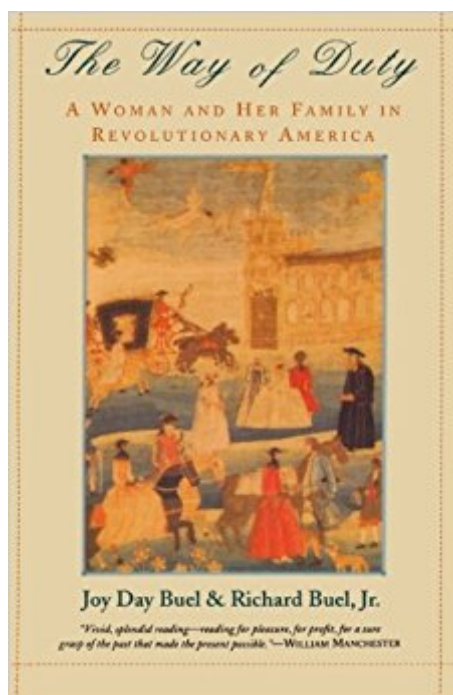


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# The Way Of Duty: A Woman And Her Family In Revolutionary America



## 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

“Engrossing family history, very well told.” - Kirkus Reviews  
“An admirable book about an admirable person. . . . Thoroughly engrossing.” - Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post Book World*  
“A poignant, even heart-wrenching story. The Buels make clear just how disruptive the Revolution was in the private lives of families. It is a beautifully written, irresistible story that tells a lot about what the Revolution really meant.” - Richard L. Bushman, *Columbia University*  
“Vivid, splendid reading—reading for pleasure, for profit, for a sure grasp of the past that made the present possible.” - William Manchester

The late Joy Day Buel was an editor and freelance writer. Richard Buel, Jr., is professor of history at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.

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 enjoyed it greatly, and even more so after finding the subject and her family on my own family tree as distant cousins. The book provides a lot of details about the daily lives of our pre-Revolutionary War forbearers, especially the women. In particular, I enjoyed the religious controversies evoked by the Great Awakening as experienced by Mary's father. Super book!

She was a woman of integrity and courage. She fought the war of survival and won the freedom of her husband from British captivity. She sewed no flags, fed no canons and was no one's mistress. She was a mother, a wife and the reason American independence was won. Well written historical narrative, very interesting and well researched.

part of my family history

I struggled with the first part of the book. I don't have much patience with religiosity. When the Revolution started I sat up and took notice. I had no idea of what it was like to fight for freedom as a State. Funding, law and order broke down. One lived in fear of kidnapping. You couldn't trust your neighbors, being unsure of their true allegiance. Mary's husband left to help defend New York while their own state, Conn. was under attack by the British Navy. Mary's husband returned from the War a man broken physically and financially. The last part of the book, the outcomes for her children revealed a pattern of what was probably Bipolar Illness complicated with Epilepsy, the genetic inheritance from her first husband. Mary had no framework within which to conceptualize these disasters. The Religion she had relied on had no answers. The story is one of a brave and capable woman living at a difficult time. It is modern in that it is the story of a woman trying to maintain her family while her society tears itself apart. I recommend it.

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.

The remarkable accounting of Mary Fish from birth to death. The Buel's accurate description of 18th Century life, and of the telling of this rare woman's life are exceptional, to say the least! This was a thoroughly enjoyable read. Mary Fish takes us from 1736, her birth, to 1818 and her death. The rarity of finding so much information to confirm the life of a woman in America from this era is truly remarkable! And the Buel's tell it with rare form! From the death of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to that of three spouses, Mary Fish Silliman Noyes Dickinson's life is one that drew strength from her faith in God, and her belief in this great land. Truly an inspiration, I give this work a five star rating...and my thumbs up award!! highly recommend this book for anyone interested in biographical studies of the 18th century. DISCLOSURE: This book was a private purchase.

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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