

Gender and Sporting Practice in Early America, 1750-1810

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In the latter half of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries, the recreational scene in what was becoming the United States was markedly different from what had been the case 100 years earlier. Well-organized thoroughbred races on formal tracks had supplanted impromptu quartermile sprints in many places along the Atlantic seaboard, and race weeks drew thousands of people to small towns and bustling cities. In the more recently settled backcountry, especially in the South, colonists constructed a variety of human and animal contests, notably baits, cockfights, and gouging matches, which tested the mettle of the contestants and appealed to the gambling interests of many. Elsewhere, foot and boat races, card games, spinning and ax-throwing matches, sledding and skating events, and even cricket games emerged, both within and outside of the context of community celebrations. The largest cities, like New York and Philadelphia, even offered commercial "pleasure gardens"; and virtually every crossroads had at least one tavern, which had been and remained the recreational center for many early Americans.¹ By 1810, a city like Baltimore, the country's third largest, had more than 300 licensed tavernkeepers, or approximately one for every 150 inhabitants.²

That late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Americans had begun to produce and consume more sporting practices than had their predecessors a century earlier seems certain, even from this brief description. Among the many things that are not clear about this expansionism, however, are its gender

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1. Nancy L. Struna, "Sport and the Awareness of Leisure," in Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert, and Cary Carson, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, Va., forthcoming); idem, "Sport and Society in Early America," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 5 (December 1988):292-311; Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (February 1985):18-43. See, also, note 18 below.

2. The population of Baltimore was approximately 46,600 in 1810, which is the figure used in estimating the ratio. The ratio would be lower, perhaps by two-thirds if only the male population, who constituted the primary patrons of taverns, were considered; it may also be reduced, once the locations (either county or city) of some as yet untraced tavernkeepers are identified. Tavernkeeper licenses appear in Baltimore County Court Minutes, 1810, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis.

dimensions. The impressionistic evidence that undergirds the conclusion that there was an expansion in sporting practice between 1750 and 1810 suggests that it was largely a male phenomenon. Yet, most of these sources—especially, newspapers, diaries, and letters—were provided by men, so that is not particularly surprising. It does, however, require further testing.

The meanings of this expansion in sporting practice for gender relations and, in fact, the interplay between men and women over time constitute a second set of questions. Given that two of the major events of the era—the revolt against Britain and the transition to capitalism—did alter gender relations, particularly insofar as republican ideology, the disruption of family economies, and the changing relationship between work and leisure defined different roles and expectations for men and women, it seems possible to suggest that sporting practices may have incorporated those different roles and expectations.³ They may even have clarified male-female relations in particular ways.

The story that emerges in the following pages focuses on two aspects of the apparent post-1750 expansion in sport and other recreational forms: consumption and production. Such a division permits one to examine more fully the dimensions of gender and gender relations. That interplay, it appears, was complex, for even though men constituted the majority of producers and consumers, they neither defined nor conducted sporting practices independently of women. Instead, men and women negotiated both the content and the meanings of recreations. The consequences were gendered practices that eventually enabled men and women to sharpen, and even redefine, their social roles and to clarify their differences.

The Expansion of Sport

Several historians have suggested that major changes in personal and popular consumption occurred on both sides of the Atlantic during the eighteenth century. Early in the century the British middle ranks began to purchase what in the previous century would have constituted luxury goods for them, including china, stylistic household goods, wallpaper, books, fabrics, and even pets.⁴ By at least 1750 this “consumer revolution” had begun in the Anglo-American colonies, first with the landowning and mercantile gentry and then among middling and lower rank colonials. As Lois Carr, Lorena Walsh, and Gloria Main have concluded, the goods were numerous, non-essential items, and

3. See, especially, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va., 1989); Linda K. Kerber, Nancy F. Cott, Robert Gross, Lynn Hunt, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Christine M. Stansell, “Beyond Roles, Beyond Spheres: Thinking about Gender in the Early Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (July 1989):565-85; Christine Stansell, *City of Women. Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (Urbana, Ill., 1987); Laurel T. Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale. The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York, 1990); Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., “To Toil the Livelong Day.” *America’s Women at Work, 1780-1980* (Ithaca, NY, 1987); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work. Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1990).

4. Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (London, 1988); Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington, Ind., 1982); Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policies and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978).

sufficiently widespread to suggest that the colonists had come to define an entirely different standard of living.⁵

The effect of this popular consumption movement on late colonial popular culture more generally has not received any systematic attention from historians. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that the presence of a variety of consumer goods probably underlay the broadening array of popular culture practices evident from the middle of the eighteenth century onward. Forms of and forums for music, theater, literary works, and art all expanded dramatically; and libraries, philosophic societies, fire and insurance companies, and academies and colleges formed. Modes of political action, forms of travel, eating and drinking facilities, and social organizations also proliferated and specialized.⁶

It also seems reasonable to suggest that the apparent expansion of sporting practices was one aspect of this expanding popular culture and popular consumption movement. J. H. Plumb in particular has put forward just such an argument for sporting' and other recreational practices on the British isles. There, horse racing became institutionalized within the social and political life of high society, cricket and boxing regularized and acquired specific ethics, and equipment and facilities became relatively common features in the lives of elite and low-born alike and the towns in which they lived.⁷

Whether Anglo-American sporting practices altered in the face of changing consumption patterns and standards of living remains a question. Using the same sources that other historians have used to document changing types and ownership patterns of consumer goods, however, we should be able to explore this possibility by focusing on sporting goods, which indicate ownership and access and perhaps even behavior. These sources are estate inventories, which listed the real and personal property holdings of individuals at the time of their deaths. Estate inventories are not bias-free, particularly insofar as poorer and rural colonists tended to be underrepresented; nor did they probably register all of the goods used in sport, since not all such items were either recognizable or

5. Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in Hoffman, et al., eds., *Of Consuming Interests*; Lorena S. Walsh, Gloria L. Main, and Lois Green Carr, "Toward a History of the Standard of Living in British North America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (January 1988):116-169; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Economic Diversification and Labor Organization in the Chesapeake, 1650-1820," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1988), 144-88; Gloria L. Main and Jackson Turner Main, "Standards and Styles of Living in Southern New England, 1640-1774," *Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988):27-46. See, also, Carole Shammas, "Explaining Past Changes in Consumption and Consumer Behavior," *Historical Methods* 22 (September 1989):61-67.

6. T. H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988):73-104; idem, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986):467-99; Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Material Life in America 1600-1860* (Boston, 1988); Hoffman, et al., eds., *Of Consuming Interests*.

7. J. H. Plumb, "The Commercialization of Leisure," in McKendrick, et al., *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, 265-85. Support for this theme is implicit in Richard Holt, *Sport and the British. A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989), 12-73; Dennis Brailsford, "Morals and Maulers: The Ethics of Early Pugilism," *Journal of Sport History* 12 (Summer 1985):126-42; idem, "1787: An Eighteenth-Century Sporting Year," *Research Quarterly* 55 (September 1983):217-30; Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-1880* (New York, 1980), 15-56; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973); J.M. Goldby and A. W. Purdie, *The Civilisation of the Crowd. Popular Culture in England 1750-1900* (London, 1984), 41-87.

sport-specific. They do, however, serve as one indicator of potential consumer behavior and, hence, suffice as one gauge of sporting consumption.⁸

Table 1 summarizes the sporting goods content of the inventories registered in six counties in Maryland between 1770 and 1810. Before 1770 few sport-specific goods of any kind appeared in individual inventories, even though the same inventories did register the kinds of non-essential items that early American historians have described. The timing of their appearance thus suggests that sporting goods were probably even more non-essential than were other forms of personal property, in part perhaps because people could use make-shift items and because they participated in sport away from the confines of their homes.

By 1770, as recognizable items for sporting practice began to appear, they quickly become relatively numerous and varied. Some of these items, like the

Table 1: Sporting Goods in Maryland Estate Inventories, 1770-1810

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>1770</u>	<u>1790</u>	<u>1810</u>
Backgammon tables	1	6	5
Billiard tables	1	0	3
Card tables	0	9	45
Dice/box	0	0	1
Fishing hooks/ lines	7	4	9
Fowling pieces	3	6	15
Hunting saddles	2	2	2
Packs of cards	0	5	2
Pleasure boat	0	0	1
Shuffleboard/ checkers	0	0	4
Sleighs	1	5	7
<u>Sulkeys</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Totals</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>Estate N</u>	<u>239</u>	<u>206</u>	<u>361</u>
Percent of estates with goods	6	18	27

Sources: Probate Records of Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Worcester, Frederick, Queen Anne, and St. Mary's counties, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

8. Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption Patterns in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658-1777," *Historical Methods* 8 (1980):81-104; Gloria L. Main, "The Correction of Biases in Colonial American Probate Records," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 8 (1974):10-28; Alice Hanson Jones, *American Colonial Wealth*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977). Most histories that rely on inventories discuss their limits as historical sources.

varieties of gaming tables, embellished parlors and libraries in large Georgian and smaller town houses alike. Sleighs and sulkeys replaced the once ubiquitous and multi-use sleds or sledges and wagons for winter and summer races and recreational outings, respectively, just as fowling pieces and hunting saddles supplanted muskets and ordinary riding saddles. Moreover, more people had access to these items, as the increase from six percent of estates with goods to more than a quarter of all estates by 1810 suggests.

Marylanders were not the only collectors of sporting goods between 1770 and 1810, as inventories from Suffolk County, Massachusetts described in Table 2 indicate.

As had been the case in Maryland, the Suffolk County inventories revealed a substantial increase in the total numbers of items and the percentage of estates with sporting equipment. There are differences between the two samples, of course; and those differences are suggestive, especially about the urban/rural dimensions of ownership. By 1810 Suffolk County had essentially become Greater Boston, and consequently most of the Suffolk inventories were Boston inventories. An examination of differences between rural and urban ownership patterns await a systematic analysis.

The estate inventories in both Maryland and Massachusetts help to confirm that the expansion in sporting practice indicated in newspapers and diaries was probably something other than the figment of contemporary imaginations.

Table 2: Sporting Goods in Suffolk County Estate Inventories, 1769-1810

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>1769</u>	<u>1790</u>	<u>1810</u>
Backgammon tables	2	3	7
Card tables	1	7	33*
Fishing goods	0	4	5
Fowling pieces	0	0	3
Packs of cards	0	0	9
Sleighs	1	4	6
Pigeon nets	1	2	0
“Hoyle’s Games”	1	1	0
<u>Totals</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>63</u>
<u>Estate N</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>93</u>
Percent of estates with goods	6	14	68

Sources: Suffolk County Probate Records, Suffolk County Courthouse, Boston; 1770 inventories missing, so the ones for 1769 were used.

*The actual number of card tables was 68. Inventories also registered skates and sulkeys in 1790 and a pair of barbells in 1810.

Neither increase, either of goods or of estates with goods, signals a consumer revolution of the dimensions evident in other consumer behavior studies, but the simple fact of the matter is that more people did have more sporting goods.⁹ Importantly as well, the owners of sporting goods were not all members of the colonial and early national upper ranks. Indeed, by 1810 more than sixty percent of the goods registered in Suffolk and Baltimore county estates belonged to middling rank decedents, a pattern that suggests that sporting goods were no longer luxuries.¹⁰

The proliferation of sporting goods probably enabled late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Americans to incorporate sporting practices within their style of daily living. In doing so, such goods may have fueled the expansion of sporting practice that contemporary diarists and newspapers described. The availability of goods does not, however, account for all or even most of that expansion, especially since many sporting practices required little or no equipment. Moreover, colonists and early nationals often engaged in sport away from the home, or the farm, or the plantation-in public places where personal holdings, or the lack thereof, would not necessarily be evident or significant.¹¹ Taverns, in particular, served as significant venues for sport. Consequently, an examination of tavern licensing patterns may provide another gauge of the post-1750 sporting expansion.

Taverns had always been a center of colonial social life in early America. Settlers and visitors to the colonies alike went to them for food, drink, lodging, conversation, and conviviality. Most towns and crossroads had at least one tavern; and over the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the numbers of taverns increased in proportion to the popular demand and an area's economic base. Tavernkeepers, in turn, often acquired particular responsibilities, such as for arbitrating disputes, and respect. They also often carried the favor of local magistrates, who controlled licenses, and customers. Accommodating the latter group was, for many tavernkeepers, the more critical task, for their livelihood depended on the patronage of people who came to refresh and relax themselves with food, drink, talk, and recreation. Consequently, many tavernkeepers found ways either to skirt the laws concerning sporting practices, especially gambling, or to harness the popular interest in recreations by organizing and promoting particular practices. Many tavernkeepers furnished tables and cards and permitted gambling, which they could limit by the amount of credit they extended. A few tavernkeepers built cockpits and alleys,

9. Struna, "Sport and the Awareness of Leisure." See, also, Stephen Hardy, "'Adopted by All the Leading Clubs': Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure, 1800-1900," in Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit. The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* (Philadelphia, 1990). 71-101.

10. This figure results from an analysis of estate value totals and owners' occupations; Nancy L. Struna, "Sporting Styles and Consumer Behavior in Early America, 1770-1810" (paper presented at the North American Society for Sport History annual conference, Tempe, Ariz., 1988).

11. In Baltimore County middling rank estates held 46% of the goods in 1790 and 66% in 1810; in Suffolk County, those estates held 30% of goods in 1790 and 60% in 1810.

Newspapers, diaries and travel accounts consistently locate most sporting events (except some practices of the gentry) at race tracks in and near towns, in fields, on road, on village greens, and at taverns, all away from individual homes.

and some arranged horse races and baits. One man, Benjamin Berry, even built a business of legendary proportions in west central Virginia by retaining locals to serve as fistfighters in bouts against all corners.¹²

There is virtually no evidence to suggest that connection between taverns and sporting practice diminished over time in early America. In fact, particularly after the middle of the eighteenth century as the population grew and the economy diversified, the sporting business of tavernkeepers also expanded. In cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston where taverns catered to specific groups of people, to laborers or mechanics or trading and shipping magnates, the owners arranged activities ranging from baits to billiards that their clients preferred. Elsewhere small, barely subsisting rural taverns held shooting contests; and middling rank tavernkeepers in villages and hamlets even began to import or buy from local craftspeople tables, cards, and dice.¹³

Historians may never know the full extent of sporting practice in early American taverns or even how much of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sporting expansion occurred in the taverns. We can begin, however, to understand the possible dimensions of what was really the producer side of this expansion by examining licensing patterns. Such patterns do not speak directly to actual sporting practice, but they may be adequate indicators of opportunity, insofar as they focus on the people who might have permitted and even promoted sport in any given colony. In the case of Maryland these patterns are made possible by the existence of county court records, which record the names of people who obtained their licenses on an annual basis. Using the records of Baltimore County, which are more complete than are some other counties, one is able to identify who obtained licenses, when they got them, where they resided, and for how many years they kept the license. The records do not, of course, speak either to the actual use of the license or to individuals who kept unlicensed taverns.

By counting the numbers of licenses granted for the first time to any individual, we can chart the numbers of individuals who first received their

12. Kym S. Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago, 1983); Paton Yoder, "Melting Pot or Stewing Kettle?" *Indiana Magazine of History* 59 (June 1963):135-51; Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., *Drinking in America* (New York, 1982); Patricia A. Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater, Virginia, 1700-1774" (M. A. thesis, William and Mary College, 1968); Francis M. Manges, "Women Shopkeepers, Tavernkeepers, and Artisans in Colonial Philadelphia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1958); Struna, "Sport and the Awareness of Leisure." The linkage of recreation and refreshment in the taverns was not unique to eighteenth-century North America. See, also, Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse. A Social History 1200-1830* (London, 1983); Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, 1988).

13. Diaries, travel accounts, and court records frequently describe and usually either praise or condemn the social life and accommodations of late eighteenth-century taverns; see, for example, Robert Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786. Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (San Marino, Calif., 1943), 183; Richard J. Hooker, ed., *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution. The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1953), 129; York County, Virginia, Wills and Inventories, 20:46-49, 22:19-24, Mfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg. See, also, Struna, "Sport and the Awareness of Leisure"; Charles G. Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore. Workers and Politics in the Age of the Revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana, Ill., 1984); Sean Wilentz, *New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class 1788-1850* (New York, 1984); Billy G. Smith, *The 'Lower Sort.' Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990); Graham Russell Hodges, *New York City Carmen, 1667-1850* (New York, 1986).

license in a given decade. The Baltimore County data, both actual numbers of tavernkeepers licensed in each decade and scaled numbers to account for years in which the records are missing, appear in Graph 1.¹⁴

Whether one examines the actual numbers of licenses given for the first time in any decade or the numbers that are scaled to account for missing years, he or she will see a similar and quite dramatic rise between 1750 and 1810. The actual numbers of licenses increased from sixty-eight in the 1750s to 1008 between 1801 and 1810, which represents a fifteen-fold increase. The scaled numbers, which rose from 108 in the earliest decade to 1440 in the final one, reflect a slightly smaller rise. Either of these sets of figures, however, suggests that the number of tavernkeepers receiving licenses to do business for the first time increased significantly.

Precisely why the numbers of tavernkeepers who acquired licenses for the first time rose so dramatically, especially from 1780 onward, remains unknown. Immigration from abroad and in-migration from other parts of Maryland and other colonies probably swelled the numbers of prospective taverners. Both movements clearly changed the demographics of Baltimore County itself, which experienced approximately a tenfold rise in population. The energy and growth of Baltimore City itself may also have attracted prospective tavernkeepers. Little more than a village in 1760, it became the nation's second major entrepôt for goods and people, after New York City, by 1810. Other factors, including the relatively low cost of setting up a tavern, the instability of the trade, the prime location of Baltimore County on the north-south travel axis, and the relatively stable economy of the region, also probably encouraged the rising tide of tavernkeepers.¹⁵

This pattern of increasing numbers of licensed tavernkeepers may have emerged in other colonies and states along the Atlantic seaboard, as well. Evidence from a neighboring county, Anne Arundel, suggests precisely that, albeit on a smaller scale.¹⁶ Anecdotal evidence from travelers and diarists also indicates that in other regions licensed taverns proliferated rapidly, as did specialized coffee and boarding houses and in unlicensed taverns, between 1750 and 1810.¹⁷

14. Numerous years of the court minutes no longer exist (1750-54, 1765-67, 1769-71, 1773-74, 1776, 1798-99, 1805-07); consequently, the scaled data are estimates (proportional within decades) helpful only in suggesting the probable number of all people who received licenses.

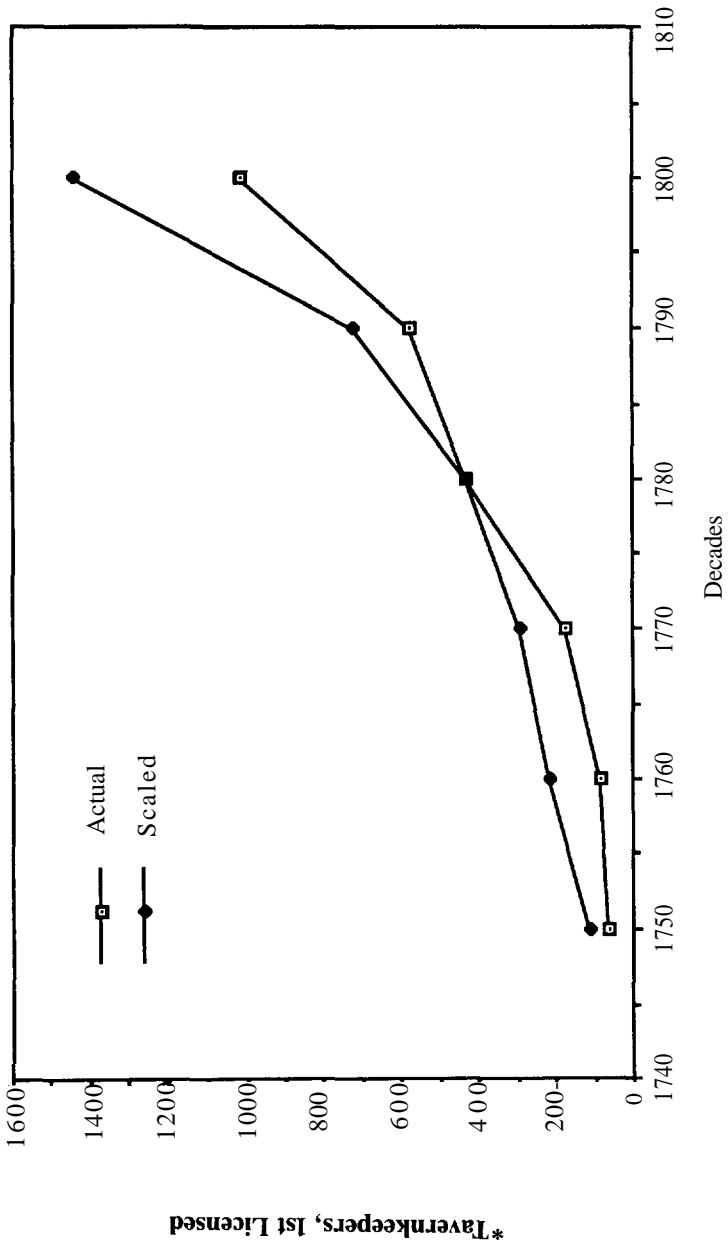
15. The dynamic, possibly even unstable, nature of the trade is also suggested by a comparison of the numbers of one-time tavernkeeper licenses (2342) with the number of people who got licenses for more years. 1098 people obtained licenses for two or more years, and 231 had licenses for six or more years. Also, tavernkeepers obtained licenses for only two years on average.

On the history of Baltimore, see Steffen, *Mechanics of Baltimore*, esp. ch. 1; J. Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1874); Sherry Olson, *Baltimore. The Building of an American City* (Baltimore, 1980).

16. Anne Arundel County licensed 162 people as tavernkeepers between 1750 and 1800; Anne Arundel County Court Minutes, 1750-1800, Hall of Records, Annapolis.

17. See, for example, *Henry Wansley, Henry Wansley and His American Journal*, 1794, ed. David John Jeremy (Philadelphia, 1970), 73, 96; Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation [1783-1784]*, trans. and ed. Alfred J. Morrison, 2 vols. (New York, 1968), 1:46-47; Francis Baily, *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 and 1797* (London, 1856), 101; Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, 19 vols. (Cleveland, 1904), 4:33; Mays Dramatic History of Baltimore, ms 995, Part 6 (1747-1819), 28 February 1791, Maryland Historical Society; Robert Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, Va., 1977), 208.

Graph 1: Numbers of Baltimore County Tavernkeepers, First Licensed



Source: Baltimore County Court Minutes, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

The Dimensions of Gender

Contemporary accounts suggest that the post-1750 expansion in sporting practice was largely a white male phenomenon. Diaries and newspapers, especially, report that men arranged the matches and constituted a majority of both participants and spectators. These sources, as well as the numerous letters and public records, also encourage one to conclude that men organized clubs and formalized rules for sports, controlled the legislatures and courts that continued to try to regulate sporting behavior, and determined times and contexts for events. Even the events that engaged both sexes—such as horse races, card games, balls, and recreational “outings” that involved things like sleighing and fishing—appear as the products of male initiative.¹⁸

Is this impression fact or artifact? This question arises for the simple reason that most of the evidence underlying this inference derives from public and private literary sources produced by men. Women, and men of lower rank and of color who lacked writing skills or the means of acquiring such skills, neither constructed nor appeared in such records in proportion to their numbers. Consequently, these sources probably misrepresent the dimensions of gender—the sex ratio was nearly equal—in many parts of late colonial and early national America.¹⁹

Estate inventories and tavern licenses do, however, enable us to explore the possible gender dimensions of this movement. Though not without a male bias, both sets of records do include evidence about women. The county courts, of course, had a vested interest in gathering the information contained in these records from as many people as possible. Estate inventories were the basis for inheritance taxes levied by counties, and license applicants always paid an annual fee that went into the coffers of the county and, in some cases, the colony or state.²⁰

Because they list individuals by name, estate inventories permit us to see who owned sporting goods. Table 3 compares the percentages of selected goods registered in male and female estate inventories in Baltimore and Suffolk counties.

18. *Maryland Gazette*, 5 February 1765, 26 September 1782, 30 October 1782; *Virginia Gazette*, 22 February 1770, 19 April 1770, 15 August 1771, 27 May 1773; Francisco de Miranda, *The New Democracy in America. Travels of Francisco de Miranda in the United States, 1783-84*, trans. Judson P. Wood, ed. John S. Ezell (Norman, Okla., 1963), 15; Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 204, 210; Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, 1:361; Charles W. Janson, *The Stranger in America 1793-1806* (New York, 1935), 309-10; John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802*, ed. A. J. Morrison (New York, 1909), 88-90; Thomas P. Cope, *Philadelphia Merchant: The Diary of Thomas P. Cope, 1800-1851* (South Bend, Ind., 1978), 85, 253; John F. D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America (1784)* 2 vols. (New York, 1968), 1:66-67; Isaac N. P. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, 6 vols. (New York, 1967), 1:379-80; Philip V. Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. H. D. Farish (Williamsburg, Va., 1943), 198, 201-03, 212; William Dunlap, *William Dunlap (1766-1839): The Memoirs of a Dramatist, Theatrical Manager, Painter, Critic, Novelist, and Historian* (New York, 1969), 309, 321, 324, 329-39, 342-48.

19. Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House. Planter Life in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, NY, 1980), 80-124; Jim Potter, “Demographic Development and Family Structure,” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds. *Colonial British America. Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1984), 123-57.

20. See note 8 above. Kilty, *Laws of Maryland*, 1: March 1780, ch. xxiv provides a description of the requirements for obtaining a license.

In both counties men owned all the registered sporting equipment in 1770 and a large majority of it in 1810. Although this pattern of ownership does not speak to the matter of use, it does indicate access and perhaps control of the means of participation, for in early America the owners of property held the rights to use and conveyance.²¹ In the case of sporting equipment, those owners and controllers were predominantly men.

Still, the 1790 and 1810 inventories do indicate that some women did own sporting goods. Even though the numbers are small—twelve percent of the Suffolk County estates and four percent of the Baltimore County estates with goods belonged to women in 1810—they encourage one to ask how women came to own this equipment? Did they purchase or receive it as a gift and, hence, exercise control over the equipment? Or did they acquire it through inheritance from their husbands?²² If the latter case were true, the presence of equipment in women’s inventories might indicate men’s experience rather than their own. Historians have no way of knowing for certain how women gained possession of these goods, but one can suggest whether they acquired them by inheritance or purchase (or gift) by distinguishing the owners who were either married or widowed from those who were unmarried. Table 4 presents this comparison for Suffolk County.

In 1790 when women’s inventories first registered sporting goods, the women who owned sporting goods were either married women or widowed. Not until after the turn of the century did single women’s estates in Suffolk County contain recognizable sporting goods. This pattern, coupled with the nature of

Table 3: Percentage of Total Selected Sporting Goods in Baltimore and Suffolk County Inventories, by Gender

Decade	<u>1769/70</u>	<u>1790</u>	<u>1810</u>
% equipment in male estates			
Baltimore	100	89	96
Suffolk	100	94	88
% equipment in female estates			
Baltimore	0	11	4
Suffolk	0	6	12

Sources: Probate Records of Baltimore County, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland; Suffolk County Probate Records, Suffolk County Courthouse, Boston, Massachusetts.

21. Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1986).

22. Wills are the best source of information on bequests and inheritance, but will rarely specify sporting goods. See, Toby L. Ditz, “Ownership and Obligation: Inheritance and Patriarchal Households in Connecticut, 1750-1821,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (April 1990):235-65; idem, *Property and Kinship. Inheritance in Early Connecticut 1750-1820* (Princeton, N.J., 1986); Carole Shammas, Marylynn Salmon and Michel Dahlin, *Inheritance in America: Colonial Times to the Present* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987); Daniel Scott Smith, “Inheritance and the Social History of Early American Women,” in Hoffman and Albert, *Women in the Age of the Revolution*, 45-66.

Table 4: Percentage of Married/Unmarried Women's Estates With Sporting Goods, Suffolk County

Decade	1790	1810
Married/widows	100	80
Single women	0	20

Source: Suffolk County Probate Records, Suffolk County Courthouse, Boston, Massachusetts.

the actual items, reinforces the prospect that women inherited the sporting goods registered in their estates rather than having purchased them and that men controlled this aspect of the consumption of sport.

If records of the actual producers of sporting goods existed, we could more adequately determine whether most goods were made for and purchased by men. Unfortunately, few such records have survived the ravages of time; and the ones that have, especially ships' manifests and merchants accounts, merely confirm what goods were for sale rather than who purchased them. Given the goods on the market, the types and percentages of that equipment in men's estates, and the kinds of events commonly described in literary sources, however, we may conclude that men were the major consumers of particular sports, especially sports like billiards, cards, races, fishing, and hunting.²³

To understand more fully the gender dimensions of this post-1750 sporting expansion, we do, however, need to know something about men's and women's roles as suppliers in the market. In a society undergoing a transition to capitalism, such as late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America was, consumers and suppliers played critical and symbiotic roles in the construction of new standards of living and new social practices. A portrait of who made goods and organized and promoted services for whom in this emergent capitalist system, however, is just beginning to emerge. At this point, the picture highlights men making and promoting goods and services for men and women often operating independently of men to provide goods and services necessary to life but neither effectively capitalized nor efficiently incorporated within capitalist structures. A similar pattern may have shaped the post-1750 sporting expansion, as well. As owners, and presumably purchasers, men clearly outnumbered women, but whether they dominated the market as producers remains to be seen.²⁴

23. Stokes, *Iconography of New York*, 5:1182; *Maryland Gazette*, 20 October 1763, *Virginia Gazette*, 25 July 1766, 26 October 1769, 2 November 1769, 8 November 1770; *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 17 May 1750, 27 December 1753.

24. Elizabeth Evans, *Weathering the Storm. Women of the American Revolution* (New York, 1989), 2; Laurel T. Ulrich, "Housewife and Gadder: Themes of Self-Sufficiency and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England," in Groneman and Norton, eds., *To Toil the Livelong Day*, 21-34; idem, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in Innes, ed., *Work and Labor*, 70-105; Carr and Walsh, "Economic Diversification and Labor Organization," 175-76; Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province. Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1976); Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise. Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1986).

At this point, the only records of a supply-side group that are complete enough to permit a systematic gender analysis are those of tavernkeepers. Graph 2 presents the total numbers of men and women who received licenses for the first time to operate taverns in Baltimore County, Maryland.

The numbers of both men and women licensed for the first time as tavernkeepers rose steadily across the period, an increase that reflected the general population growth of the county. Men and women did not, however, acquire their first licenses at the same rate. The numbers of women increased from eight to ten by the 1770s, to forty-five in the 1790s, and to eighty-two in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The number of male licensees, on the other hand, more than tripled by the 1770s (164) and then tripled again by the 1790s (532). Finally, after the turn of the century, Baltimore County had slightly more than eleven male first-time tavern licensees for each female who obtained one.

This licensing pattern requires careful, even conservative interpretation at this point. On the one hand, of course, the fact that someone obtained a license does not insure that he or she ever operated a tavern. Second, this pattern derives only from the experiences in one county, and the patterns in other places may have varied. Still, one conclusion that the Baltimore County licensing history suggests, that many more men than women were likely to obtain licenses, seems valid. Contemporary literary accounts from the period support it, as does the licensing pattern in neighboring Anne Arundel County. There, males licensed as tavernkeepers increased from sixty-seven percent of the total in the 1750s to eight-one percent in the 1790s.²⁵ An analysis of Baltimore County tavernkeepers who obtained licenses for two or more years reveals a similar pattern. Men took out eighty-seven percent of the licenses in the 1750s and ninety-five percent in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Over the sixty-year period, as well, of the 1098 people who obtained licenses for at least two years, 1044 were men.²⁶

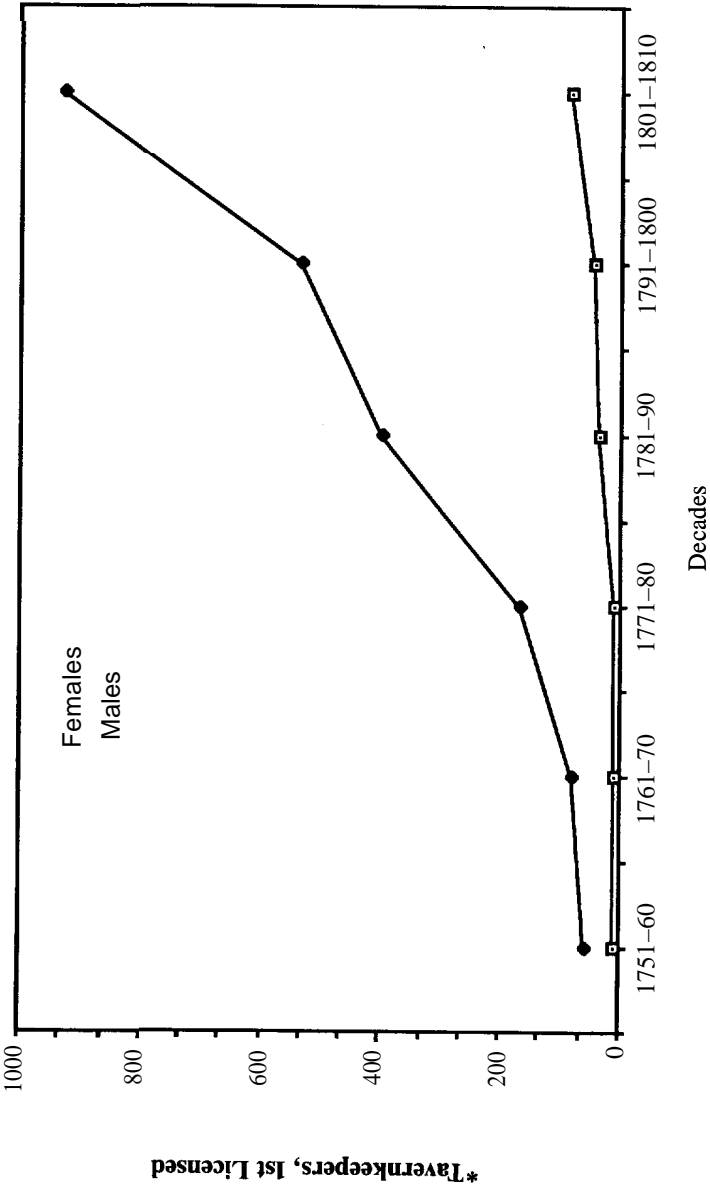
It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that the tavern trade was increasingly run by men and, as the descriptions of activities in the taverns reveal, probably for men. This probability, coupled with the equipment ownership patterns in which men also dominated, encourages one to conclude that men, at the very least, had the material base and the public presence that enabled them to define and direct much of the sporting expansion after 1750. One might also be tempted to conclude that women were minority players on this stage, particularly insofar as tavernkeeping and ownership of sporting goods are gauges of their roles as suppliers and consumers, and that the post-1750 sporting expansion really was largely a male phenomenon.

Fragmentary evidence in newspapers and court records occasionally locates women retailers of sporting goods or animals (e.g., *New York Journal*, 29 April 1773; *New York Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1793), but men are more commonly portrayed as salespeople, customers, and keepers (e.g., *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 9 March 1790, 3; Baltimore City Court of Oyer and Terminer, Docket and Minutes, 1808/09, Series BC 0183, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis).

25. Anne Arundel County Court Minutes, 1750-1800, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis.

26. Baltimore County Court Minutes, 1755-1810, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis.

Graph 2: Numbers of First-time Tavern Licenses in Baltimore County, By Gender



Source: Baltimore County Court Minutes, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

Gender Relations

Prior histories of sport in early America—and, in fact, most histories of sport at other times in American life—have encouraged us to make precisely this conclusion: sporting practice has primarily been a male phenomenon. Men have constituted the majority of participants, and they have written most of the rules and created most of the organizations. Sporting practice, in turn, has been incorporated within the rituals of manhood and the institutions of men. Carried to the extreme, this nearly formulaic linking of sport and men has even produced a distinctive social type, or trope, that modernizationists define as “modern sport.”²⁷

As secure as this conclusion is in the writings of historians, however, it may baldly, and badly, misstate the reality of history. It surely does so in the case of early America, where women were agents in the making of sporting practices in ways and to an extent beyond what either their numbers or historians’ prior reading of the literary evidence have suggested. For certain, colonial and early national women participated in recreational forms, although not always in full view of contemporary chroniclers. But they also played a role in the construction of what have traditionally been described as men’s sporting practices, particularly insofar as their labor often underlay men’s leisure and insofar as their behaviors and expectations shaped those of men. Moreover, as the eighteenth century lengthened, women assumed an increasingly visible public presence in formalized and often commercialized recreations for both sexes. Promoters targeted women as prospective participants and consumers, and organizers encouraged women to attend events.

The full extent of women’s involvement in the post-1750 sporting expansion may never be known, but it seems clear that, just as did men, women participated in more numerous forms of sport. This was particularly true for middle and upper rank women, among whom the changing nature of work, improved modes of travel, and the tightening of kin and neighborhood bonds produced time and opportunity for recreations. Their own diaries and letters reveal that they played cards and gambled, and they fished, skated, ran foot races, and went sledding. Just prior to the Revolution, when domestic production became all-important, and until mechanization removed it from the domestic scene, women of all ranks transformed the necessary work of spinning into competitive contests. They divided themselves into groups, either by neighborhood or skill, and set out to produce as many skeins of yarn as possible. Invariably, as well, someone would produce a prize for the winning side.²⁸

27. See, for example, my own “The Formalizing of Sport and the Formation of an Elite: The Chesapeake Gentry, 1650-1720s,” *Journal of Sport History* 12 (Winter 1986):212-34. A later piece on women largely places women off to the side or in a separate sphere and does nothing to resolve the dilemma of gender; see, “‘Good Wives’ and ‘Gardeners,’ Spinners and ‘Fearless Riders’: Middle- and Upper-Rank Women in the Early American Sporting Culture,” in J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds., *From “Fair Sex” to Feminism. Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London, 1987):235-55. On modernization, see Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record. The Nature of Modern Sport* (New York, 1978); Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time. New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana, Ill., 1986).

28. Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady: with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, as They*

Women's participation in sport extended well beyond the confines of the home and domestic production, particularly to the era's most commonly discussed practices, horseback riding and racing. Wherever horses were common, and whether or not sidesaddles were available, girls and women took to riding as if it were an ordinary expectation. In a place like post-war Charleston, of course, it was, or so it seemed to the Venezuelan-born traveler, Francisco de Miranda, who concluded that riding was the women's "favorite diversion."²⁹ But women did more than ride; they also raced, occasionally "with the best male riders for a wager" or among themselves.³⁰ In 1791, as the Frenchman Ferdinand Bayard observed some women challenge one another to a race near Bath, Virginia, he concluded that all of the contestants were "skillful and fearless riders."³¹

The most telling comment about late colonial and early national women equestrians, however, may be one made on the eve of the Revolution. Having observed the members of the Virginia family of Robert Carter, as well as their friends and relatives, for over a year in his role as tutor, Philip Fithian concluded that the females of the family "are passionately fond of Riding."³² Contemporaries must have recognized a similar emotion and interest among the wives and daughters of other Virginia and Maryland planters and merchants, and they responded accordingly. Between the 1760s and the 1780s—as thoroughbred racing formalized, as race weeks replaced race days, and as the crowds of spectators rose from several hundred to several thousand people—the jockey clubs and individual entrepreneurs changed the face of racing in the Chesapeake in substantive ways. They initiated "Ladies purses," or specific events often on the third and final day of racing.³³ They also designated seats for women and improved and expanded facilities at the course for them, even to the point of constructing "a commodious House" where women could escape inclement weather, rest, or find other entertainments.³⁴

What all of this suggests, of course, is that horse racing in the Chesapeake, and eventually in other sections of the eastern mid-Atlantic and the deep South, was not primarily or even predominantly a male practice. Men were the most

Existed Previous to the Revolution (New York, 1809) 54; Anna Green Winslow, *Diary of Anna Green Winslow*, ed. Alice M. Earle (Boston, 1894) 28; "The Diary of Mrs. Mary Vial Holyoke, 1760-1800," in George Dow, ed., *The Holyoke Diaries* (Salem, Mass., 1911), 47-49, 63,74; Ellen Spofford, "Personal Sketches of Early Inhabitants of Georgetown, Massachusetts," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 41 (April 1905), 169-70; James Parker, "Diary," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 69 (January 1915): 14, 121; *Maryland Gazette*, 14 June 1753; *Essex Gazette*, 2 August 1768; *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 16 October 1769. See, also, note 36 below.

29. Miranda, *The New Democracy*, 29. On a woman renowned for her riding see Herman Mann, *The Female Review: Life of Deborah Sampson* (New York, 1972) 167. The accounts of Chief Justice John Marshall also reveal purchases of two saddles and a bridle for his wife Polly. See Herbert A. Johnson, *The Papers of John Marshall*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1974), 1:383, 485. Inventories also establish the existence of distinct "women's" saddles.

30. Gottlieb Mittleberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, eds. and trans., Oscar Handlin and John Clive (Cambridge, 1960) 89.

31. Ferdinand Bayard, *Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia with a Description of Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1791*, ed. Ben C. McCary (Williamsburg, Va., 1950), 40.

32. Fithian, *Journal and Letters*, 266.

33. See, for example, *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 30 April 1782.

34. *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, 7 October 1790.

visible, public contestants, but they were not the only ones. Nor did they alone construct the racing scene; women were evident along the rail, and women's interests shaped the structure of events. The net effect was a strikingly different sporting practice than was the case in some other places. In New England, for example, where trotting and pacing races were more common than thoroughbred events, there is no evidence that women displayed much interest in the matches, nor is there any evidence that race organizers catered to women. The same is true about the various forms of racing that emerged in the southern Piedmont regions and in western Pennsylvania and New York. The disinterest of women in racing in these areas, and perhaps even the disinterest in women's interests, may help to explain why horse racing, in any of its other forms, never appeared to be as popular or as important in the cultures and social lives of the people of those areas as did thoroughbred races in the Chesapeake.³⁵

Recreational practices in some of these other regions did, however, incorporate women from the 1750s onward. In Salem, Massachusetts, for example, women and men went sailing and then returned to shore for supper and an evening at backgammon or cards. Wintry evenings in the mid-Atlantic states, as well as in New England, permitted sleigh rides and races, while southerners organized balls and card parties. Rural families throughout the country regularly celebrated the end of a harvest with frolics, which included dancing and games. In northern New Jersey and the Hudson River region of New York, the "pinkster" holiday, a Dutch- and African-influenced time of dancing and drinking, among other things, became an annual event for the young and old of both sexes.³⁶

In many of these events and celebrations, women's experiences extended beyond their traditional, or at least pre-1750, roles as provisioners in what were family and neighborhood gatherings. They cast the lines and drew seines, they dealt cards and rode to the hunt, and, of course, they sang and danced. They were, in effect, active participants, and perhaps even partners, in practices that may have proliferated and regularized at least in part because of women's presence, in greater numbers, and their interests in establishing new gender relations. For certain, the structure of these events suggests that women, and men, chose to construct practices that minimized the physical differences between them and maximized shared experiences.

In the process of constructing these shared experiences, late colonial and early national Americans also altered the place and significance of recreational

35. Thomas Anburey, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1923), 2:227-28; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1830) 238-39; *Boston Gazette*, 20 October 1760.

36. See, for example, Grant, *Memoirs*, 191; Eliza Pinckney, *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney 1739-1762*, ed. Elise Pinckney (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1972), 48-49, 57; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:722; Fithian, *Journal and Letters*, 44-45, 140; Mittleberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, 85; Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 245; Miranda, *The New Democracy*, 245; Dunlap, *Diary*, 64; Cope, *Diary*, 228; Anburey, *Travels*, 2:57; John Boyle, "Boyle's Journal of Occurrences in Boston, 1759-1778," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 84 (October 1930):364; James Gordon, "Diary of Colonel James Gordon of Lancaster County, Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st series, 11 (January 1903): 196; William Eddis, *Letters from America*, ed. Aubrey Land (Cambridge, 1969), 20-21; Julia Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1938), 85-87; Struna, "Sport and the Awareness of Leisure."

practices in general and of sports in particular. Horse races, for example, ceased to be tied to elections and court days and emerged as central rituals in the culture of the Chesapeake. Fishing parties and sleigh rides and races in many regions emerged from the shadows of ordinary food gathering and necessary travel-linked tasks and became independent, and joyful, social practices. Balls, also, expanded beyond their earlier settings in officious celebrations of royal anniversaries, birthdays, and military and political victories. In fact, for middle and upper rank early Americans after 1750, particularly those who either lived or visited for lengthy periods in urban areas, balls organized in the context of subscription assemblies became the central social events, even the hallmark of emergent bourgeoisie society.³⁷

This last point requires some expansion. Not all women exerted the same degree of influence in the early American sporting culture, nor did all women experience similar changes in their relationships with men. Slave women, for certain, clearly remained subordinate to the whims and whips of their masters, both black and white; and, except for holiday celebrations and weekend or evening breaks, they rarely had the opportunity to construct their own recreational forms. White servants, also, had little effect on the expanding sporting culture, except insofar as they, like slave women, provided the work which underlay the leisure of their mistresses and masters and insofar as they took advantage of, and were taken advantage of in, the expanding sphere of bawdy houses and laborers' commercial entertainments. Finally, women who lived on the fringes of late colonial and early national society, in the most recently settled frontier regions, did not find their experiences substantially different from those of their ancestors a century or more earlier. Often isolated on farmsteads and with children and farms to tend, they knew little of the outside world or its recreations. Weddings and Christmas aside, theirs was a world dominated by men and expressed in gouging and drinking and shooting.³⁸

Farm women in the longer settled and more heavily populated regions of early America, as well as the wives and daughters of village artisans and

37. Robert S. Rantoul, "Historic Ball Room," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 31 (August-December 1894): 81; Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the Years 1774 to 1776*, eds. Evangeline W. and Charles M. Andrews (New Haven, Conn., 1931) 149, 153-54; Winslow, *Diary*, 16-17; Thomas W. Griffin, *Annals of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1824) 160; Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 294; Miranda, *The New Democracy*, 54, 148; Francois Jean de Chastellux, *Travels in North America, in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*, trans. George Grieve, ed. Howard C. Rice, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1963), 1:176-77, 2:506; Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 145, 182; *New York Journal*, 23-30 October 1766; *New York Mercury*, 22 October 1770, 1 December 1777; *New York Packet*, 2 January 1786; *Virginia Gazette*, 27 February 1752, 5 March 1752, 3 March 1774, 12 May 1774; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1982) 104.

38. Many sources speak to the persistence of residual recreations within rural and frontier communities and among laborers in urban areas. See, for example, Moreau de St. Mery, *Moreau de St.-Mery's American Journey (1793-1798)*, trans. and eds. Kenneth and Anna M. Roberts (Garden City, N. Y., 1947), 59-60, 156, 336-37; Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, 1:173-74, 238; Davis, *Travels, 400*; Smyth, *Tour in the United States*, 1:98-99. A letter describing the drudgery of a white servant's life is reprinted in Nancy F. Cott, ed., *Root of Bitterness* (New York, 1972) 89-90; see, also Stansell, *City of Women*. The recent literature that includes the experiences of slave women is small in quantity but of high quality; this includes Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together. Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, 1987); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves. The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1986); and for the early nineteenth century, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household. Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, No. Car., 1988).

seafarers, played a more visible role in the construction of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century recreations than did any of these women who were on the margins of society. Their work, which was often independent of men's but interdependent with the family and village economy and society, often left them with the means and the opportunity to participate and even to arrange frolics and quiltings and picnics or barbecues. Young women, especially, sought out or joined neighboring youths, of both sexes, in various recreations. Their mothers, in turn, became the managers and moral monitors of their pleasure-seeking offspring. They knew what historians of the family and women's experience have only recently begun to recognize: that recreation occasionally resulted in procreation.³⁹

Neither their recreations nor their roles in shaping recreations altered as rapidly or as substantively for farm and village women, however, as both did for urban women, especially those in the middle and upper ranks. These women, of course, were the co-creators of balls and assemblies, and they had access to the card and billiard tables- and the fowling pieces and sleighs that merchants sold and their husbands acquired. They also possessed the resources and the time to enjoy the increasing variety of commercial entertainments, from tumbling and equestrian exhibitions to pleasure gardens to bathing apparatus, that urban entrepreneurs devised.⁴⁰

Particularly after the Revolution, as capitalist enterprise permeated many facets of urban life, the wives and daughters of the new nation's shopkeepers, bankers, civil servants, merchants, and factory owners found themselves in a new situation. In New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston, the organizers of commercial recreational facilities actively pursued the participation of women, as well as that of men. The owners of building with rooms large enough for assemblies advertised in the papers and stressed the decorous behavior and good food that awaited dancers.⁴¹ Charles Quinan, who operated Queen Ann's in Philadelphia, installed "flying coaches" for women and, for their escorts, "horses[s]" that whirled about-all apparently in an effort to draw customers.⁴² Not surprisingly, as well, in New York City where the competition for bourgeoisie customers was great, one operator of a pleasure garden went a step beyond his competitors. Having just completed a "grand Amphitheatre" for the July 4th celebration at his Vauxhall Garden, Joseph Delacroix ended his

39. Grant, *Memoirs*, 51-53; Janson, *Stranger in America*, 375-75,413; Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell 1774-1777* (New York, 1924), 26; Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 106; Ulrich, *Life of Martha Ballard*; idem, "Housewife and Gadder," 30; idem, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls," 93; John Mack Faragher, "History from the Inside Out: Writing the History of Women in Rural America," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981):537-57; Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 139-40. J. D. F. Smyth also provided a description of a woman, whom he saw near Hillsborough, North Carolina, who "excelled in athletic power and agility"; *Tour in the United States*, 1:111.

40. St. Mery, *American Journal*, 154, 346; Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1311; Wansley, *American Journal*, 134; *Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, 22 October 1795; *New York Daily Advertiser*, 25 June 1805; *Records of the City of Baltimore (Special Commissioners) 1782-1797* (Baltimore, 1909), 114, 123, 130-31, 157-58, 226, 228, 255, 258, 288, 330.

41. See note 40 above and Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1316; *New York Independent Journal*, 13 August 1788; *New York Daily Advertiser*, 3 July 1802.

42. Cited in Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 239.

description of the proposed entertainments with this warning: "No gentleman will be admitted without [being] accompanied by a lady."⁴³

Delacroix's statement suggests two expectations that men in his profession held about consumers of commercial recreations at the turn of the century. First, male patrons were not entirely trustworthy; their moral judgments were suspect, and they could be rowdy. Second, only women could effectively curb the passions of the men and prevent them from over-drinking, bothering other customers, or getting into arguments or fights. Put another way, he expected his urban female customers to assume precisely the kind of role that farm and village women had assumed, the role of moral arbiter, of social manager. He was not alone. Other men, including the members of jockey clubs, organizers of assemblies, theater managers, and exhibition and museum promoters actively appealed to prospective female consumers, especially in the decades immediately after the Revolution.⁴⁴ They did so, in part of course, because they accepted the role for women that republican ideology expressed, the role as republican mothers, as caretakers of the new nation's virtue.⁴⁵

Republicanism and capitalism thus heightened, rather than diminished, the significance and directions of male-female negotiations in the construction of post-Revolutionary recreations. Men owned the vast majority of sporting goods and dominated as tavernkeepers, merchants, and leisure organizers, but women were clearly essential to the use of those goods and the consumption of recreations. For certain, women provided much of the labor that freed men for leisure, and they existed as a substantive body of clients to whom commercial promoters appealed. Moreover, with women responsible for the nation's virtue, they ultimately affected the definition of two different but interrelated codes of behavior evident in early national sporting life.

The first of these codes was that of the "sportsman." In contemporary terms, a sportsman engaged only in particular sports, especially the out-door events of hunting, fishing, quoits, and horse racing and a few indoor games like billiards and whist. He was also one who set limits on the kill—as "one brace of woodcocks and two of partridges"—kept the inevitable wager small, and displayed generosity, courtesy, and bravery.⁴⁶ The sportsman, in short, was a masculine type imbued with masculine values; and he appealed to those leading men, like John Stuart Skinner and John Randolph, who had both a

43. *New York Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1801.

44. Wansley, ed., *American Journal*, 112, 134; *Rivington's New York Gazette*, 24 December 1783; *New York Daily Gazette*, 18-26 November 1794; Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 229; *Maryland Gazette*, 11 July 1782, 1 May 1783; Miranda, *The New Democracy*, 54.

45. Linda K. Kerber, "'History Can Do It No Justice.' Women and the Reinterpretation of the American Revolution," in Hoffman and Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the Revolution*, 3-42; idem, "The Republican Ideology of the Revolutionary Generation," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985):474-95; Kerber, et al., "Beyond Roles, Beyond Spheres," 565-85; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experiences of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Domesticating 'Virtue': Coquettes and Revolutionaries in Young America," in Elaine Stary, ed., *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons* (Baltimore, 1988), 160-84; Evans, *Weathering the Storm*, 350.

46. John Randolph, *Letters of John Randolph, to a Young Relative* (Philadelphia, 1834), 128-29, 15, 26, 109; Dunlap, *Memoirs*, 111; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:1324.

political and an economic stake in distinguishing themselves from propertyless wage-laborers and servants in the young nation.⁴⁷

Men like Skinner and Randolph also had a stake in distinguishing themselves—and their sports—from women. Rank differences with all their implications for economic and political order and power, rather than gender differences, provided the rationale; but gender provided the means, via the second code constructed by early national middle and upper rank Americans: the cult of domesticity. Rooted in the image of the republican mother, which first expressed virtue as a feminine characteristic and what the important female virtues were, the cult of domesticity prescribed female dependency highlighted by domestic exercises and very few active, outdoor recreations. As championed by Skinner's contemporary, Catharine Beecher, the cult of domesticity envisioned forms and forums for recreations among women that were antithetical to Skinner's own tabulation of the rural ones embraced by a sportsman.⁴⁸

This story thus ends with an ironic twist to what was a lengthy and complex series of negotiations between men and women about the content of early national recreations and their respective roles in them. The code of the sportsman and the cult of domesticity emerged as opposing categories of experiences in a world of "separate spheres" among upper and middle class Anglo-Americans. Historically, however, they are not separable, for men and women like Skinner and Beecher negotiated the experiences collapsed in these social types. They did so, of course, in a social, economic, and political context that was far different from the one Mittleberger had encountered in the 1750s or even Bayard knew in the 1790s. Capitalism had penetrated more deeply into American life, and the sexual division of labor and leisure had broadened.⁴⁹ In such an era, the participant of active rural sports, the sportsman, which Skinner championed and the domestically-inclined and morally upright women whom Beecher upheld declared the all-important differences between men and women. Each also made a statement about gender relations.

47. Two fine secondary works that treat the values and behavior of this contemporary type, from different perspectives and without concern for gender, are Jack W. Berryman, "Sport, Health, and the Rural-Urban Conflict: Baltimore and John Stuart Skinner's *American Farmer*," *Conspectus of History* 1 (1982):43-61; John Dizikes, *Sportsmen and Gamesmen* (New York, 1981).

48. Struna, "'Good Wives' and 'Gardeners,'" 247-50; Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, 1984); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood. Woman's Sphere in New England 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn., 1977); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher. A Study in American Domesticity* (New York, 1973). See, also, Patricia Vertinsky, "Body Shapes: The Role of the Medical Establishment in Informing Female Exercise and Physical Education in Nineteenth-Century North America," in Mangan and Park, eds., *From 'Fair' Sex to Feminism*, esp. 256-65; Martha Verbrugge, *Able-Bodied Womanhood, Personal Health and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (New York, 1988), 11-48; Roberta J. Park, "'Embodied Selves': The Rise and Development of Concern for Physical Education, Active Games and Recreation for American Women, 1776-1865," *Journal of Sport History* 5 (Summer 1978):5-41.

49. Among the more recent histories that address the gendering effect of capitalism on labor are Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work. Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910* (Urbana, Ill., 1988); Stansell, *City of Women*; Wilentz, *New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class*; Smith, *The 'Lower Sort.'* About the negotiation, by men and women, of leisure much later in the nineteenth century, see Kathy Peiss, "Commercial Leisure and the 'Woman Question,'" in Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit*. 105-117; idem, "Gender Relations and Working-Class Leisure: New York City, 1880-1920," in Groneman and Norton, eds., *To Toil the Livelong Day*, "98-111.