



## **The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of The American Revolution**

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Hannah Callender Sansom (1737-1801) witnessed the effects of the tumultuous eighteenth century: political struggles, war and peace, and economic development. She experienced the pull of traditional emphases on duty, subjection, and hierarchy and the emergence of radical new ideas promoting free choice, liberty, and independence. Regarding these changes from her position as a well-educated member of the colonial Quaker elite and as a resident of Philadelphia, the principal city in North America, this assertive, outspoken woman described her life and her society in a diary kept intermittently from the time she was twenty-one years old in 1758 through the birth of her first grandchild in 1788.

As a young woman, she enjoyed sociable rounds of visits and conviviality. She also had considerable freedom to travel and to develop her interests in the arts, literature, and religion. In 1762, under pressure from her father, she married fellow Quaker Samuel Sansom. While this arranged marriage made financial and social sense, her father's plans failed to consider the emerging goals of sensibility, including free choice and emotional fulfillment in marriage. Hannah Callender Sansom's struggle to become reconciled to an unhappy marriage is related in frank terms both through daily entries and in certain silences in the record. Ultimately she did create a life of meaning centered on children, religion, and domesticity. When her beloved daughter Sarah was of marriageable age, Hannah Callender Sansom made certain that, despite risking her standing among Quakers, Sarah was able to marry for love.

Long held in private hands, the complete text of Hannah Callender Sansom's extraordinary diary is published here for the first time. In-depth interpretive essays, as well as explanatory footnotes, provide context for students and other readers. The diary is one of the earliest, fullest documents written by an American woman, and it provides fresh insights into women's experience in early America, the urban milieu of the emerging middle classes, and the culture that shaped both.

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