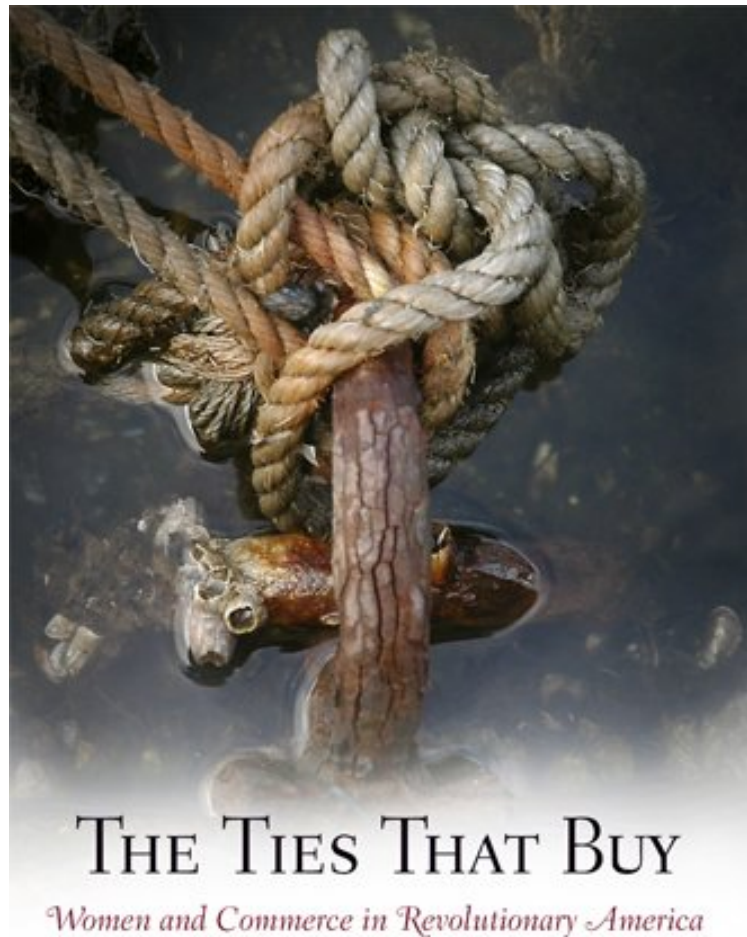


(Download pdf) The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America (Early American Studies)

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Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor

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Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor : The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America (Early American Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America (Early American Studies):

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bamboo This is an important and well written book. Ms. H-O tell the always interesting story of the marketplace, and how a woman's status did not matter in that place of exchange of coin for product. Too often students of history see the domestic sphere as the all of a woman's world. The author expands that sphere to include her job as "procurer" of goods; food, fabric, kitchen utensils etc, for the home -- thus involving women all all classes in the colonial marketplace. This is a book that needed to be written.

In 1770, tavernkeeper Abigail Stoneman called in her debts by flourishing a handful of playing cards before the Rhode Island Court of Common Pleas. Scrawled on the cards were the IOUs of drinkers whose links to Stoneman testified to women's paradoxical place in the urban economy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Stoneman did traditional women's work: boarding, feeding, cleaning, and selling alcohol but her customers, like her creditors, underscore her connections to an expansive commercial society. These connections are central to *The Ties That Buy*. Historian Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor traces the lives of urban women in early America to reveal how they used the ties of residence, work, credit, and money to shape consumer culture at a time when the politics of the marketplace was gaining national significance. Covering the period 1750-1820, the book analyzes how women such as Stoneman used and were used by shifting forms of credit and cash in an economy transitioning between neighborly exchanges and investment-oriented transactions. In this world, commerce reached into every part of life. At the hearths of multifamily homes, renters, lodgers, and recent acquaintances lived together and struck financial deals for survival. Landladies, enslaved washerwomen, shopkeepers, and hucksters sustained themselves by serving the mobile population. A new economic practice in America: shopping mobilized hierarchical and friendly relationships into wide-ranging consumer networks that depended on these same market connections. Rhetoric emerging after the Revolution downplayed the significance of expanding female economic life in the interest of stabilizing the political order. But women were quintessential market participants, with fluid occupational identities, cross-class social and economic connections, and a firm investment in cash and commercial goods for power and meaning.

"*The Ties That Buy* challenges our assumptions about the eighteenth-century American marketplace and the world of commerce. In the author's eyes, this world was not a male-defined or even male-dominated space. Poor, middling, and elite women as well as free and enslaved African American women were a significant presence as savvy entrepreneurs, producers, and consumers who knew about commodities. They also knew about money: how to get it, how to use it, how to spend it. I know of no other book that covers these themes in such a succinct and interesting way." Susan Branson, Syracuse University

"This fascinating and well-researched book challenges our assumptions at every turn. Because Hartigan-O'Connor shifts our focus from the countryside to the city, she forces historians to rethink their fundamental precepts concerning the 'capitalist transformation.' . . . This is a book that all scholars of the early Republic whether or not they focus on issues of gender will ignore at their own peril." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*

"Through an examination of residence, work, credit, circulation of money, and shopping patterns, Hartigan-O'Connor has created a detailed account of the colonial women who helped shape the vocabulary of commerce with their economic networks. This book provides insight into the everyday practices of women and a meticulous look at the economic implications of everyday life in the era explored." *Women's Studies*

"In this nuanced and innovative book, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor moves female economic life from the margins of society to the center where it belongs. Instead of focusing on the great merchants, she explains how and why women of all ranks were central to economic development. And by taking a new and intriguing approach to consumerism, she shows how the production and importation of goods transformed women's lives. This is a creative and important work." Elaine Forman Crane, Fordham University

About the Author: Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor teaches history at the University of California, Davis.