

ing Hannah's literary quotations and reading, for example, are helpful in contrasting her literary consumption with that of the more bookish Drinker. Klepp and Wulf might have followed Crane's lead, however, in providing more extensive annotation. Initial identification of persons mentioned would have greatly increased the utility of the diary for social-network analysis. But such lacunae are also assets in that while the editors' essays demonstrate the diary's significance, they do not foreclose its utility for further inquiry.

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Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820. By SUSAN E. KLEPP. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 328 pp., Illustrations, figures, tables, appendix, notes. \$24.95.)

Susan E. Klepp's *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820* is an outstanding study of the onset of a decline in fertility during the revolutionary era. Klepp seeks to explain why colonial birth rates were so high, why revolutionary-era women were among the first women in the world to limit their childbearing, and how the growing practice of fertility control within marriage was related to changing ideas about sexuality, health, children, marriage, family, religious authority, individuality, sentimentality, economic aspirations, numeracy, and gender.

Unfortunately, there are few sources explicitly describing couples' sexual or contraceptive practices. Through a creative reading of a wide range of sources, including letters, diaries, almanacs, portraits, medical tracts, and demographic data, however, Klepp is able to document a dramatic shift in ideas about fertility and the cultural acceptability of limited childbearing. Prior to the Revolution, social conventions characterized childbearing as procreation and associated it with the generation of wealth; afterwards they described it as reproduction and separated from the creation of wealth. "Breeding" became a term used only when discussing livestock and slaves, and pregnancy connoted sickness. Prerevolutionary portraits depicted the female body with flowers and fruit symbolizing fecundity, "cornucopias pouring out symbolic babies and future wealth from their bodies" (143). Postrevolutionary portraits represented women as less sexualized and celebrated women's restrained virtues and domestic roles.

A chapter on the technology of birth control cogently argues that women's demand for contraception and abortion was high, if not always effectively met. Contemporary definitions of disease and the perceived need to regulate the menstrual cycle provided a possible way for women to eliminate unwanted pregnancies with emmenagogic medicines. Women shared knowledge about abortifac-

cients and other methods to limit fertility, such as prolonging breast feeding, through informal networks. The cumulative weight of this new evidence is convincing. Clearly, women in the early republic articulated a new idea of prudent, family limitation that challenged the earlier, pronatal culture of the colonial era.

If there is a failing of this admirable book it is in perhaps assuming that this shift in women's intentions and attitudes led to greater change in demographic behavior than the evidence supports. Although Klepp openly acknowledges potential biases and difficulties in interpreting her sources, she ultimately contends that women in the revolutionary era consciously created a revolution of their own by deliberately breaking from the high fertility practices of the colonial era. While this was certainly the case for some women in New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions, it remains unclear how common or how effective the practice of marital fertility control was before 1820. Contrary to Klepp's assertion, age-specific marital fertility rates do not indicate a significant presence of "stopping" behavior before the mid-nineteenth century. Increased spacing between births, while significant, is difficult to interpret as evidence of conscious behavior.

We should also bear in mind that American fertility rates were high in the colonial era and that the decline in fertility was modest before the mid-nineteenth century. It took less than a decade to make a political break from England; it took nearly a century before American women bore fewer children than their English counterparts. If revolutionary-era women instigated the practice of limited childbearing within marriage, it was not until their granddaughters' generation that the practice was extensive or effective enough to have had a significant impact on national birth rates.

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The Liberty Bell. By GARY NASH. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. 256 pp., Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.)

On April 1, 1996, Americans across the nation woke to the shocking news that the National Park Service had sold the Liberty Bell to the fast-food chain Taco Bell. Phone calls flooded into Independence National Historical Park, and by lunchtime the park service had to convene a press conference. No, the Bell had not been sold. It was all an elaborate—and beautifully executed—April Fool's joke by Taco Bell.

Gary Nash opens the final chapter of this breezy and thoroughly entertaining history of America's most beloved bell with this story. He does so to underscore that the Liberty Bell, in any number of commercialized forms from teapots to bourbon bottles, from t-shirts to naughty knickers, has been bought and sold since the nineteenth century. In this sense, the Liberty Bell has become that most