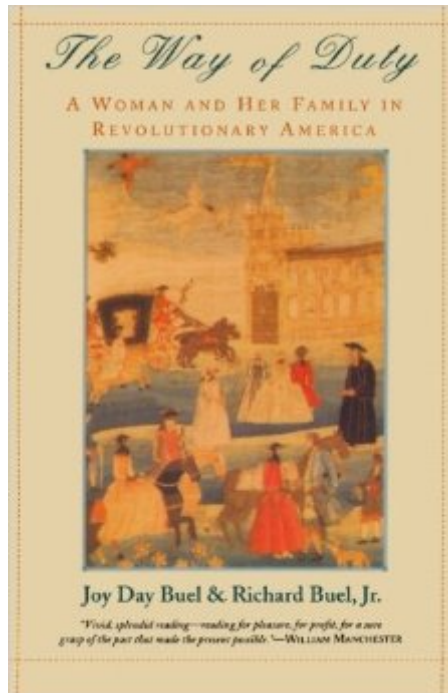


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The Way Of Duty: A Woman And Her Family In Revolutionary America



Synopsis

Combining the skills of a gifted writer and a scholar's grasp of early America, *The Way of Duty* draws readers into a vividly evoked world. The Buels have used a rich trove of documents to tell the story of a Connecticut woman, Mary Fish Silliman (1736–1818), whose adventures illuminate the day-to-day realities of living through the American Revolution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I began reading this book as part of research I'm conducting on the Revolutionary War. It ended up as pleasure reading. I found the book not only enjoyable to read, but inspiring as well. Mary Fish Silliman, an upper class woman during the Revolution, shares her trials and joys in this wonderful portrayal of her life. Using Mary's journal and family letters, the authors do a fabulous job of bringing her to life, as well as the long ago culture in which she lived. Her faith and strength of character are truly inspiring, especially when she faces the untimely deaths of two of her young children, her young husband, and the possibility of losing another husband in battle. A remarkable woman in a fascinating age.

The Way of Duty is a great supplementary reading for those taking a first course in US History or for those wanting to know about the life of an ordinary woman and her family during the time of the American Revolution and pre-Revolutionary times. This book has information about the First Great Awakening, and on the religious sermons that were preached during the Great Awakening. But this

book tells a story about the life of Mary Fish Silliman, and the time (1736-1818) in which she lived. It's a good window to look out to see how a family functioned during the American Revolution.

Although I found it a bit hard to stay focused while reading "The Way of Duty," I did like the book. Unlike textbooks that provide facts, charts, graphs and statistics, "The Way of Duty" gives the reader a look at what life was like for the Fish family during the Revolutionary War. The reader gets an inside look at childhood, education, religious devotion, the obstacles surrounding marriage, home life for a woman, ideas about death, childbirth, and war. It is excellent when blended with readings from textbooks that deal with the same subject matter.

I found this book to be a very interesting look at the life of an upper middle class woman, throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century. Mary Fish Silliman had a bittersweet existence and survived three husbands and several children and grandchildren. a very good read for research or pleasure

A particular contribution of this volume is that it lays out the domestic side of the American Revolutionary War and post-war period for families as well as for returning combatants. It is not often that women are as prominent in history books as Mary Silliman is here. That she wrote letters that were kept as well as extensive diaries has permitted us to view what it was like to live on fought-over land throughout the war. The picture is not the romantic, pretty picture of the American Revolution that I studied in a high school history class in the 1950s. Not only was domestic life hard during this period, but many jurisdictions did not treat their soldiers well either. This well-sourced and well-written biography provides convincing detail of what war does to the human spirit, demonstrates that taken-for-granted moral principles of honesty may actually be provisional. Some fairly shocking events revealed here. This is not your dried and purified view of history. It's lively, disturbing, and also fascinating.

I purchased this book at a thrift shop in nearby Stonington, Connecticut, intrigued by the fact that Mary Fish was from Stonington. The local angle hooked me to buy the book; I truly never expected to enjoy it as much as I did. It is a fascinating, readable book that is definitely an important piece of women's history, up there with such books as Mary Chesnutts's *Diary from Dixie* and Elizabeth Custer's *Boots and Saddles*. In history class we learn very little of the daily lives of women; we tend to believe that because they couldn't vote, because they were second class citizens in the eyes of the law and because they lacked political power, that they were unaware of what was going on in

their world around them. Books such as this show us otherwise. As an aside, I also found the discussion of the theological dissension during the Great Awakening fascinating and very relevant to today's moral issues.

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