend on consumables, which they chose with just as much calculation and choice. They could also use their financial credit to establish or re-affirm themselves as socially credit worthy both at home and abroad.

¹¹⁷ Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 173-180.

CHAPTER 2: THE OBJECTS OF CONSUMPTION: REASON AND VALUE IN PURCHASES BY THE WOMEN OF COLCHESTER

On Friday, November 21, 1760 Henderson recorded the purchases made by Elizabeth Payne and by the joint account holders George Nickols and his wife Mary. The Nickols and Elizabeth Payne both bought rum, a fairly common household purchase.¹¹⁸ On Saturday, November 22, Sue, the enslaved woman belonging to Benjamin Grayson, purchased a chest and lock for herself, while the son of the planter Elizabeth Connell purchased powder and shot on her account.¹¹⁹ Sunday, November 23 saw John Ford purchasing a blanket and a large rug on the account of his tenants: the Nickols couple.¹²⁰ In the following week, Henderson recorded the sale of 83 weight of beef to Elizabeth Fallen. He also sold cotton and a pair of buckles to Valinda Wade and four yards of plied fabric along with a large, dyed rug to Connell.¹²¹

The two-weeks of purchases in late fall 1760 are a small sample of the various goods Colchester residents needed, and the range of consumer choices women who were participating actively in the Atlantic world of goods made. This snapshot shows a colonial Virginia community of women preparing for winter and dealing with the needs of everyday life. By examining the daily purchases Henderson's shoppers made in 1760 and 1761, this chapter demonstrates how women wielded their agency as consumers. Measuring how eighteenth-century women made market decisions and used what they purchased demonstrates how they

¹¹⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 76, 91 debit.

¹¹⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 23, 79 debit.

¹²⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91 debit.; Beth Anderson Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

¹²¹ Henderson, et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42, 19, 23 debit.

made consumer choices. Such choices reveal to historians what their lives were like and what needs they prioritized.

The women of Colchester, Virginia who shopped at Henderson's store were part of an Atlantic-world network of markets and products. They were at once both producers of raw goods (tobacco) and consumers who benefitted from the increasing number and variety of goods transported to the colonies. The products they bought had everyday uses, and they ranged from gunpowder and nails to well-made shoes and fine fabrics. However, their purchases went beyond utility and often reflected the cultural and social demands that concerned residents of Fairfax County. For both women and men, the social credit and cultural capital some goods carried almost outweighed the practical needs they supplied. High-quality fabrics, finished articles of clothing, and silverware, for example, often carried social meaning – especially for colonists who had to establish themselves as “genteel”.¹²²

The relationship between consumer goods and social value, the way in which items could be used beyond their mundane purposes, has been the subject of study for several scholars who identify this seventeenth-and eighteenth-century shift as the Consumer Revolution.¹²³ Jan de Vries explored the changing labor of the household economy into one where husbands, wives, and children all worked to earn incomes and afford the consumer goods becoming more readily available as part of his “industrious revolution.”¹²⁴ Apart from affording those goods, de Vries also investigated demand as an aspect of the industrious revolution. He argued that specialization

¹²² Kate Haulman, "Rods and Reels: Social Clubs and Political Culture in Early Pennsylvania," *Early American Studies*, vol. 12, no.1 (Winter, 2014), 143-154; Carson, *Face Value*, 66-68.

¹²³ Carson, *Face Value*, 56-58; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 48-60; John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*. 25-34, 80-84; Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 58-62.

¹²⁴ De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, 2-6, 9-10.

in the household economy itself drove consumption of other goods after household members had re-allocated their time.¹²⁵

Cary Carson in *Face Value* answered some of the questions surrounding consumer demand in the eighteenth-century British colonies, particularly why demand was such a driving force in the economy. Demand for fine goods was ultimately a demand for increased social currency that individuals and families used to represent themselves. Carson outlined how the early modern consumers in British North America began to move beyond basic needs for recreation, fashion, and home architecture reflecting a shift in their social world. “Fashion became a badge of membership (or a bid for membership) in class-conscious social groups.... Consumer goods and the social arts they were used to perform served, first, as shared symbols of group identity and, second, as devices that social climbers imitated in hopes of ascending the social ladder.”¹²⁶ Carson’s analysis of these symbols focused on their cultural value: how they could be used as signifiers that portrayed wealth. Finished articles of clothing and fine fabrics were important cultural signifiers since the long distances that people migrated took them out of their local contexts where social rank was well established. Therefore, individuals could establish social credit for themselves by presenting themselves as refined. Even in localized social worlds like those of renaissance Europe, scholars like Ulinka Rublack have discussed the trends of fashion and how they carried social markers, such as markers of cultural heritage in addition to symbols of status, which would influence the colonial culture of the Americas.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, 9-10.

¹²⁶ Carson, *Face Value*, 34.

¹²⁷ Carson, *Face Value*, 31-32; Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33-37, 67-71. 2010).

Some historians have argued that women, as consumers, experienced the greatest amount of freedom and access to make decisions during the early days of the consumer revolution.¹²⁸ I argue that they made use of those freedoms to engage with the market, but the choices which they made as consumers were determined by social pressures they needed to accommodate. The women of Colchester made consumer choices to benefit themselves and their household. Whether that was through ensuring daily needs were met or creating a respectable social image for the family through fine clothes and decoration, women had options to choose from thanks to the consumer market of the British Empire. Creating an improved image of oneself was tied to the social meanings clothing carried, that accentuated a person's social "face value".

The ability of fashion to carry social meaning is intertwined with the history of women in the economy since women were often at the forefront of consumer interest. Kate Haulman discussed social indications of foreignness in fashion in her study on the advertising language of New England stores during the American revolution. Women general store owners among others had to balance political messages with attempts to advertise their wares. During the Seven Year's War an aversion to French styles was promoted as a political statement, along with a growing "homespun" movement leading up to the revolution. These cultural shifts were tied to presentations of sexuality, and women consumers had to make careful choices about how to represent themselves.¹²⁹ This complicates the scholarly trend started by T.H. Breen to emphasize the liberating qualities of the consumer revolution for women, since now women's choices could

¹²⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich references T.H. Breen and credits him with shifting the discourse on women's economic activity heavily to consumption in the colonies in his work T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 485; Thatcher Ulrich, "Looms, Wheels, and Gender Divisions of Labor," 4.

¹²⁹ Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Gender and American Culture Series, 2011), 62-75, 84-87.

have serious social consequences.¹³⁰ While the works of Rublack and Haulman have individually focused on the political and cultural representations that were borne out in early modern fashion (renaissance Europe and the early republic era respectively), other historians have discussed gender roles in this era and how they were socially coded, often within and around the language of clothing and fabric. Clare Crowston analyzed the seamstress guilds of Paris to discuss how they worked as economically active women who were part of the consumer economy. As a largely informal network containing thousands of women, Crowston asserts that the seamstresses of Paris were able to establish a niche for themselves in the guild system offering them the right to work. The Parisian seamstress guild was able to outcompete the city's tailors by creating a more casual style of women's clothing, the mantua, since seamstresses were legally outlawed from making boned corsets. Mantuas became so popular that women consumers considered them fashionable, which created a clientele of women consumers for a set of women producers.¹³¹

Crowston's work should be read alongside Rublack and Haulman's scholarship since the clothing context for this era is both a gendered phenomenon as well as one that carried economic and social weight. Together, the research by historians of fashion and historians of gender in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world can provide a more complete picture of consumer interests and the social relations surrounding consumption. This is especially true of the activities of women in this period due to the expectations of proper manners and behavior placed on women during the eighteenth century.

¹³⁰ T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148-152.

¹³¹ Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Duke University Press, 2013) 45-56, 155-162; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 63-77; Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 28-40.

But how does this play out in the localized world of 1760 Colchester? Though the women's guilds of seamstresses in Paris are geographically far removed and the witty advertising language of the American Revolution is a decade in the future, Colchester shares the social language of those Parisian seamstresses and saleswomen of the north. And how the women chose to shop informs how they lived within their own context.

Early modern people used the articles of clothing and other finished goods for the household which they purchased in many ways, but as scholars like Carson have argued, they sought to send a message to society, whether conscious or otherwise: "I am a refined woman" or "I am a woman who makes good financial decisions and can be considered credit-worthy."¹³² For widowed planters and women of middling means, being able to portray themselves as financially stable and credit-worthy was about more than just their social reputation; doing so improved their ability to maintain their livelihoods and provide for their dependents. For other women who were not the heads of households, they still desired to appear refined for social reasons ranging from increased marriage prospects to the reputation of their families.¹³³ The material goods which Henderson's store carried could relay these messages. Refinement, therefore, was central to some of the consumer choices they made.

To understand what the women were buying and to help understand the social meaning of those items, this chapter categorizes the goods Henderson sold and reveals which were most frequently purchased. It then analyzes the consumer trends of the women themselves, and the

¹³² Carson, *Face Value*, 67, 92, 108; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 420-425 on the idea of gentility, specifically on how the household was changing into the eighteenth century.

¹³³ Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998) 6, 24-27.

social and cultural value of the items they chose to purchase. It is critical to understand just how the women measured up as parts of the general consumer population and what form their consumption took. It is also critical to analyze the social meanings which customers assigned to their purchases. Connecting all these points, the broader question asked is what do these purchases say about consumer demand and desire and what do they say about women's economic agency in the eighteenth century? Colchester women who had market access had the same level of decision-making control as men; however, household need and maximized social value often informed their choices.

Women's Activity: Measuring the Consumer Base

To measure how women engaged in the economy, we must begin by summarizing and categorizing the transactions recorded in Henderson's ledgers. How many customers Henderson had, and who shopped in 1760 and 1761, will determine how representative these women are of the general population of consumers.¹³⁴ As previously established, there were twenty-one women account holders in 1760-1761. During that year, fifteen of the account holding women made purchases, while six apparently did not shop or add new credit to their accounts.¹³⁵ In order to have accounts but no shopping activity, these six women had previously established lines of credit with Henderson with balances that transferred to 1760-1761.¹³⁶ While the six women may

¹³⁴ The following information is taken from both Henderson's Ledgers and Scheme of goods, as well as from the Indexes created from those by History Revealed, Inc., courtesy of Molly Kerr. History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019; History Revealed, Inc., "Scheme of Goods Index, 1759-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019; History Revealed, Inc., "Person Index, 1760" (unpublished), August 19, 2018.

¹³⁵ History Revealed, Inc., "Person Index, 1760" (unpublished), August 19, 2018.

¹³⁶ The six who did not have any debit side activity in 1760-1761 except to transfer the balance of their totals include: Mrs. Chew, Sarah Barnes, Sarah Lewis, Mrs. Whale, Ann Mason, and Mrs. William Simpson. For a few like Mrs. Barnes and Mrs. Mason, their purchases in other years tell us about them, but for this study, their accounts cannot be considered "active consumers."

have shopped elsewhere during the year, they did not do so at Henderson's store. For the non-account holding women, their purchases can be found in the accounts of the other account holding women or on accounts held in men's names. There were forty-four additional women who all appeared at least once throughout the 1760-1761 ledgers as a consumer or recipient of a purchase.¹³⁷

We can directly measure the purchases of account holding women and those who shopped on their accounts while non-account holding women's purchases can be assessed indirectly through the household they belonged to. Looking at all of the accounts (both men's and women's), there were 7210 store transactions recorded in the 1760-1761 ledger year. Transactions, in this case, include items bought from and sold to the store but do not measure the amounts or count the numbers of each item. Transactions simply include each mention of an item in an account.¹³⁸ Of those transactions, 384 were Henderson's own activity since they fell under his accounts. The remaining 6,826 transactions can be split between 6,642 on accounts held by men, and 184 transactions on accounts held by women. Consequently, the women whose accounts were active during 1760 and 1761 made up 2.7 percent of all customer purchases.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Apart from a "Negro Girl" valued at 30 pounds in folio 1 debit and Mrs. Ellis's reference in Goods in Barter fol. 78 credit, all appearances by non-account holding women in the ledgers is marked "per" said woman or "for" said woman, indicating that they purchased the recorded items or were the eventual recipient of the items purchased by another.

¹³⁸ By transactions, I am referring to each time an item was purchased, or an expenditure on credit for a specific item regardless of its number or volume in that transaction. The item index composed by Molly Kerr and History Revealed Inc. counted each type of item bought as one purchase. Therefore, if a customer bought salt, linen, and rum together it would be counted as three individual purchases: one for salt, one for linen, and one for rum. This does not account for the volume of the item bought one time, however. For example: a purchase of 4 yards Irish linen is counted as one purchase of a fabric, while 2 bushels of salt will be counted as one purchase of salt as a household store. Items are counted as multiples only where they were bought more than once by the same person: i.e. multiple purchases of ¼ gallon of Rum made at different dates or on the same day but marked separately. Henderson's activity was counted in the object index with the purchases made by store customers.

¹³⁹ History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019.



Figure 5: Store Transactions per Item by Account Holder.¹⁴⁰

On the women’s accounts, those who made the most purchases during 1760 and 1761 were Jean Turley, Elizabeth Connell, Elizabeth Fallen, and Susannah Rattliff, whose accounts had fifty-three, forty-seven, twenty-two, and fifteen purchases, respectively. As a group, their transactions were higher than all of the other women’s accounts combined.¹⁴¹ This pattern suggests that some women did not shop regularly at the store, but also the likely possibility that Henderson’s store was not their only option. Some may have preferred to shop at one of Henderson’s competitors in Colchester - the stores of Hector Ross or Benjamin Grayson – and only went to Henderson for items neither carried. Some of Henderson’s customers, like Valinda Wade, also did business with merchants outside of Colchester, like William Ramsay of Alexandria where Wade was an active customer.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Divided by gender of the account holder and separating Henderson’s store account transactions. The women who had purchases on their accounts in 1760-1761 made up 2.7 percent of recorded purchases.

¹⁴¹ History Revealed, Inc., “Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761”, (unpublished) December 11, 2019. Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 91, 131 debit.

¹⁴² Ann Smart Martin, Morgan Lemmer-Webber, Monica Welke, Ann Glascock, and Chris Slaby, *A Colonial Merchant: The Ledger of William Ramsay: Alexandria, VA 1753-1756*, Accessed November 2, 2019. <https://ramsay.arthistory.wisc.edu/about/>; Sprouse, *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 38-40. Hamrick and Hamrick, *Virginia Merchant*, 22: first letter where Henderson talks about his brother and the other stores. The



Figure 6: Number of Purchases Made on Women's Accounts in 1760-1761.

Though our sample of women account holding customers is small compared to number of Henderson's account holding men, the number of women present and the purchases they made are still significant. It is also important to note that the account holder was not always the one who made purchases on the account but was simply the financially responsible member of the household. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the account holder is the buyer unless otherwise noted in the ledger. Henderson usually took note of when a person who was not the account holder made a purchase using someone's credit. These notations lets us know when John Ford's wife bought goods on her husband's account, when Elizabeth Fallen's daughter bought on her account, and when Grayson's enslaved people Jack, Sue, and Sucky bought goods on his account.¹⁴³ Often these other members of the household or associates of the account holder were making purchases intended for the household, so we can often read the needs of the household at large through individual purchases. Women's pattern of consumption was often

Quantico Store has an account in the ledgers as well: Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 138 credit, debit.

¹⁴³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 27, 42, 50 debit.

based on the needs of the household which could be vary significantly. If other individuals made purchases on women's accounts, those too could reflect the needs of that household.

One way to find patterns of consumption for the consumer women of Colchester is by looking at what items they most frequently purchased and asking why they bought them so often. The different social standings of individual women can provide a perspective on their different consumer strategies. Account holding women of different social ranks, like Turley a planter and Sue an enslaved woman, and non-account holders who could vary just as much made consumer decisions informed by the different necessities of their lives.¹⁴⁴ Social capital and general need are two categories we can use to assess the types of consumer choices women were making.

The Objects of Consumption: Categorizing the Items for Sale at Henderson's Store

Women shopping at Henderson's store expected to find consumer goods typical of a general store. It did not specialize in any one type of item, so the women of Colchester had a range of choices they could and did make depending upon their daily or seasonal needs and desires. Henderson stocked his store with a variety of fabrics, the most common type of item he ordered from Glassford. Based on the frequency of women's purchases in the ledgers, some fabrics were in high demand. Therefore, the trends of consumption can be measured through studying some of the popular fabrics.¹⁴⁵

The clothing industry of the British colonies was partly home-made. Families collected material to do minor repair on pieces of clothing and household goods while specialists and

¹⁴⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 21, 25, 50, 79, 131 debit.

¹⁴⁵ Hamrick and Hamrick, *Virginia Merchants*, 4-10.

designers made fine goods and did major repair work on clothing by commission.¹⁴⁶ Buying fabrics was useful to the colonists since they could repair or update their own clothing if they had the skill, and if not, they could have the local tailor or seamstress manufacture or update what they needed. Tailors sometimes could not afford the fine fabrics their customers wanted made into clothes or made it part of their policy to request the colonists provide the fabric they desired in their new attire. Colonists would therefore also purchase fabrics as part of payment for their commissions or allow the tailor or seamstress to purchase the requested fabric using their credit.¹⁴⁷ Fabrics were ever present in the lives of the colonists, with a lexicon of special fabric types from Irish Linen, Osnaburgs, Muslin, and others hinting at their origin, thread count, and general quality.¹⁴⁸ Henderson supplied whatever he could acquire from Glassford, and the colonists went out of their way to demand continual shipments of new fabric.¹⁴⁹

By counting the number of purchases for specific items, we can see what was important to the women shopping in Henderson's store. The results of this catalogue, created from Henderson's scheme of goods, indicate that textiles were by far the most popular item which customers bought. Out of 7,210 transactions during 1760-1761, 2,877, or thirty-nine percent, can be categorized as textiles. This broad category consists of five subcategories of items: fabric,

¹⁴⁶ Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 57; Anne E. C. McCants, "Exotic Goods, Popular Consumption, and the Standard of Living: Thinking about Globalization in the Early Modern World", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 2007), 433-462.

¹⁴⁷ Katherine Egner Gruber, "'By Measures Taken of Men': Clothing the Classes in William Carlin's Alexandria, 1763-1782," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Special Issue: Ligaments: Everyday Connections of Colonial Economies (Fall 2015), 931-953. This article is one of the best examples of a local tailor not far from Henderson's store who was a contemporary businessman to him and to Colchester's tailor John McIntosh.

¹⁴⁸ Keith H. and Kaelem E. Burgess, "18th Century Cloth Fabric Terminology: Of Silk, Cotton, Linen and Wool," *A Woodsrunner's Diary: 18th Century Living History, Historical Trekking, and Period Wilderness Living*, June 28, 2011, Accessed: February 29, 2020,

<http://woodsrunnersdiary.blogspot.com/2011/06/18th-century-cloth-fabric-terminology.html>

¹⁴⁹ Hamrick & Hamrick, *Virginia Merchants*, 4-20.

bedding, notions, production, and cleaning.¹⁵⁰ The second most frequently category of items purchased was clothing at 1,163 or sixteen percent. Clothing consisted of apparel, headgear, accessories, and footwear. The third most bought category was household stores which is a broad category consisting of food, medicine, beverages like rum, tea and tea accessories, lighting for candles, and containers. Household stores accounted for 843 individual purchases, or just over eleven percent of all purchases made in 1760-1761. These examples of how the objects can be categorized and grouped together to show consumer interest are based on how the items were used.¹⁵¹ Pocket books, mitts, and necklaces are labeled as clothing accessories due to how they were used and thought of. Meanwhile pins, needles, and buttons dominate the subcategory of notions, since both items were used in homemade textile works.¹⁵²

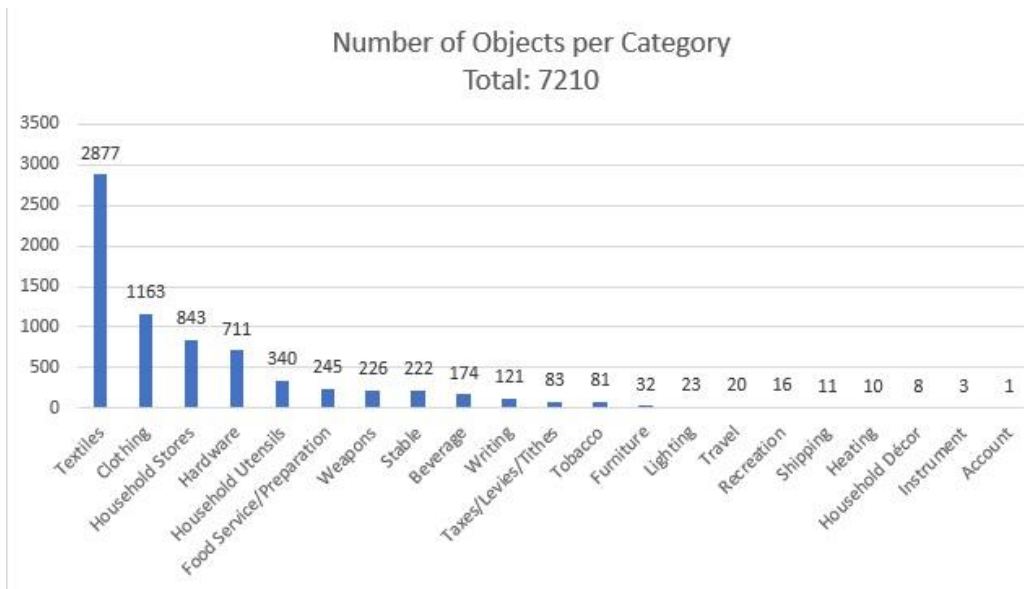


Figure 7: Object Categories by Number of Purchases or Transactions by Henderson.

¹⁵⁰ Production includes shears and playing cards made from wool and cotton.

¹⁵¹ The categories and subcategories were originally organized by the researchers with History Revealed Inc. They are divided by specific objects, and then are more broadly categorized by use, and then by “type” – such as Textile, Clothing, or Household Store.

¹⁵² History Revealed, Inc., “Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761”, (unpublished) December 11, 2019.

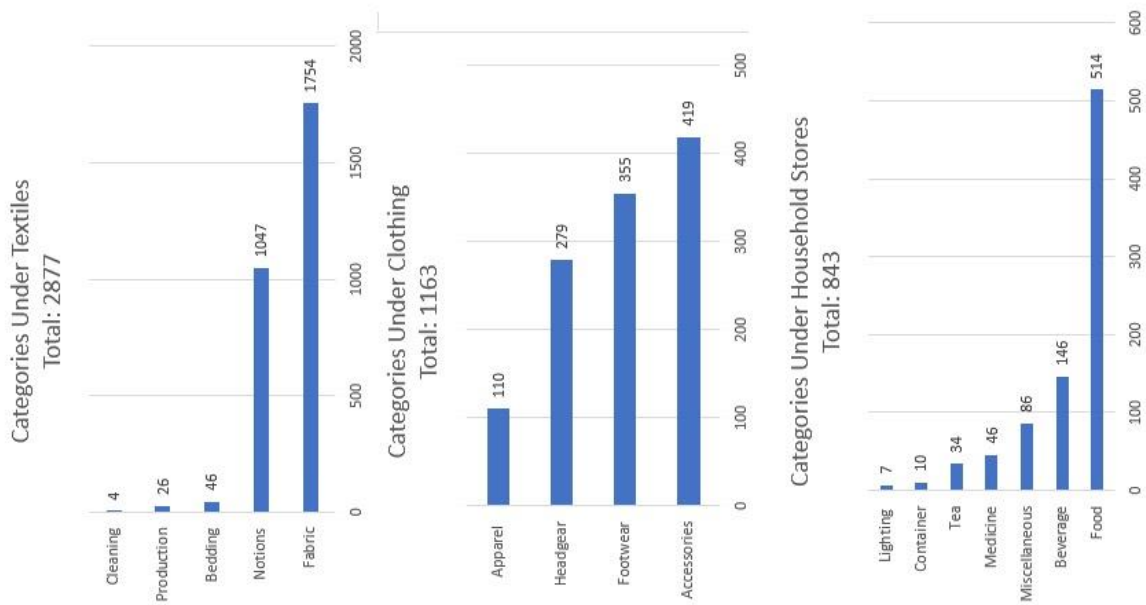


Figure 8: Three Most Purchased Categories of Items.¹⁵³

Building on the previous scholarship of items having social value, one might be tempted to try to define the variety of goods Henderson sold by two categories: items with material utility and luxuries or “necessities,” which was the contemporary term for finished goods with high social value but little practical usefulness.¹⁵⁴ However, many of the items in Henderson’s store blurred the lines between those categories so it is easier to categorize them more specifically as demonstrated in the charts above. What we can take from assessments of the consumer revolution is that consumer choice was dictated sometimes by strategic demand, and rather than classifying the items by their uses, we can determine which purchases might have been made for household need and which were made as part of a planned attempt to convey an image of refinement.

¹⁵³ This chart includes the three most populated categories divided into types of object, numbered by individual purchases of each item.

¹⁵⁴ Carson, *Face Value*, 67; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 421-425.

As an example of the varied types of items one individual could purchase, Jean Turley's account is useful, since her account recorded the most purchases of all woman-held accounts in 1760 and 1761.¹⁵⁵ Among the purchases on her account there were items like nails and pins which were bought in bulk, a quart mug, and a pair of scissors priced at seven pence.¹⁵⁶ Some of these items would have been helpful in everyday household maintenance and clothing repair, something which households in the tidewater did regularly. Turley's most frequent purchases, however, were fabrics and notions of varying qualities including twenty yards of cotton, ten yards of Irish linen, ten hanks of silk, twelve ells of the best osnaburg, two and a half yards of fine linen, two and a half yards of ribbon, and seven and a half yards of pink durant.¹⁵⁷

Cloth types such as those Turley purchased formed the majority of fabrics shipped to the general store, with woolen and worsted making up the greatest majority, followed by linens and cottons, then silks and half silks, with the last being the rarest but most expensive fabrics shipped.¹⁵⁸ The same types of fabrics with different thread counts could be priced differently and use different units of measurement, like hanks for silk and sticks for mohair, and thus indicate the quality the buyer could expect from their purchase.¹⁵⁹ Threads of better quality certainly held a greater social value than more common threads to the eighteenth century consumer. For instance the frequently bought callamanco fabric was made from wool with some parts silk and goat hair, while bombazine, another regularly purchased fabric was wholly made from silk, and

¹⁵⁵ See Figure 3 for detail.

¹⁵⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 131 debit; Alexander Henderson, et. al. *Ledger 1768-1769, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 208 debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 62 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).

¹⁵⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 131 debit.

¹⁵⁸ Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*. 82, 342, sourced from Natalie Rothstein, "Silks for the American Market:2," *The Connoisseur*, American edn. (Nov. 1967): 150-156.

¹⁵⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 133, 23 debit.

mohair was made from the hair of Angora goats.¹⁶⁰ The rarity and price of silk attests to its fashionable quality, making it sought after for formal occasions, while cotton and wool were used for daywear.¹⁶¹ As Henderson noted in one letter to Glassford: “Of oznabrigs[sic] I want the cheapest, strong kind for negroes. Scots white linnen[sic] is a very bad article [and I] have not sent for any of it.”¹⁶² Henderson’s descriptions hint at the quality and social status assigned to items. Women who purchased Henderson’s fabric often bought a large variety, but what they bought hints at the needs for which those fabrics were bought to fill.

There are some qualifying differences in how customers used each type of fabric which determined what influenced a person to purchase osnaburg rather than lincey or prefer cambrick to Irish linens. Preferences for different fabrics were often decided by utility. Bertrand Ewill’s daughter Betty purchased 1 ¼ yards of cambrick fabric, while Elizabeth Connell and many other women bought large quantities of osnaburgs.¹⁶³ Osnaburgs, cambrick, and basic linen and cotton threaded fabrics were often made into work clothing, such as osnaburg shirts for enslaved laborers. Plain cottons and osnaburgs were constructed for labor because of their ease of manufacture and the ability to withstand heat, making them both cheap and easy to maintain thanks to their durability. The social value they carried was minimal for the wearer, since it was expected that enslaved people would wear them, and they carried no signifiers of refinement.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Keith H. and Kaelem E. Burgess, “18th Century Cloth Fabric Terminology: Of Silk, Cotton, Linen and Wool,” *A Woodsrunner's Diary: 18th Century Living History, Historical Trekking, and Period Wilderness Living*, June 28, 2011, Accessed: February 29, 2020,

<http://woodsrunnersdiary.blogspot.com/2011/06/18th-century-cloth-fabric-terminology.html>.

¹⁶¹ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, 86-93.

¹⁶² Hamrick and Hamrick, *Virginia Merchants*, 20.

¹⁶³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 23, 31 debit.

¹⁶⁴ Keith H. and Kaelem E. Burgess, “18th Century Cloth Fabric Terminology: Of Silk, Cotton, Linen and Wool,” *A Woodsrunner's Diary: 18th Century Living History, Historical Trekking, and Period Wilderness Living*, June 28, 2011, Accessed: February 29, 2020,

<http://woodsrunnersdiary.blogspot.com/2011/06/18th-century-cloth-fabric-terminology.html>.

Finer fabrics with more intricate threading or patterns were the indicators of social credit. In 1761, Fallen bought both linen and printed cotton, Bronaugh purchased twelve yards of well-made Irish linen, and Rebecca Javins took home striped lincey.¹⁶⁵ William Pinkstone bought 1 yard of ferrit for his sister and Thomas Stone's wife used her husband's account to buy 1 ½ yards of ribbon.¹⁶⁶ James Kille's wife made one of the finer purchases. She bought 1 hank of silk, equivalent to 840 yards of silk thread, which sold for a shilling.¹⁶⁷ Fabrics like silk and "ferrit" were of finer construction than coarser and easier to make fabrics like cambrick and osnaburg while ribbon was a common accessory on period clothing.¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the quality implied by the special naming of the Irish linen as well as printed cotton and striped lincey meant that they held a finer thread count than the other fabrics and were meant for formal or fashionable wear. Wearing them implied that the cost of their manufacture and upkeep was affordable to the wearer.¹⁶⁹ Unlike the fabrics meant for laboring clothes, the "finer" fabrics held more value in presentation than comfort. These different fabrics were a fraction of the variety available to consumers at Henderson's store, and women and men often sampled different pieces of the entire stock, but the specialization of each type of fabric points researchers in the direction of what the customer needed.

¹⁶⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 42, 79, 155 debit.

¹⁶⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 51, 125 debit.

¹⁶⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 126 debit; Marie Clayton, *The Ultimate A to Z Companion to 1,001 Needlecraft Terms: Applique, Crochet, Embroidery, Knitting, Quilting, Sewing and More*, (New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 2008) 121; Thomas Yates, *A Practical Treatise on Yarn and Cloth Calculations for Cotton Fabrics*, 2nd Edition, (New Bedford, n.p., 1904).

¹⁶⁸ Jennifer Van Horn, *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth Century British America*, (Kindle Edition, from the Omohondro Institute & Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁹ Keith H. and Kaelem E. Burgess, "18th Century Cloth Fabric Terminology: Of Silk, Cotton, Linen and Wool," *A Woodrunner's Diary: 18th Century Living History, Historical Trekking, and Period Wilderness Living*, June 28, 2011, Accessed: February 29, 2020,

<http://woodrunnersdiary.blogspot.com/2011/06/18th-century-cloth-fabric-terminology.html>

Aside from fabrics sold in yards or ells for home-use and fashion modification, Henderson sold finished clothing. Items like shoes, handkerchiefs, fine dresses, and hats all had significant presence in the cultural world of fashion for the people of the British Atlantic. Their primary value lay in the desire of people emulating the nobility and gentry of England to wear them and use them. In the colonies, that could be the colonial gentry refining themselves, or the middling sorts who could afford those items to create social credit for themselves, or the lower sorts who worked with the items they could afford to participate in this culture. Beautiful items showed a person's refinement, and a refined person was someone that people would respect and do business with. In this way the quality of clothing and accessories which a person had in their possession reflected their personal honor, their social and financial credit, and sometimes their business acumen.¹⁷⁰ This idea frames how the women of Colchester would buy certain products, specifically items of clothing and fine household goods that could reflect well on themselves and their household.

At Henderson's store, undergarments and supports like stays and basic shirts were regularly bought on accounts held by men and women, as were felt hats and shoes made from callamanco which was considered one of the finer fabrics.¹⁷¹ Dresses, cloaks, and coats were also available for purchase. Shoppers regularly requested certain finished articles of clothing. Women's stays were bought a total of nineteen times in the 1760 and 1761 ledgers, and since this

¹⁷⁰ Cary Carson, *Face Value: The Consumer Revolution and the Colonizing of America* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2017) 93-95, 155.

¹⁷¹ As a note on spelling, I have chosen Callamanco despite alternate spellings used frequently and inconsistently by Henderson and his employees. Alternate spellings found in the ledgers can include Calamanco and Calimanco. See *A Woodrunner's Diary* for more detail on fabric types. Keith H. and Kaelem E Burgess, "18th Century Cloth Fabric Terminology: Of Silk, Cotton, Linen and Wool," *A Woodrunner's Diary: 18th Century Living History, Historical Trekking, and Period Wilderness Living*, June 28, 2011, Accessed: February 29, 2020, <http://woodrunnersdiary.blogspot.com/2011/06/18th-century-cloth-fabric-terminology.html>

was a common undergarment for women, it makes sense that it would be purchased often. Hats for men and women, some specifically marked as made of felt or other material, were also frequently bought; Henderson recorded 203 purchases. Another regularly bought finished article was callamanco shoes, purchased 30 times and making up a significant percentage of the 155 sales related to shoes.¹⁷² On women's accounts Turley, West, and Connell each bought a combination of felt hats, several pairs callamanco shoes, or girls stays.¹⁷³

The women in Colchester who made these purchases had several reasons for doing so. They needed their own new clothing of course, but they also would purchase items on behalf of their dependents or loved ones. These could have been replacements for the worn clothes of children or other family members. Susannah Ratliff purchased a dozen buttons on her own account, possibly to mend an article of clothing, while John Ford's wife bought several pairs of shoe buckles throughout the year on his account to replace worn out buckles on shoes the family owned.¹⁷⁴ Sometimes customers made a purchase on someone else's behalf or as a gift. Edward Ford, the son of Thomas Ford, bought a pair of women's stays per his sister's order.¹⁷⁵ If one member of the family put in a request for an item, such as Edward Ford's sister ordering the stays, another person like Edward could pick it up and charge it to their parent's account.

Henderson also noted when items were purchases made on behalf of someone on another's account or were intended as gifts because of the legal use the ledgers could provide.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019.

¹⁷³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 23, 131, 156 debit.

¹⁷⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 27, 134 debit.

¹⁷⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 52 debit.

¹⁷⁶ Ann Smart Martin investigates the legal uses of store ledgers in John Hook's court cases in *Buying into the World of Goods*. Henderson appears to have not been in the same kind of legal trouble as Hook but recorded the specifics of the purchases since they were of legal importance as well as useful for the store's financial records.

Specifically, the ledgers acted as a form of buyer's security or a return receipt in the case of a stolen or damaged item. In this face-to-face, connected community the ledger provided evidence for account holders of who had made what purchases on their accounts and what the value was of returned items. The women's stays that Edward Ford bought for his sister might have been the wrong size, and she might have needed to return them on her own rather than have Edward return them on her behalf. The fact that Henderson had marked them as "Women's Stays, Best" could also indicate their value, which Edward's sister had the option to debate as a discerning customer.¹⁷⁷ One example of this kind of return was Jean Turley returning a pair of stays, for which she was reimbursed with store credit.¹⁷⁸ If Edward's sister had done the same, he would have received credit in exchange on his account.

Much like the fabrics they were crafted from, the finished articles of clothing often had a range of uses and qualities that represent different consumer desires and social status. The hats of undefined make and hats made of felt seem to have been more common and "fine" beaver hats like those bought by Morriss, Tillett, Posey, and Barkley might have held greater value due to the rarer commodity of their material.¹⁷⁹ Callamanco shoes were also a much-desired style, since they were such a common purchase; thirty pairs were sold in 1760 and 1761.¹⁸⁰ Good footwear was a daily need, but one that could be accentuated by updated fashionable taste. Henderson ordered a large number of callamanco shoes due in part to high demand, which attests to the

¹⁷⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 52 debit.

¹⁷⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 131 credit.

¹⁷⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 46, 92, 102, 120 debit.

¹⁸⁰ History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019.

strength of consumer choice in shaping the eighteenth century economy of fine goods, and the extent to which items could reach even the far reaches of the British Empire.¹⁸¹

In contrast to articles of clothing, which straddle the line between needs and fashion, the third most popular category of items sold, household stores, were bought mostly as the need arose. One example is Elizabeth Fallen's purchase of ten weight of beef for the winter of 1761, an early form of groceries.¹⁸² Some of the most popular household stores women purchased from Henderson were rum, salt, and sugar.¹⁸³ These were top commodities of the Atlantic trade and could be used in a variety of ways within households. More conspicuous and hard to transport items such as corn, lemons, and beef were traded locally. These items speak to the intra and intercolonial networks of food supply that existed in Virginia in the mid-eighteenth-century.¹⁸⁴ Women who maintained a household had to regularly resupply what they could not grow or trade for on their own, leading them to the store to purchase these early groceries.¹⁸⁵

Other household goods for daily use and medicinal treatment could reflect the medical emergencies and concerns of the customers. Take the purchase made by Ann Mason on May 28, 1760 of a bottle of "Turlington's Balsam of Life."¹⁸⁶ What did this bottle of Turlington's, an all-purpose remedy, signify about Mason's needs as a consumer? She could have been ill or

¹⁸¹ Alexander Hamilton, *Gentlemen's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbough (University of North Carolina Press, 1948; repr., Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 54.

¹⁸² Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit.; Carole Shammas, "America, the Atlantic, and Global Consumer Demand, 1500-1800", *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Martin Luther King, Jr. (Jan. 2005), 59-64.

¹⁸³ See Figure 4: Household Stores is where Rum and Salt are counted, of the subcategory beverages, which accounted for 166 of the 843 Household Stores transactions, Rum counted 130. Meanwhile, among Foodstuffs, which was most Household stores purchases at 510, Salt accounted for 91 transactions.

¹⁸⁴ Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, 44-51.

¹⁸⁵ Meacham, "'They Will Be Adjudged by Their Drink,'" 120-122.

¹⁸⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1758-1759, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 158 debit.

suffering from some ailment for which Turlington's was a cure, or she might have purchased it for another ill member of her household. She may have also been trying to improve her life in some way with a common treatment with a reputation to "cure all ills."¹⁸⁷ Medicinal stores like Turlington's Balsam could provide for the daily needs of an individual or household in the same way foods and beverages did.

Henderson also sold some other items intended for different household needs. Take Turley's bulk purchase of nails and pins, as well as the broad hoe and the narrow axe which she bought in 1761. She either used these items herself or her family members or slaves did so to help maintain their home.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Benjamin Grayson's enslaved man Jack bought an additional set of door hinges for Grayson after he had purchased one set previously.¹⁸⁹ Another enslaved person in Grayson's household, Sue, purchased a chest lock on her own account in 1761.¹⁹⁰ This purchase implies that she may have owned a chest or container of some kind and wanted to secure or re-secure it. Purchases like Sue's suggest that in the homes of the enslaved there was just as much potential for consumer demand and household goods. In contrast to the purchase Sucky made for Grayson on his account, or the purchases Grayson made on behalf of others, it appears likely that Sue's purchase was intended for her personal use.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Sprouse, *Colchester, Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 42. For mention of Turlington's "they used it to cure all ailments."; Andrew Abbott and Molly Kerr, "Turlington's Balsam of Life: Colonial Snake Oil or Miracle Cure All?" History Revealed Inc., (April 2, 2020). Accessed: June 11, 2020. <https://www.historyrevealed.co/post/turlingtons-balsam-of-life>

¹⁸⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 131 debit.

¹⁸⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 50 debit.

¹⁹⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 79 debit.

¹⁹¹ As marked in the folios there is a difference between "for so and so" and "Per so and so" which ought to be made clear. Per is used when the purchaser is the name listed and is much more common.

The women who shopped in Henderson's store decided to purchase certain items with clear goals in mind, whether it was to feed and clothe their household members or to increase their social status. While some purchases supplied the needs of everyday life, fabric and clothing also hint at the ambitions and social strategies of the women of Colchester.

Engaging in the Consumer Culture of the Atlantic World: How Consumer Choices Reflect Social Projection

To answer the question of how the women of Colchester engaged with the consumer culture, we must understand the role fine goods played in helping them establish an image of sophistication. Economic engagement is the ability of an individual to make choices for themselves and participate as a conscious consumer in the marketplace.¹⁹² For the women of Colchester, the question is not whether they engaged as active consumers, they clearly did. The question is ultimately how did they do so, and in what context? Were they making their purchases with a sense of social strategy in mind?

It is impossible to overstate the decision-making ability of this cohort of early modern women as informed consumers. Many of them had to manage estates and find ways to earn the credit which they were spending. Reputations of good credit worthiness and high social standing enhanced their ability to provide for their households. Therefore, we can also assume that they could make judgements about what they wanted and what they needed to fulfill their various responsibilities – material and social.

¹⁹² This is my personal definition but is based on the works of McKendrick et al and Jan de Vries on the Consumer Revolution. This definition could be applied to other periods but is right now for the context of the eighteenth century British Atlantic.

The qualifiers Henderson noted for clothing and fabrics make them the two easiest categories of items to track when it comes to consumer demands and social status. Henderson's notes help to signify the cultural labels that were attached to the objects themselves. One of the most immediate of these signifiers was gender. Jean Turley bought two felt hats, one listed as a "man's felt hat" and another listed as a "woman's felt hat," while Elizabeth Connell purchased a pair of "men's shoes."¹⁹³ Later in 1761, Connell purchased two hats from Henderson, one made of leghorn and a one listed as a "youth's felt hat".¹⁹⁴ These qualifiers were not limited to purchases made on women's accounts: James Paul bought a pair of women's shoes, possibly for his wife, who herself bought a dozen teacups and saucers on his account.¹⁹⁵ Benjamin Grayson bought two pairs of bruised gloves, with each pair marked specifically as for men or women.¹⁹⁶ Consumer items had specific qualities that set them apart as gendered: for women, for men, or for children.

Another qualifier – the material from which articles of clothing were made – also carried social meaning. The quality of a felt hat or of bruised gloves was indicated by an object's label. The most frequently purchased type of headgear was felt hats, suggesting they held an important place in the clothing market and were a regularly sought after commodity.¹⁹⁷ This makes sense as

¹⁹³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, fol. 23, 131 debit.

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Henderson, et. al. *Ledger 1764-1765, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 29a debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 59 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).

¹⁹⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 70 debit. Tape is a type of fabric that like some others is sold in cuts called "pieces."

¹⁹⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19, 50 debit.

¹⁹⁷ During the 1760-1761 record year, Henderson's customers purchased felt hats 45 times, and "hats" in general 203 times. This was the most frequently purchased item under "Headgear" in the category Clothing. History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019.

well made hats were considered part of the necessary attire of a refined lady or gentleman.¹⁹⁸

Beaver felt was also one of the most durable materials for hat-making available to manufacturers of the period.¹⁹⁹ The hats came in all sizes which Henderson labeled for men and women and with children's hats being listed as for "boys" or "girls".²⁰⁰ While many hats were clearly marked as made of felt, there were a few other materials such as leghorn that were specially noted. In other cases, Henderson did not record the materials from which the hats were made – like the ones purchased by Elizabeth Connell and James Lane.²⁰¹ However, felt hats were one of the most frequent pieces of headgear purchased by Henderson's customers overall, so much so that he had to order seven hundred and thirty eight felt hats in his scheme of goods for 1759.²⁰² Henderson seems to have marked up women's hats more, since Connell and Turley's felt hats were priced at three shillings while Turley bought a man's felt hat for one shilling and six pence.²⁰³ That significant difference in value could indicate the demand for men's felt hats was greater. Overall, the number of times felt hats were purchased, one hundred and seventeen times, indicates that they were an essential accessory for the dress of the day.²⁰⁴ Felt's durability made hats crafted from it a much demanded good.

Some of the other popular clothing and fabrics the women of Colchester purchased they did so with special social occasions or customs in mind. In doing so, they were adhering to the

¹⁹⁸ James Styles and Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, (Yale University Press, 2006), 8, 20, 62, 238.

¹⁹⁹ Bill Waiser, "History Matters: Beaver felt made best hats," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, January 31, 2017, updated 2017, accessed November 17, 2020. <https://thestarphoenix.com/opinion/columnists/history-matters-beaver-felt-made-best-hats>

²⁰⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 20, 131 debit.

²⁰¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 77 debit.; Henderson, *Ledger 1764-1765*, fol. 29a debit.

²⁰² Hamrick & Hamrick, *Virginia Merchants*, 42.

²⁰³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 23, 131 debit.

²⁰⁴ History Revealed, Inc., "Object Index, Colchester Store, 1760-1761", (unpublished) December 11, 2019.

norms of fashion which existed in the British Empire.²⁰⁵ Funerary clothing and black fabrics are examples of purchases made for use at a significant event. In 1765 Ann Tyler bought black bombasine fabric, a pair of men's black stockings, a pair of women's black stockings and black gloves. She is listed as the widow of Charles Tyler and was likely collecting these goods for his funeral. The men's stockings could have been for her late husband as burial clothes, or they could have been mourning clothes for her son or another male relative. The women's black attire was most likely for herself but also could have suited a woman relative if Ann had her own clothing already made.²⁰⁶ Funerary fabrics were one of a variety of socially important pieces of clothing which were seen as "necessities" according to Carson's definition, that is, as objects with social value that were required for good social standing.²⁰⁷ In a similar case, William Bronaugh bought mourning clothes for the burial of his mother, Rosa Bronaugh, late in 1761.²⁰⁸ Along with new buckles for his own attire, he bought ties and sheeting to create her shroud and funerary clothing, purchases that were appropriate for her station. Since the Bronaugh and Tylers were both of higher social standing they could afford finer things to represent their loved ones in death.²⁰⁹

Another category of consumer good that provided utility but also carried special social significance was home furnishings. Sometimes home furnishings also carried material wealth in

²⁰⁵ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, 85-91; Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, 20-26.

²⁰⁶ Alexander Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1766-1767, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 117 debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 61 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).

²⁰⁷ Carson, *Face Value*, 14, 25, 30, 34-36.

²⁰⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 159 debit.

²⁰⁹ Casey Wolf, "Momentos Mori: The Material of Mourning." In *The Economy of Goods, Colonial America, 1607-1763*, online project for AMH 4110.0M01 (University of Central Florida: Center for Humanities and Digital Research, 2018). <https://projects.cah.ucf.edu/economyofgoods/index.php/2018/08/15/momentos-mori-the-materials-of-mourning/>.

the form of specie. Items that could be both decorative displays and useful were regularly purchased by the Colchester women. Some sets of silver spoons may have been used as part of a teatime set of utensils, such as the cups and saucers bought by the wife of James Paul, but they held almost as much value as display items as they held as practical objects.²¹⁰ Thinking about items as carrying social credit in addition to their value as specie and as household décor has been part of the discourse on consumer culture since the development of ideas like gentility, delicacy, and social credit. By understanding what social credit certain items carried historians can better estimate their cultural “value” to people of the period.

For example, Rebecca Javins bought one drinking glass and one looking glass on the same day in 1761.²¹¹ Together these items each tell a different story. The looking glass provided a way for Javins to observe herself and maintain her looks and graces, while the drinking glass may have been bought for a special occasion, novelty, or as a replacement for a broken part of a set. Since no description beyond its utility was given, the explanations for why she bought only one glass are numerous. However, tableware had become increasingly important for Chesapeake planters, since better and more silverware and fine kitchen wares implied refinement.²¹² If this drinking glass was bought to replace a missing part of a larger set, her purchase would help to retain the balanced and affluent image Javins may have been trying to display in her home.

Likewise, Sue, who was recorded as “Belonging to Mr. Grayson,” purchased ½ dozen pewter plates in 1758 on her own account.²¹³ Sue had bought a pitcher for Grayson on his

²¹⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 70 debit.

²¹¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 155 debit.

²¹² Carson, *Face Value*, 80-85.

²¹³ Alexander Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1758-1759, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 179 debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 58 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association). Henderson, *Ledger 1760-1761*, 79 Debit.

account that same year and she was not the only enslaved member of his household to purchase items on his behalf.²¹⁴ One may wonder why Sue bought the pewter plates and whether she was trying to send a social message with this purchase. Her place in society as an enslaved woman meant that she was restricted in some of her decisions. But there was no law in Virginia preventing her from owning pewter if she could afford it.²¹⁵ Sue's purchase demonstrates that she and other enslaved people could enjoy some aspects of the consumer economy, and it is possible that she may have desired to display such items in her residence.²¹⁶ This was true for many Virginians outside of the wealthier social circles. In Dr. Hamilton's account of Virginia in *Gentleman's Progress* he relates his concern about the "superfluous things which showed an inclination to finery in these poor people" who he observed to be "quite wild and rustic," but dined with "half a dozen pewter spoons and as many plates . . . bright and clean."²¹⁷ Even in meaner circumstances Virginians in the eighteenth century were inclined to show themselves as practicing social delicacy.²¹⁸ While pewter might not have been the finest quality available to all, it may have been what Sue could afford on the meagre credit she collected as an enslaved woman.

²¹⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1758-1759, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 103 debit.

²¹⁵ "An Act Concerning Servants and Slaves," 1705, William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, (Philadelphia: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), 3:447-463, (First published: September 30, 2011, Last modified: July 17, 2012) Accessed: June 11, 2020. https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/An_act_concerning_Servants_and_Slaves_1705

²¹⁶ If she had one, we don't have any guarantee that she did, but she was one of fourteen slaves belonging to Grayson as of 1760 and likely lived somewhere on his land; Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

²¹⁷ Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton*, 54-55.

²¹⁸ Richard Bushman uses the term delicacy to describe the table manners and aversion to social embarrassment that the eighteenth-century English gentry used to center their social interactions. It is useful here to describe the need for fine things that the women of the Chesapeake among Henderson's other customers felt and made consumer choices with. Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 80-81.

The importance of dishes and tableware extends from Sue’s purchase to the inheritable wealth of some of her widowed planter neighbors who bought similar goods fashioned from silver. As Carson and Bushman and others have demonstrated, fine goods did more than reflect the manners and social standing of their owners – they formed real wealth. Virginians at the time recognized that fine tableware meant more than just fancy utensils to eat with. William Fitzhugh, for instance, ordered silver from England because he desired “to furnish my self with an handsom[sic] Cupboard of plate which gives my self[sic] the present use & Credit, [and] is a sure friend at a dead lift without much loss, or is a certain portion for a Child after my decease.”²¹⁹

One way to understand the value the women of Colchester placed on the items they purchased is through how they chose to pass them to their heirs as legacies. This is an easy task for some women like Rosa Bronaugh whose surviving will and probate inventory clearly indicate to whom she meant to distribute legacies. Bronaugh bequeathed to her two sons William and John each a set of six silver spoons.²²⁰ While she and her husband already had provided land for William after his father’s passing, she devised tracts of land along the Accontinck and Dodges Runs and one of her enslaved men to her son John.²²¹ John and his sisters also received sums of money from her estate. But of all the objects provided for in her will and noted in her inventory, why did Bronaugh provide her sons with these spoons rather than her daughters?²²² Perhaps it

²¹⁹ *William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701: The Fitzhugh Letters and Other Documents*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 244-46, 249-50, 258-59, 382. Sourced from Carson, *Face Value*, 95.

²²⁰ “Will of Rosa Bronaugh,” in Will Book B-1, p 315-317, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded 16 February 1762.; “Inventory of Rosa Bronaugh,” in Will Book B-1, page 332, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded June 15, 1762.

²²¹ “Will of Rosa Bronaugh,” B-1, p 315.

²²² “Inventory of Rosa Bronaugh,” B-1, p 332.

was a sign of favoritism. However, it is also possible that her sons' presentation as properly "genteel" men rested on her ability to provide for them, while her daughters, who were married, had husbands responsible for assuring their social standing. The spoons functioned as a valuable form of specie when pounds sterling was rare. In this time the silver spoons carried both social value and legal currency.²²³

In a more extensive division of property in 1786, Sarah Barnes provided for her large family through a very specific division of her goods. Her enslaved people and her cattle, as part of her "moveable estate," were divided between her son Thaddeus McCarty and his sisters and Barnes' grandchildren. Her granddaughter Sarah Elizabeth McCarty was given a bed, bedstead, and furniture, one large chest, one large iron pot, one small iron pot, her flat irons, and gold earrings. Sarah McCarty and her sister Mary Ann received all pewter from Barnes' estate equally divided. Their first cousin once removed William Ramsay also received a bed and bedstead from his great grandmother. Sarah Barnes' daughter Sarah Donnel received some cattle, one black bombazine petticoat, one muslin apron, one linen apron, and one pair of black calamanco shoes. Her grandson Dennis McCarty also received six silver spoons, like Bronaugh's sons. It is interesting that her son Daniel McCarty was made one of the executors of the will but did not receive any land as part of this will. This could indicate a type of favoritism between her sons or could indicate that he had previously been provided for from his father similar to the Bronaugh brothers William and John.²²⁴ While Thaddeus was her main beneficiary, she trusted Daniel to

²²³ "Will of Rosa Bronaugh," in Will Book B-1, p 315-317, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded 16 February 1762; "Inventory of Rosa Bronaugh," in Will Book B-1, p 332, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded June 15, 1762.

²²⁴ "Will of Rosa Bronaugh," B-1 p 315.

see that her legacies were distributed according to her wishes.²²⁵ Through all the different recipients Barnes indicates to whom each item or set of goods and wealth is promised with care, showing that items that could be purchased could be bought with long term goals in mind by economically active women. A set of cups and saucers bought one day, like those purchased by James Paul's wife, could come to be passed on as legacies like the silver tea spoons which Rosa Bronaugh left to her sons, and the iron pots and kitchenware that Sarah Barnes passed to her children.

Together these wills and the social credit of such general store goods reveal the ways women could use their agency to make good consumer choices. They likely bought the above utensils and clothing from a store like Henderson's. The Colchester store provided many items that carried special social and, in the case of silver, real financial value. The consumer goods of the Atlantic Market had variable values and sometimes even outlived or surpassed their original value to their first owners. The family plates and other goods, when they carried specie and social currency, could be passed on for generations and reflect some of the longest-lived legacies of the good choices made by discerning consumers.

Conclusion

Eighteenth century women had the resources to make informed decisions as consumers and demonstrated their ability clearly within Henderson's store and in others throughout the colonies.²²⁶ Women consumers knew how to navigate the social world they lived in and they

²²⁵ "Will of Sarah Barnes," in Will Book E-1, p 158-160, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 19th, 1786; "Inventory of Sarah Barnes," in Will Book E-1, p 177, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded October 16th, 1786.

²²⁶ T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods" 484-485; Thatcher Ulrich, "Looms, Wheels, and Gender Divisions of Labor," 3-5.

knew which items they could purchase to convey a successful and financially stable image of themselves and their households. Women of the gentry and of the “better sorts” bought fine clothing, quality fabric, and finely crafted household goods to enhance their image and social credit. Middling women did the same, buying items to better their social image, but their taste was modified by what they could afford. The same was true for laboring women of the “lower sorts,” whether free or enslaved, white or black. Women had the ability to fill their homes with goods that provided for their household needs. Those needs could be related to daily goods like food and medicine such as Turlington’s Balsam. They could be tied to repairing the house or other projects such as the nails Mrs. Turley purchased. Or they could be a sign of an updated wardrobe as the numerous purchases of felt hats and callamanco shoes indicate.²²⁷

Purchasing power reflected household needs and consumer choice, and indeed some of that choice could be framed as “gendered.” The Women of Colchester bought articles of clothing that served social needs, and those needs informed their decisions. Eighteenth-century women were free to make purchases from among the many goods circulating on the Atlantic market, however they were limited in choice by the need to present themselves favorably in their community.

²²⁷ Van Horn, *The Power of Objects*, Chapter 4, and Shamas in “The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America,” discuss how women adapted their behaviors to fit in the social dynamics they lived in. Some like Bushman argue for a stricter reading of gentility and refinement, but others like Carson and Rozbicki think it could be expanded to a wider realm of participation. I agree with the latter scholars; Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 109, 131, 156 debit.

CHAPTER 3: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CUSTOMERS: HOW SOCIAL CONNECTIONS DEFINED THE AGENCY OF WOMEN AS ECONOMIC ACTORS

Two days before Christmas 1760, Henderson recorded the purchase of a pair of “women’s shoes for Eliz[abet]h Pierce” on Robert Boggiss Sr.’s personal account. Boggiss was, the tithe collector for Truro Parish, the Church of England district which encompassed Fairfax County.²²⁸ Was this new pair of shoes a Christmas present? And if so, how did Pierce and Boggiss know each other? Boggiss held two accounts at Henderson’s store: one for his use as collector and one for the use of his household.²²⁹ Three women made purchases on Boggiss’s personal account throughout the year: his wife and daughter, whose names went unrecorded, and Elizabeth Pierce, a seemingly unrelated woman who was an account holder in her own right. On Boggiss’s household account, Henderson recorded him later paying for an assumpsit on Pierce’s behalf, while she bought a pitcher using Boggiss’s credit.²³⁰ At first glance the relationship between Boggiss and Pierce is indiscernible but clearly they had some connection that influenced Boggiss to provide her access to his account. According to the contemporary church records of Truro Parish, Pierce was the sexton or caretaker for the church at Pohick which served the people in and around Colchester. The leading vestrymen of the church assigned her to this post and her assignment put her in a close working-relationship other parish “employees” like its minister, Reverend Charles Green. As the tithe collector for the parish, Boggiss paid Pierce her salary for

²²⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 122, 128 credit, debit; George Washington, *George Washington Papers, Series 5, Financial Papers: General Ledger A, 1750 to 1772*, pp. 113, 124, (Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress,) <https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500001/> (accessed November 17, 2020,) <http://financial.gwpapers.org/?q=content/boggess-robert>.

²²⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 62, 128 credit, debit.

²³⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 62 debit.

her work as a sexton.²³¹ These interactions in the ledgers are examples of how social links, such as the one which Boggiss and Pierce had through the church, shaped economic transactions. Pierce had access to Boggiss's line of credit and his assistance in financial needs due in part to their social connection.

These connections, which enmeshed Pierce and the other women of Colchester, demonstrate the varied ways that social networks which dominated the colonial Chesapeake could manifest. Beyond the act of establishing wealth and being an active consumer, women in the colonial marketplace maneuvered within and utilized social webs of family, friends, and business partners to their own advantage. The sixty-five total women named in the 1760 and 1761 ledgers all had different means of either establishing credit or accessing the store. Their activity was not limited to the local level but existed between the local world of Fairfax county and the Atlantic World of the British Empire. By looking at the structures of the social networks the women maintained with each-other and with the men of Colchester, we can better understand their daily lives and the reach and effects of their economic activity within their community.

The scholarly move towards defining and discussing the broad idea of the Atlantic World has seen many concepts of how social networks functioned posited, including the idea of the Atlantic World itself. It is a way to connect the widespread interactions among Europe, Africa, the New World, and all their constituent parts. The Atlantic World is also a term which hints at the existence of a new global network of goods extending across the oceans.²³² Henderson

²³¹ History Revealed, "The Mysterious Elizabeth Pierce (Pearce, Peirce): A Parish Sexton," (History Revealed Inc., January 28, 2020.) Accessed: June 11, 2020, https://www.historyrevealed.co/post/elizabeth_pierce

²³² Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History, Concepts and Contours*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. London, England, 2005).

existed within this world and it defined the marketplace in which the women at his store participated. But what sets this marketplace apart? And is there a clear distinction between the localized world of Colchester and Fairfax County and the Atlantic world economy of the British Empire?

Marketplaces are an abstract idea: they do not just exist in terms of the physical place where people buy goods and make sales; they are also abstractions of how people interact in a shared space of resources and money.²³³ The marketplace can be local, and it can be expanded to include imperial, international, and global communities. In the early modern marketplace, social networks, those ties of communication, commerce, and cooperation, brought a variety of people together toward making a livelihood and establishing the prosperity of their families. These networks connected individuals in the Chesapeake, the plantations of the Caribbean, the kingdoms and slave traders in West Africa, the ports of Bristol and Glasgow, the capital of the British empire in London, and the foreign markets of the rest of Europe. They also extended beyond the Atlantic networks into Asia and the Pacific creating what one might consider an early modern web of global activity.²³⁴ The same economic and social networks also existed on a local level and were determining factors in how women could make decisions as active members of the economy.

Several scholars have examined how people in the British empire acted through social networks to accumulate wealth and socially improve themselves. Since these social networks

²³³ "Markets in the Atlantic World". In *Oxford Bibliographies: Atlantic History*, Accessed: June 12, 2020, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0288.xml>.

²³⁴ Three works for further study on the development of the early modern Atlantic World and its consumer economy are: Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*; Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, and Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*. Steve Pincus, "Reconfiguring the British Empire," *WMQ*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2012), pp. 63-70.

were essential to the maintenance of an empire wide mercantile economy, they often serve as an important framework for economic historians. In *Citizens of the World*, David Hancock looked at how connections between tobacco traders and their factors facilitated communication across the Atlantic and allowed participants to become well-respected businessmen. They had to hire loyal and dependable people, and they had to keep their places of business orderly and present themselves in a professional manner.²³⁵ Another scholar looking at contemporary merchants, Toby Ditz, focused on how masculinity itself and the images created in these social networks relied on maintaining a proper image of good standing. Ditz argues not only that merchants' letters to each-other expressed ideals of masculinity, but also that they present the "theatricality" which these men used while communicating within their social networks. "Theatricality was a way of realizing the changing 'structures of meaning and feeling' accompanying formation [of the presented masculine identity of a merchant], particularly the vertiginous sense of... the market's undermining of customary ways of sanctioning social rank."²³⁶ For both Hancock and Toby Ditz, the way men as merchants worked within larger social networks was critical for promoting and maintaining their good standing.

While merchant men might seem the more obvious focus, other scholars have revealed that women could be just as vital to these social networks. Zara Anishanslin used the craftsmanship and skill behind the design of a dress in the portrait of a wealthy Philadelphia woman to demonstrate the complexities of the market.²³⁷ Anna Maria Garthwaithe the silk painter was well connected to other fashion designers in Spitalfields despite being the only

²³⁵ Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 85-90, 110-114.

²³⁶ Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked, or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," *The Journal of American History*, Vol 81., No. 1 (June 1994), 54.

²³⁷ Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, 6-8.

woman, and through her brother-in-law had connections to the botanical societies of the day which influenced her silk designs.²³⁸ Likewise, Anne Shippen Willing, the woman who wore the silk dress that Garthwaithe designed, used her own social connections to influence Pennsylvania politics, by supporting her relative Governor Hamilton at his inaugural ball and using her family's mercantile influence to her advantage.²³⁹ Garthwaithe and Willing, on opposite ends of the Atlantic and the consumer market, demonstrate how women could use social networks to their advantage.

Women played a role in every part of these continent-spanning social networks as economically cognizant individuals. Hartigan-O'Connor investigated the important roles that women had in the local economies of the cities of Charleston and Newport and how they relied on their social networks to maintain their good credit standing. She uses the example of Eliza Pinckney's search for a desired piece of gauze for her daughter as a demonstration of how wide those networks could be. As Pinckney coordinated the search for gauze, a man she knew reported that he had seen some, and Pinckney's enslaved woman checked every store, and eventually made contact with a salesman who offered them a good deal.²⁴⁰ That search relied on access to a series of social connections within Charleston, and a level of trust that facilitated Pinckney's success at finding deals.

This chapter builds on the works of the above scholars by demonstrating that the women of Colchester, as tobacco planters, artisans, tenant farmers, or enslaved people with limited forms of income, all used their networks to acquire the things they desired and support their

²³⁸ Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, 55-57.

²³⁹ Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, 185-186.

²⁴⁰ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 130.

households. The better they could support their households, the easier it was to maintain their networks, since an entire household could be involved in the community in different ways. The women of Colchester were able to access credit through familial or personal or commercial relationships, all of which built trustworthiness or creditworthiness in the eyes of the community. The social ties illustrated by interactions in the accounts show how the women of Colchester, Virginia had significant influence in the social world of their community. Their networks provided them with increased consumer choice and buying power.²⁴¹

Work Connections: Business Transactions of Working Women in Community Networks

Like Elizabeth Pierce, Elizabeth Fallen was one of the women in Colchester who established her reputation and credit-worthiness through her interactions in the wider community.²⁴² Fallen was the keeper of one of the town ordinaries which were vital social gathering spots.²⁴³ Ordinaries were common meeting places in Colchester and other Virginia communities, which meant Fallen would have been well known. However, Fallen's social relationships to others like Peter Wagener, one of the town's trustees and the original owner of the land on which Colchester was built, also may have influenced her ability to receive a license.²⁴⁴ Wagener served security for Fallen in 1759 when she received her ordinary license

²⁴¹ For other works on women and economic participation in the Chesapeake and British Atlantic, see the following works: Serena Zabin, "Women's Trading Networks and Dangerous Economies in Eighteenth-Century New York City," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 2006), 291-321; Mary Beth Sievens, "Female Consumerism and Household Authority in Early National New England," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 2006), 353-371; Cathy Matson, "Women's Economies in North America before 1820: Special Forum Introduction," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 2006), 271-290.

²⁴² Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 credit.

²⁴³ Court order book 1756. Court of the County of Fairfax, held April 17, 1759, in Court Order Book 1756, p 334, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia. Henderson et al. *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42, 107 credit.

²⁴⁴ Sprouse, *Colchester, Colonial Port on the Potomac*, 20.

from the county court, so we know he must have known her in some way. Two of Fallen's nieces had been taken into Wagener's guardianship the previous year.²⁴⁵ While there are no clear indications of whether they lived with Fallen at any point, her income may have been needed to support them in addition to herself and her household. Peter Wagener's assistance in securing the job as a tavern keeper may have been connected to the care of Fallen's nieces. He could have known that she needed financial security and holding a post as the keeper of an ordinary would have provided it for her. Fallen's connection to Wagener would have also increased the reach of her social network by giving her a respected landowner as a professional reference if not a patron.

Once she became established as an ordinary keeper in the town, Fallen associated with regular customers from around the county and beyond. Any seamstress work she might do could be advertised too by regular patrons, giving her an expanded clientele. Wagener and Henderson would serve as well-known associates and with an ordinary to bring in customers. Fallen was well placed to establish a wide social network for herself throughout the county. Women in similar positions, such as Diana White of Albermarle, North Carolina could make themselves very influential in the colonial south, since ordinaries and taverns were primary social locations.²⁴⁶ Fallen's connections to several individuals in the community are clearly laid out in the ledgers, but we find evidence from other women regarding the kind of work they commissioned of others.

²⁴⁵ Court of the County of Fairfax, held August 19, 1758, Court Order Book 1756, p 289. Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia.

²⁴⁶ Kristi Rutz-Robbins, "'Divers Debts': Women's Participation in the Local Economy, Albermarle, North Carolina, 1663—1729," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 2006), 425-428.

Account activity that shows one member of the community buying items using another's credit is often evidence of association through a job. Fallen's other work as a seamstress was usually completed by commission, where she would take individual tasks from clients like Henderson. Some of the fabrics she bought from him were likely purchased to complete some of the jobs he gave her, which was a common practice at the time.²⁴⁷ On Jean Turley's account, William Moon is noted to have bought three hundred 'six-pence' nails with her credit on August 8.²⁴⁸ He may have been tasked to repair something for Turley and she allowed him to go pick up the nails he needed for the job on her credit. Only two weeks prior in July, Turley had bought three hundred nails herself, fifty 'six pence' and two hundred and fifty 'four pence' sized nails.²⁴⁹ On Moon's own account, he bought upwards of eight hundred nails throughout the year, and also purchased a polished narrow axe and a grindstone.²⁵⁰ Although he appears to have been a planter, since he turned in three hogsheads of tobacco for credit, it is possible that Turley needed his assistance with whatever task she was completing with her recent purchase of nails. Moon could have helped if he possessed the skill, which his own purchases hint at, and his compensation was partly paid by getting the nails for the job on Turley's credit.

In a similar case of account holders allowing others to use their credit for a task: Elizabeth Connell allowed John Ford to buy one dozen metal buttons on her account. John Ford was a landowner who may have had the skilled labor available to him to sew buttons. Ford's own account hints that he regularly lent his labor, goods, and credit to others such as the Nickols'

²⁴⁷ Katherine Egner Gruber, "'By Measures Taken of Men': Clothing the Classes in William Carlin's Alexandria, 1763—1782," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Special Issue: Ligaments: Everyday Connections of Colonial Economies (Fall 2015), 935-937.

²⁴⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 23, 50, 131 debit.

²⁴⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 131 debit.

²⁵⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 52 debit.

couple and other nearby planters.²⁵¹ On the other hand, Connell and Ford were both planters, and those good deeds which Ford did for others established his reputation as a dependable man. Connell, being one of the widow planters of Fairfax County, would want to establish ties to the other planters, and Ford owned one of the larger tracts of land near Colchester. It is possible that they had a family connection which would have facilitated this good deed; however, it was important even without familial ties to have good standing with planter peers.²⁵² Whether it was a task for a neighbor or a family member, the social obligations which neighbors held to each other is what established the trust between individuals. An individual's use of credit was trusted inside the social circle of the community's elite. Connell gained a crucial ally in the person of John Ford for her social network who would benefit her economically, like when he could help her purchase essentials.

Women's relationship to others in the social landscape of Fairfax County often depended on what they could provide the community. We have established that Mary Nickols' ability to supply hay to Henderson allowed him to keep his horses fed. Nickols' relationships with other community members is also apparent in her transactions at the store.²⁵³ She and her husband George shared an account – the only joint account for the 1760-1761 ledger.²⁵⁴ They sold hay to Henderson in exchange for credit. In contrast to widowed account holders, Nickols' husband was still alive. Other married women made purchases on their husbands' accounts, reflecting that

²⁵¹ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987; Henderson, *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 27 credit, debit.

²⁵² History Revealed, "Paging Mrs. Elizabeth Connell," *History Revealed Inc.*, (March 19, 2019. accessed: November 17, 2020,) <https://www.historyrevealed.co/post/paging-mrs-elizabeth-connell>.

²⁵³ Like Mrs. Rogers and her corn sales, the Nickols family provided for Henderson's supply of horse feed by growing hay, establishing them as some of the supplementary farmers of Colchester. Both Mary Rogers and the Nickols couple's credit come out of the book debt for "Horses' Expenses" in Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4 debit.

²⁵⁴ We know her name from the 1758 ledger.

Henderson understood the household dynamics at work and could guarantee these women's trustworthiness to use their family credit.²⁵⁵ Apart from their sales to Henderson, they received credit from a tobacco note belonging to James Edwards. It is also of note that John Ford bought some items on the Nickols' credit - Henderson charged the Nickols for a large rug and a blanket "Per: John Ford."²⁵⁶ Why were the Nickols connected to James Edwards and John Ford?

The relationships between the Nickols, Ford, and Edwards can be better understood by investigating their social ties through property. In 1760, George Nickols was a non-slave owning tenant on Ford's land.²⁵⁷ The tenant and landowner relationship explains several transactions in Henderson's store. The Nickols sold hay to Henderson, who gave them credit at the store. When Ford purchased items on their account, he likely was collecting some of their rent in the form of a rug and a blanket or, at the very least, they trusted him to pick the items up for them. Ford's own account reveals that he too received credit for hay Henderson purchased to feed his horses. Ford sold 3000 weight of hay – significantly more than what the Nickols sold him..²⁵⁸ While the Nickols sold Henderson hay to supply them with personal credit, it is possible that some of the hay on John Ford's account was hay they helped to grow and paid him in rent. The Nickols' relationship to Edwards remains mysterious. However, it's likely the tobacco note the couple brought to the store represents either Edwards' payment for hay from the farm they rented from Ford or payment for labor they performed for Edwards. Henderson would have known all four of them and thus recognized the nuances of their connections to one another.

²⁵⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91 credit.

²⁵⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 91 debit.

²⁵⁷ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

²⁵⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 27 credit.

For the women in Colchester, their relationship to others often depended on what they could produce or provide for the community. Women like Fallen built their financial creditworthiness by establishing a reliable client base. In Fallen's case, through her connections to Henderson, Wagener, and those she met while keeping the ordinary, she could establish herself in the community as a trustworthy individual. In a different way, the relationships between landowners and tenants formed the foundations for social networks and the dynamic of cross-household interactions. Associations of trust were built on labor and connected tenants to landowners, who often worked side-by-side in the same fields. Other women provided essential goods, like Rogers selling corn to Henderson and providing his household with food. In a similar way, often involving multiple family members as the heirs to these large properties, landowning widows could become the center of their own community networks, as was the case for Sybil West, Ann Mason, and Valinda Wade.

Family Connections: Landowning Widows at the Center of Social Networks

Landowning widows made up a significant portion of the account holding women in Colchester and their accounts reflect their central place as members of the local social networks that existed in Fairfax County. Widowed account holders relied the social networks they maintained through their families and properties to provide for themselves. Widows had full responsibility for managing the land and making their produce profitable in the British-Atlantic market. They used the skills they had accumulated during their husbands' lifetime or while raised on their parent's plantations to maintain and profit from their property. Some of these women may have faced challenges when the family land and enslaved labor was divided among heirs following their husbands' deaths. Henderson's records show that widowed women still

regularly turned in tobacco notes, even with labor and acreage cut. West, Mason, and Wade are three examples of widowed women who held accounts in their own name and had their own personal tobacco stamp. This signified their status as planters and gentlewomen who had the potential to be influential members of the Colchester community.

All three of these women were widows, and their status as *femme soles* is what granted them the ability to control their estates, even when the division of those estates had already occurred on the deaths of their husbands. They had taken at least a portion of their husband's land into their possession while the rest was split among sons and married daughters. This often diminished the human labor available to them in addition to the land itself and therefore affected some of their ability to produce tobacco. In the case of West, she along with her children split her husband's property five ways and she only received a small portion for herself.²⁵⁹ Mason, meanwhile, had no children of her own. Instead she maintained her property while providing for orphaned children in the community, some of whom lived with her.²⁶⁰ Wade's property may have been left intact because her children were daughters: Valinda, who was still young when her father died; Eleanor, wife of John Barry; and Sarah or Sally Wade. Since two were unmarried, Wade likely maintained control of any property that would be left to them.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Sybil West's land split with her children is a good example of this, see: "Will of Hugh West" in Will Book B-1, pages 74-75, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 21, 1754.

²⁶⁰ "Will of Ann Mason," in Will Book B-1, p 299-301, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15th, 1761.

²⁶¹ Valinda Wade's own case is interesting, since it is ultimately her daughter, also named Valinda, who inherited the tract of land she controlled in 1760-1761. Due to limited surviving information the specifics of this transfer were hard to pin down. However Henderson's ledgers and a surviving administrative bond indicate that Wade was still alive possibly until March of 1765 and by 1766 her account's name was changed to "Mrs. Wade's Estate" and Sarah/Sally Wade and "Miss Valinda" held their own accounts. References to Zephaniah as Valinda's husband or Valinda's father can help differentiate which individual owned the land in what years in: "Administrative Bond of Valinda Wade", in Bond Book 1, p 71, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax Virginia, recorded March 19, 1765; "Release of Land to Thomas Marshall from Zephaniah and Valinda Wade" in Deed Book A-1, p 491-492, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded August 7, 1745; "Lease and Release of Land to George Washington from Valinda

West appears to have been involved in the lives of her children and grandchildren heavily; her actions reflect how family social network functioned. West's own social connections allowed her to manage her estates and the properties of her family more effectively. She could send her son Hugh to run her errands, such as when he purchased two pairs of callamanco shoes and two pairs of women's worsted stockings on her credit at Henderson's store. Hugh may have picked these items up for her or perhaps for her granddaughters, who we know she was fond because of the legacy she left for them in her will.²⁶² Whether for herself or her grandchildren, West would have known that, as a better sort of woman, she and her family members were expected to wear these essential and fashionable articles of clothing.²⁶³ Hugh was an attorney in the county, so he needed to keep up his own place as a gentleman.²⁶⁴ West may have been providing for him and his daughters so that the family's reputation could be maintained, and the family as a whole depended upon that reputation to maintain their commercial networks with other planters.

West could also depend on Hugh to pick up the tobacco rent from Thomas Winsor, a landowner in his own right who used a section of the land belonging to William West, her other son. Mrs. West's assistance from her son Hugh and her leasing of land to Thomas Winsor affirm that maintaining social connections was a crucial part of successfully managing her estate.²⁶⁵

Wade," in Deed Book J-1, p 135-137, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded, 1771; Alexander Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1764-1765, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 26a debit, from the *John Glassford and Company Records*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Microfilm Reel 59 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association); Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1766-1767, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 105 credit, 117 credit, debit.

²⁶² "Will of Sibyl West," in Will Book E-1, p 235-236b, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 16, 1786.

²⁶³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 156 debit.

²⁶⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 96 debit.

²⁶⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 124, 156 debit. Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

William West lived in Maryland at this time and did not reside on his property in the county of Fairfax.²⁶⁶ This meant that unless someone else was working on that land it would lay fallow, and he would be losing money. Thomas Winsor who lived nearby may have been using it as way to grow more tobacco for himself and owed a rent payment to William for his use of the land. Since William could not easily collect the rent himself, and possibly to provide for his mother, William may have asked Hugh to deposit the rent from Winsor on Sybil West's account. It is also possible that Sybil and Hugh together looked after William's property and were themselves responsible for arranging the rent agreement with Winsor. Sybil West was the sole executrix of her husband's will, making it likely that she had some say in how her children's properties were managed especially if they were unable to manage it themselves.²⁶⁷ West's influence over her family and the man who rented family land demonstrate her ability to use her family network to maintain her place as a planter in Fairfax County society. Through her own established place as a landed widow, the authority of her son Hugh, and Thomas Winsor's rent as a source of additional income, West maintained the family's influence as well as her own.

The widow Mason provides a markedly different example of an extended network. When she died in 1761, she did not leave any children of her own. Consequently, she divided her estate between several orphans, some of whom lived with her by the time of her death, and her living relatives in Oakham, England. Mason, having no children of her own, sought to create a different sort of family network. Mason granted sums of money in her will to these orphans in addition to other individuals who may have been her friends. Two orphans, Charles Roch and Ann Longden,

²⁶⁶ "Will of Hugh West" in Will Book B-1, p 74-75, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 21, 1754.

²⁶⁷ "Will of Hugh West" in Will Book B-1, p 74-75, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded November 21, 1754.

were to have three years of their school and boarding paid for from her estate. Charles and Ann both lived in Mason's house during her lifetime, which means that she likely provided for their educations while she was alive as well.²⁶⁸ By raising them and seeing that they were educated, Mason was hoping to give the two orphans an opportunity to join her own social circle. In addition, Mason left legacies of her wearing apparel to two other minors named Ann and Sarah Masterson. Passing on clothes to the Masterson sisters was a form of patronage or favoritism among the planter women of means who could provide the signs of social status to those they valued.²⁶⁹ By providing for the schooling of Charles and Ann and giving her clothing to the Masterson sisters, Mason demonstrated how she created her own familial connections to establish networks of their own. She provided for this small community after her death, making herself for a time the center of their burgeoning social network.

A third example of a landed widow, Valinda Wade, can provide insight on the ways that social connections could make consumption of goods easier for women managing estates.²⁷⁰ Wade became a landowner following the death of her husband in 1746. It was ultimately her oldest unmarried daughter, Miss Valinda, who would inherit the land. However, it seems that the elder Valinda still controlled the land and household finances until her own demise in early 1765.²⁷¹ We also know that either Mrs. Wade or her daughter Valinda held an account at the Alexandria store of William Ramsay, a competitor of Henderson's during the same years of this

²⁶⁸ "Will of Ann Mason," in Will Book B-1, p 299-301, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15th, 1761.

²⁶⁹ "Will of Ann Mason," in Will Book B-1, p 299-301, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded September 15th, 1761.

²⁷⁰ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19 debit.

²⁷¹ "Administrator Bond and Inventory of Zephaniah Wade" in Will Book A-1 p 170-172, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax, Virginia, recorded 1746; Henderson et al. *Ledger 1766-1767, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 117 debit; "Administrator Bond of Valinda Wade", in Bond Book 1, p 71, Fairfax Circuit Court, Fairfax Virginia, recorded March 19, 1765.

study.²⁷² Mrs. Wade's own purchases and those of her associates reflected the type of cooperative relationship which planters and landowners could use to each other's benefit.

The person who shopped most frequently on Mrs. Wade's account in 1760 and 1761 was Edward Barrett. Barrett was a tenant of Mrs. Wade's who worked and resided on her tract of land.²⁷³ Record of him paying rent to her on the account at the store has not survived in the same way it did for West and Winsor; however, their interaction suggests they had a cooperative relationship. Barrett made purchases of sugar, nails, rum, and tea in June and July. Edward's son Charles also bought sugar and a pair of buckles on Wade's household account. Wade herself only entered the store in October 1760 and September 1761 to purchase two yards of worsted quality shalloon fabric and a pair of women's shoes.²⁷⁴ This series of transactions may have been a form of strategic shopping on the part of Mrs. Wade. Sending Barrett and his son to pick up household goods allowed her to stay at home and tend to her plantation, or to seek out goods on her own at other stores such as Ramsay's. It is possible that Wade was a discerning customer, but one who, like Eliza Pinckney in Charleston, had connections that streamlined her purchases.²⁷⁵ Barrett may have been in Henderson's store on his own business and knew that Wade needed those items and picked them up for her as a matter of convenience. They were regular sorts of items too, while Wade herself went to Henderson's store seeking fabric and clothing. Henderson knew Barrett as her tenant so he would trust the legitimacy of the purchase.

²⁷² Smart Martin et al., *The Ledger of William Ramsay*, <https://ramsay.arthistory.wisc.edu/about/>.

²⁷³ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map, 1987.

²⁷⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19 debit.

²⁷⁵ Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 130.

Widowhood provided West, Mason, and Wade with an opportunity to own land in their own right but they were also the center of a familial support network. Their children and dependents, like orphans and tenants, supplied help they could use to maintain their own place in society. This dynamic affected the ways in which they and other women became influential within their communities and social networks – as both planters and providers for their households. For women in other social networks where they were not the center, they still had influence even if the exact nature of their place in society was obfuscated.

Obscured Connections: Networks of Women Without Personal Credit

Without a safety net of well-established resources and connected families, many women could not achieve the social prominence of West and Wade, but they could still wield access to the market and their connections to others to express buyer's choice. For many, like Fallen's daughter and her enslaved girl Kate, we only have their name and what they purchased for the household's use. These purchases can say something about their lives and abilities. In 1761 both Kate and Fallen's unnamed daughter picked up 4 weight of sugar. Kate also bought a quart of brandy on Fallen's account.²⁷⁶ These purchases were most likely made for household use but they do tell us that Henderson took note of their personhood as customers for legal reasons and because they represented Fallen as members of her household.

Since the trail for Fallen's dependents does not extend far, we need to look at further examples of women "in the margins" of the ledgers to reveal a more complete story of how

²⁷⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 42 debit.

social networks functioned for them.²⁷⁷ Pierce, the widowed sexton of the Pohick Church, and Boggiss, the parish collector, provide a good example. There is potential here to see how small interactions in the store hint at larger connections in the local community. Boggiss (sometimes spelled Boggess) appears to have been an influential figure in the Fairfax County. As parish collector, he was one of two individuals who used Henderson's store to collect the dues of the county residents. The other collector was the sheriff, John West Jr.²⁷⁸ In Boggiss's case, he collected the tithes required by the Church of England from everyone in the parish.²⁷⁹ In addition to acting as the parish collector, Boggiss also owned the land on which Grayson's mill stood, as well as one ordinary, and a race-track (likely for horse racing, which was prevalent at the time in Virginia).²⁸⁰ Boggiss was an influential person. Not only was he a representative of the church and colonial government in an official capacity, but he was also the host of some of the chief social activities which took place among the landowners in the county.

On August 13, 1761, Boggiss, on his account as the parish collector, paid Henderson 540 weight in tobacco toward Pierce's "assumsit."²⁸¹ Pierce's status as the sexton explains this transaction. The vestrymen of the Church of England often assigned this post people who needed assistance from the church such as poor widows and people with disabilities.²⁸² The sexton was

²⁷⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis's work *Women On the Margins* inspired this phrase. Unlike her prolific women writers, the non-account holding women who shopped at Henderson have noticeably scant written information, but they still have a presence that needs to be accounted for, Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives*, (Harvard University Press, 1995).

²⁷⁸ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 115 credit, debit. This is the son of Sybil West

²⁷⁹ "Virginia Taxes for Parish Operations," *Virginia Places*, Accessed June 11, 2020.

<http://www.virginiaplaces.org/taxes/taxcolonial.html>

²⁸⁰ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

²⁸¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 128 debit; This was a common spelling for an assumsit found in the ledgers.

²⁸² John Frederic Page, "The Role of the Vestry in Late Seventeenth-Century Virginia: Christ Church Parish, Middlesex County, 1663-1680 and 1695-1700," (College of William & Mary, 1969), 14, *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*, Paper 1539624673, <https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-t9nv-w663>.

paid from the church taxes or tithes, which Boggiss collected for Colchester.²⁸³ An assumption, in this case, was Pierce's agreement to work for the church as the sexton. Boggiss's payment to Henderson was simply the best means he had for paying Pierce as an employee of the parish.²⁸⁴ Henderson then recorded the same weight of tobacco as credit on Pierce's account.²⁸⁵

In contrast to the landed widows who had been provided for, Pierce likely did not have a stable safety net outside of the church. Henderson's store provided the avenue through which Boggiss, as the parish collector, could pay a fellow employee of the parish. Pierce's employment for the church indicates why Henderson was willing to establish a line of credit in her name. She would have been well known to him and the rest of the community as the church's sexton and her credit, coming from the community's tithes, was secure. With the aid of the church and Boggiss, Pierce had greater access to the resources of the community.²⁸⁶

We can determine even less about other women who lived more "in the margins" of the ledgers. For instance, Henderson had an enslaved woman named Celia as part of his household. We know very little about her, but we can determine that she was over sixteen, because on August 7, 1761 Henderson had to pay the "wenches levy and tax" to both the sheriff and the parish collector. The sheriff's levy was eleven pounds and the levy for the parish collector was twenty pounds.²⁸⁷ Tithes were issued in Virginia for white men or slaves of any sex above the

²⁸³ "Titheables," *Library of Virginia*, Accessed: February 11, 2020.

https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/tithables_vanote.htm

²⁸⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 122 credit.

²⁸⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 62 debit, 122 credit, debit.

²⁸⁶ "At a Vestry Held for Truro Parish," *The Colonial Vestry Book of Truro Parish*, November 29, 1760, 92, Accessed June 11, 2020, <http://www.pohick.org/vestrybook.html>.

²⁸⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 128, 140 credit, 6 debit.

age of sixteen.²⁸⁸ Since “wenches” was the common parlance for black women in Virginia at the time, this must have been a tax for Celia, the enslaved woman Henderson owned.²⁸⁹ The other enslaved people in Henderson’s household, such as the boy Glasgow, must have been underage since they were not tithed.²⁹⁰

Meanwhile, other women such as Mrs. Keith, Judith Davis, and the wife of Richard Crupper wielded some influence among their respective social connections - the account holders whose credit they influenced. Mrs. Keith bought two bushels of salt on John Ford’s account Ford had many individuals making purchases with his credit, and he is listed as buying items like a grindstone for John Stephens, and footwear for William Jacobs and the apprentices of Mr. Wright. It is possible that Mrs. Keith completed some work or service for Ford and that the salt she purchased was the payment she received. She also simply may have been running errands for him or his household.²⁹¹ It is possible she was one of his tenants, but a John Keith is listed as a tenant of Grayson’s, so she may have been Keith’s wife.²⁹² Whether this transaction reflects a connection based on an exchange or neighborly assistance, Mrs. Keith and Ford had some connection to one another.

In the case of Richard Crupper’s wife, she and her husband shared the duties of shopping at Henderson’s store for household goods.²⁹³ She bought a one-pint mug, striped holland fabric,

²⁸⁸ “Tithables,” *Library of Virginia*, Accessed: February 11, 2020, https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/tithables_vanote.htm.

²⁸⁹ See Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4 debit for references to her in household expenses; Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches*, 136-139.

²⁹⁰ Appears in “Housekeeping Expenses” and “Expenses for Servants.” Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 4, 5 debit. Mrs. Fallen mended clothes for Glasgow, Billy, and Celia.

²⁹¹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 27 debit.

²⁹² Mitchell, “An Interpretive Historical Map,” 1987.

²⁹³ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 41 debit.

and a sifter. While we do not know her name, Henderson recorded her coming into the store regularly. She and Crupper both bought a variety of goods.²⁹⁴ Wives could be as active as their husbands in the community to benefit their household as a unit. Henderson would have known both Mr. and Mrs. Crupper and while it was Richard Crupper who controlled the family finances, Henderson knew Crupper's wife and understood that she was trusted to use the household credit.

Meanwhile, Judith Davis received a pair of stockings and one and a half yard of yellow tartan from Samuel Canterbury. We know nothing about her other than Mr. Canterbury made the purchase on her behalf using his account, hinting at some relationship between them.²⁹⁵ A J. Davis also purchased an ounce of thread on John Ford's account during September.²⁹⁶ While it is hard to say what work or exchanges this may be related to, it could be that Davis was a seamstress like Fallen, and the thread and tartan could have gone to items Davis was mending. It is also likely that the stockings were a gift or a type of payment from Canterbury to Judith, but without further evidence these are speculations.

Other networks operating in Colchester could hint at what was happening in these hard to discern cases, since John Ford was not the only man who used his line of credit to supply the needs of women in his social network. James Edwards' account also contained evidence of an unknown relationship between him and Jean or Jane Shields. Edwards ordered three and a half yards of osnaburg fabric designated for Jane Shields in March, and in July he purchased two yards of check fabric for her.²⁹⁷ It is possible that Jane was a seamstress, and Edwards'

²⁹⁴ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 125 debit.

²⁹⁵ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 26 debit.

²⁹⁶ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 27, debit.

²⁹⁷ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 19 debit.

household could have used her expertise like Henderson used Fallen's. Edwards was a tenant of James Dozier on property near Rattlesnake Creek.²⁹⁸

Apart from task-based social connections, women also used family ties to access the store. One woman who appeared to purchase on two lines of credit was the wife of Peter Turley. She bought items on accounts of both Paul Turley her brother-in-law and William Buchanan. Interestingly, after Mrs. Turley's purchase on Buchanan's account in October 1760, Paul also made purchases of fabrics on Buchanan's credit in October and December. Buchanan later made a purchase of one weight of brimstone on Paul Turley's account on January 31, 1761.²⁹⁹ These transactions hint at a familiarity between the Turleys and Buchanans where they might have needed each-others financial aid and used the others credit to supply their households during winter. A William Buchanan married Rachel Turley, Paul's daughter. This marriage was likely after 1761 since Rachel was born sometime after 1749, but the families were clearly close.³⁰⁰ Mrs. Turley's purchases demonstrate the way women could use their family and social connections to supply their daily needs.

These varied interactions tell us that many women used their social networks to supply their households even when knowledge of who they were has not survived. They could access a variety of resources through opportunities for work and financial assistance depending on their relationships to others in the community. Social networks such as the family and work relations

²⁹⁸ Mitchell, "An Interpretive Historical Map," 1987.

²⁹⁹ Henderson et al., *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia*, fol. 21, 23 debit.

³⁰⁰ Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak: The Patents and Northern Neck Grants of Fairfax County, Virginia*, (Fairfax County Administrative Services, 1977), 68-69, 124-129; "Turley Families," *Rootsweb Blogs* hosted by Ancestry.com, updated May 1, 2005, Accessed, June 17, 2020, <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~unab22/turley.htm>.

seen here were a part of daily life in eighteenth-century Virginia, and the woman here were an integral part of those networks.

Conclusion

The women of Colchester and Fairfax County held influence in the social networks which bound the community together and they used those networks to provide for themselves and their households and maintain their reputation in society. The connections which land-owning women facilitated with their families, tenants, and other members of their households aided them in the management of their property, their ability to be active in the market, and to provide for their families. Women outside of the landowning cohort still had to find ways to establish credit and work within the marketplace, and they acted within the context of their social networks. Outside of their ability to earn credit and make consumer decisions, how women in the colonial marketplace used their social networks to find work and make deals ultimately let them express their economic agency in broad ways.

Overall, their influence as members of the community of Colchester and Fairfax County appears to have been significant. What they could do and who they influenced varied from woman to woman, but what is constant is that they had access to resources through their networks. They utilized these networks to provide wealth and resources to their households and in many instances were able to increase their social connections and influence. Women were active participants in the eighteenth-century economy and even when limited legally they could be economically and socially influential.

CONCLUSION

The daily activities of eighteenth-century women such as going to the store, accumulating credit, and interacting with family and neighbors speak to the place of women in the economy and society of Colonial Virginia. Women had the means to earn credit through a variety of work involving their own labor or that of others. They heavily influenced the consumer revolution by purchasing goods with value as everyday household goods and as status symbols with socially coded meanings. They also worked within family and business networks to maintain and improve their social connections. Those connections, in turn, linked women to work, money, and goods which provided for their personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of their households.

Women could establish credit through their control of land or labor, and they found ways to do so since credit was essential for financial and social activities. The plantations were landed property, and land created wealth and power. Widows or single daughters could inherit and join the propertied class as financially independent individuals. For non-landowning women, they could establish or earn credit by making use of any land and labor they may have had access to through a will or deed, or by their own labor or the labor of their households. If women could acquire or access credit, they could participate in consumption.

With credit in hand or earned from commissions, labor, or favors, women in Colchester, Virginia could then access the world of fine goods which general stores like Henderson's provided. On their own credit or the household credit they used, they could purchase any number of items ranging from an assortment of fabrics, finished articles of clothing, food, beverages, medicine, and tools for home repair and farming. The needs of daily life in colonial Virginia

were varied, but refined goods like well-made fashionable clothes and silverware carried social worth beyond the currency they sold for. By keeping up with the fashion trends of the interconnected Atlantic world women could enhance their own image and provide some goods with transferable value for their heirs in the form of financial and social credit.

Social credit achieved its full potential as the women of Colchester interacted in their social spheres to form networks of association and cooperation. They were part of family networks, households of related and unrelated people, and partnerships formed out of necessity to complete skilled work. Community social networks made navigating the world of goods, providing for the household needs, and acquiring credit easier. Some of the women of Colchester would have been well known to many county residents by way of their connections, making it easier for Henderson to supply them ready credit.

The varied experiences of the women of Colchester who shopped at Henderson's in 1760 and 1761, illustrate how they earned store credit, their ability to make informed consumer choices to provide for their household in material and culturally meaningful ways, and the social networks which tied them to the community and gave them the influence they needed to thrive economically. The variety of agency that women of all social standings could use to provide for themselves and their households in Colchester helps to expand the view of early modern scholarship. The ideas presented by Anishanslin and Hartigan-O'Connor that reflect the dynamic place of women in the early modern economy is buffered and modified by presenting more individual women of different social standings and how they dealt with their unique needs.³⁰¹ The depth of investigating the local economies which colonial people worked within can be

³⁰¹ Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, 54-58, 185-190; Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, 5, 57, 130.

increased if the motivations of customers are investigated. Like with John Hook in the Virginia backcountry, Henderson had to respond to his customer's demand, and his women customers had a variety of demands that they earned credit to meet.³⁰² Answering the question of "Why Demand?" for different demographics, such as women in the Chesapeake, can be achieved when the ways which they established credit and the goods they choose to purchase are assessed.³⁰³ The more evidence we can compile from resources like store ledgers about individual activity, the clearer our image of pre-revolutionary society, and women's complicated place within it.

³⁰² Smart-Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods*, 1-8.

³⁰³ Carson, *Face Value*, 25-36.

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