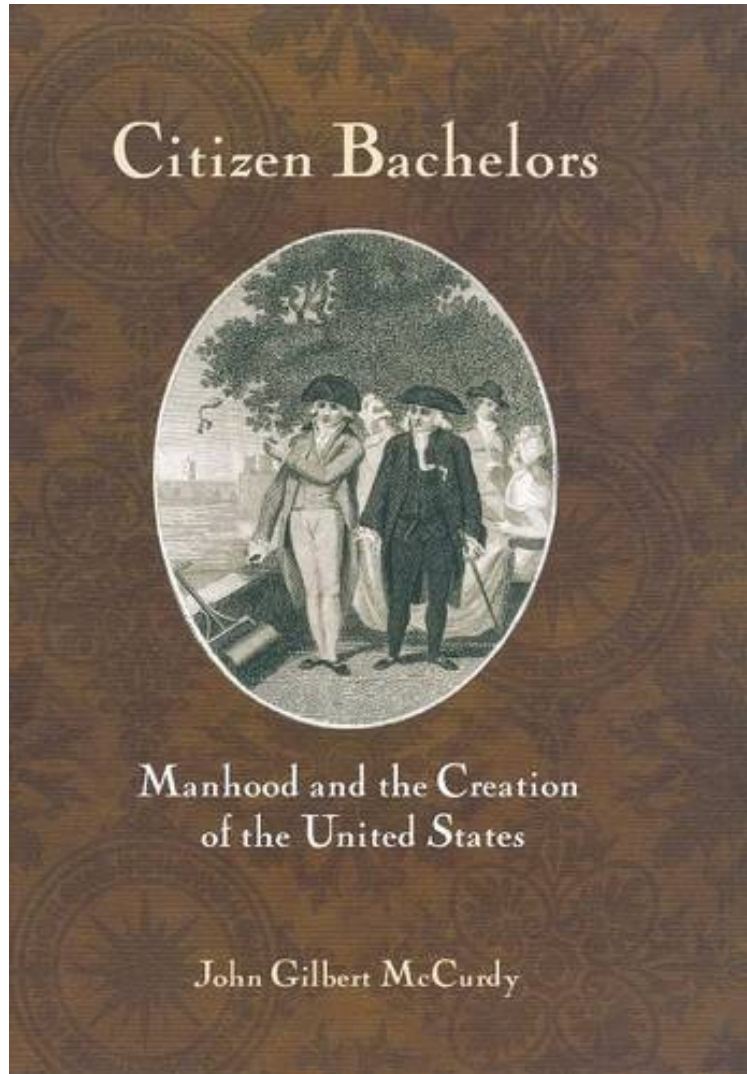


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Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States

John Gilbert McCurdy

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#1197607 in Books John Gilbert McCurdy 2009-03-19Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .90 x 6.10l, 1.15 #File Name: 0801447887288 pagesCitizen Bachelors Manhood and the Creation of the United States | File size: 49.Mb

John Gilbert McCurdy : Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A good book to learn the roots of your status, gentlemen bachelors.By HappinessIndependent men who have mastery, that is, the capability to live by themselves, having a profession that allows them to support themselves and their desired proclivities, and sufficient self control to exercise their powers discreetly, with prudence, restraint, and in accordance with the plans they have made and follow to their

satisfaction, would do well to peruse this book, and discover the historical antecedents of their current status in the United States.⁴ of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excessive Use Of The Word "Liminal" By Robert O. DeVries The author of this book repeatedly uses the word "liminal". I had not previously encountered this word, and I had to quickly find an unabridged dictionary. Having said that, I cannot find one other negative comment to make about this excellent study in early American social history. Most books about the Colonial Era focus on the struggle of the European powers to control North America and on the growing dissatisfaction of the colonists with British rule. Professor McCurdy delves into the lives of average Americans. He not only highlights the high percentage of indentured servants in American society, but also uncovers the fact that the high death rate of the era prevented almost half of this class from ever becoming free men. The theme of the book is the gradual acceptance by American society that single men were citizens in good standing too. Unfortunately the rights of women were unknown until the 20th century. The traditions of Western Civilization from the time of the Roman Republic had been to include marriage as a requirement for membership in society. The early Colonial governments went even further with criminal penalties and exotic taxes on single men. Professor McCurdy's story of how and why this all changed in America is an exciting one and is based on solid research. The results of this acceptance by society were dramatic. James Madison, while still a single man, would become the "Father of the Constitution". James Buchanan, who never married, would become the 15th President of the United States. Anyone with a serious interest in American social history, the Colonial Era, or in the history of civil rights should include this book on their reading list. Cultural conservatives will always demand universal marriage no matter what. The story of how and why the majority of Americans came to a better mind about this subject is well worth telling.⁴ of 6 people found the following review helpful. Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States By Beverly L. McCurdy I am prejudice about this book, my son wrote it. He does offer a credible, and insightful view of single men from the early years of the United States and their contribution to the country politically and socially.

In 1755 Benjamin Franklin observed "a man without a wife is but half a man" and since then historians have taken Franklin at his word. In *Citizen Bachelors*, John Gilbert McCurdy demonstrates that Franklin's comment was only one side of a much larger conversation. Early Americans vigorously debated the status of unmarried men and this debate was instrumental in the creation of American citizenship. In a sweeping examination of the bachelor in early America, McCurdy fleshes out a largely unexamined aspect of the history of gender. Single men were instrumental to the settlement of the United States and for most of the seventeenth century their presence was not particularly problematic. However, as the colonies matured, Americans began to worry about those who stood outside the family. Lawmakers began to limit the freedoms of single men with laws requiring bachelors to pay higher taxes and face harsher penalties for crimes than married men, while moralists began to decry the sexual immorality of unmarried men. But many resisted these new tactics, including single men who reveled in their hedonistic reputations by delighting in sexual horseplay without marital consequences. At the time of the Revolution, these conflicting views were confronted head-on. As the incipient American state needed men to stand at the forefront of the fight for independence, the bachelor came to be seen as possessing just the sort of political, social, and economic agency associated with citizenship in a democratic society. When the war was won, these men demanded an end to their unequal treatment, sometimes grudgingly, and the citizen bachelor was welcomed into American society. Drawing on sources as varied as laws, diaries, political manifestos, and newspapers, McCurdy shows that in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the bachelor was a simultaneously suspicious and desirable figure: suspicious because he was not tethered to family and household obligations yet desirable because he was free to study, devote himself to political office, and fight and die in battle. He suggests that this dichotomy remains with us to this day and thus it is in early America that we find the origins of the modern-day identity of the bachelor as a symbol of masculine independence. McCurdy also observes that by extending citizenship to bachelors, the founders affirmed their commitment to individual freedom, a commitment that has subsequently come to define the very essence of American citizenship.

"Many single men in eighteenth-century England and America faced heavy, discriminatory taxation, but rather than obliterating 'the solitary state,' such policies served instead to politicize bachelors and to draw them fully to the brink of citizenship. In *Citizen Bachelors*, John Gilbert McCurdy writes the history of this remarkable development. His narrative is convincing, elegant, and often astonishing. He explores both the lived experiences of single men and the social construction of bachelorhood as a gendered identity. . . . McCurdy's narrative . . . makes a vital contribution to the study of early American manhood and masculinity. . . . Written in clear, uncluttered prose and offering rich rewards for scholars of gender, sexuality, the family, and the law, *Citizen Bachelors* should be singled out for careful reading." Benjamin Irvin, H-SHEAR, H-Net s, January 2010" McCurdy has produced a valuable volume in this careful and highly readable inventory of early American bachelors and their cultural representations. When combined with the many related works on sexuality in this period, the book helps us understand a world long neglected and misrepresented. It is vital that we appreciate how different colonial society's cultural and sexual norms were from our own; the bachelor we recognize today was not known in early colonial North America. With this useful study,

however, we can begin to see how this familiar figure first came into existence."David D. Doyle, *New England Quarterly*, Spring 2009 "McCurdy succeeds brilliantly in showing how the legal standing of 'bachelors' changed over the course of the colonial and revolutionary eras. . . . Drawing enlightening comparisons between New England, the Chesapeake, and Pennsylvania, he is able to show how laws across the colonies were moving in a similar direction . . . [as they] collectively began to carve a space for adult single men in society. McCurdy also unearths some fascinating snapshots of the subjective experience of bachelorhood."Rodney Hessinger, *Men and Masculinities* (December 2011) "Although this book is about men, like the best new works on masculinity *Citizen Bachelors* repeatedly brings its subject into conversation with women's history."William and Mary *Quarterly*"John Gilbert McCurdy considers the political history of bachelors in all the colonies and over the course of the entire colonial period through the Revolutionary era. He makes use of all sorts of evidence, including statutes, popular literature, demographic data, and tax records. He describes a clear trajectory of the rise and fall of unequal treatment of bachelors in eighteenth-century America and persuasively suggests that this history is an important piece of the larger story of gender and democratic revolution. All scholars of early American manhood as well as of gender and citizenship should read this engaging book."C. Dallett Hemphill, Ursinus College, author of *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America*"*Citizen Bachelors* is a good read: lucid, concise and compelling. John Gilbert McCurdy's insightful study of unmarried young men and never-married men is an important and original contribution to our knowledge of personal identity, family, and legal status in early America."Susan E. Klepp, Temple University, coeditor of *Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, An Indentured Servant*From the Back Cover"John Gilbert McCurdy considers the political history of bachelors in all the colonies and over the course of the entire colonial period through the Revolutionary era. He makes use of all sorts of evidence, including statutes, popular literature, demographic data, and tax records. He describes a clear trajectory of the rise and fall of unequal treatment of bachelors in eighteenth-century America and persuasively suggests that this history is an important piece of the larger story of gender and democratic revolution. All scholars of early American manhood as well as of gender and citizenship should read this engaging book."-C. Dallett Hemphill, Ursinus College, author of *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America*About the AuthorJohn Gilbert McCurdy is Assistant Professor of History at Eastern Michigan University.