

## Chapter 9

### The "Other" Woman



While women on the southern Avalon during the period were predominantly of the Irish Catholic plebeian community, there were English Protestant and Irish Protestant women living in the area as well. They are not the focus of this study, and certainly an add-on chapter cannot do justice to their experiences, but they deserve some attention here. Indeed, women of the local elite have already been mentioned, albeit very peripherally as a foil to women of the Irish Catholic plebeian community. Thus a brief discussion of their lives is warranted to elucidate the various comparisons that have been made.

#### English Gentry Women

These gentlewomen were the wives and daughters of local mercantile and professional men.<sup>1</sup> Their husbands, fathers, and brothers were merchant-planters, mercantile agents, ship owners and captains, naval officers, doctors, and Anglican clerics—men who also served as magistrates and local administrators (school board members, road commissioners, relief commissioners, customs collectors, and directors of hospital boards), and whose names appeared regularly on the grand jury lists and presentments for the area. From the mid-1830s onwards, they also formed the pool from which representatives to the island's House of Assembly were elected. This local gentry, in the broad sense of the word, was tied economically to the plebeian community through interdependence in the fishery. Nonetheless, they maintained social distance through their separate ethnoreligious pedigree, exclusive patterns of marriage and socializing, and different forms of consumption, housing, dress, and behavior (for a fuller discussion of class on the southern Avalon, see Appendix A).

This group increasingly adopted middle-class ideologies and lifestyles from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the construction of middle-class womanhood became one of the defining elements of their class identity. Middle-class men, by necessity, had to associate with the outside community on a daily basis. Some of their activities—their orchestration of supply and credit, their legal and administrative functions—reinforced the power dynamic between middle-class and plebeian communities. But the regular intermingling of men from both social groups on waterfront premises, in gardens and fields, in stores and public houses, tended to blur the boundaries of class somewhat within the small fishing villages of the area. Thus, the removal of middle-class women from

the public sphere, the increasing separateness of their lives, and, in particular, the contrast between their lives and those of plebeian women were instrumental in reinforcing class distinctions on the southern Avalon.

This contrast, however, was less stark in the mid-1700s than it was a century later, for female roles among the local elite were not static over the study period, and the life experiences of these women changed in several respects over the span of a hundred years. The most obvious difference was their residence patterns, for most wives and daughters of merchant-planters, vessel owners, and naval officers operating in the area up to the late eighteenth century remained in the home country; in fact, few ever set foot on the southern Avalon. One of the earliest exceptions was Anne Wylley Carter, who came out to Ferryland from Sidmouth, Devon, with her husband, Robert, in the mid-eighteenth century. Indeed, according to the oral tradition, it was Anne who decided that the family would settle on the southern Avalon, for, while Robert had intended that Ferryland be merely a stopover on the way to the mainland, Anne "put her foot down and refused to go further."<sup>2</sup> Her instincts served her well, for the couple founded a local dynasty that carved out an extensive commercial, administrative, and judicial niche in the area and became one of its most wealthy and powerful families during the period of this study.

Anne's life would have been quite different from the lives of her granddaughters, or even those of her daughters later in the century. Despite the Carters' relative affluence, their original accommodations would have been fairly rudimentary in what was essentially still a fishing outpost with more temporary residents than long-term inhabitants. Still, they likely built or moved into a multi-roomed house more commodious than a fishing family's residence—perhaps a dwelling vacated by an outgoing merchant-planter—that likely combined the functions of residence and business.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, housewifery would have been less time-consuming until the family became more firmly established and until amenities increased and their housing became more elaborate. Anne's household production duties likely included outdoor as well as indoor work, although, unlike plebeian women, she would not have done shore work in the fishery, and her work outside the home would have been largely supervisory. More similar to plebeian women, but unlike her nineteenth-century descendants, she also would have taken significant responsibility for household management in terms of balancing the needs and resources of not only her family, but also large numbers of fishing and domestic servants. Indeed, it is quite likely that she perceived herself as an able planter and businesswoman in her own right. Because there were few other gentry families in the area, Anne's duties as hostess would have been less elaborate than those of nineteenth-century women. And because her opportunities for contact with other people of her class would have been limited, it is likely that she intermingled with the plebeian community more frequently than her female

descendants and was more involved in the day-to-day life of the community.

Indeed, according to the oral tradition, Anne was no shrinking violet. She is credited with leading the women of Ferryland, for example, in defending the harbor against the French in 1762, towards the end of the Seven Years' War. A French force had arrived in Bay Bulls in June and moved northwards, taking St. John's, Carbonear, and Trinity. The Carters rallied the inhabitants of Ferryland and moved them with arms and provisions to the Isle aux Bois (also Isle du Bois), a small island with fishing premises at the mouth of the harbor. Robert Carter then outfitted a fleet of shallops and sailed northwards to meet the French at Bay Bulls. In the absence of the men, according to local collective memory, Anne and the other local women stationed themselves at the gun battery on the island and thwarted the attempt of two French warships to raze the settlement, fending them off with cannon fire.

Like most women of her day, regardless of class, Anne outlived her husband. She inherited from Robert's estate an annuity of £30 and the use of his household furniture during her widowhood, with the proviso that she would forfeit both upon remarriage. The couple's eldest son, William, received the bulk of the estate, while three other children were left small cash amounts (one guinea each) and personal property (such as clothing and books).<sup>4</sup> It is most likely that children



other than the primary heir had already received their portions from the estate through a series of deeds of gift, marriage settlements, and trusts that were characteristic of their class. Within this system, female heirs were usually beneficiaries of passive property, from which they could obtain income but over which they could exercise no control. Anne's annuity, administered by her son William as executor of the estate and subject to forfeiture upon her remarriage, was a typical example.<sup>5</sup>

Still, as noted earlier, testation practices in Newfoundland did not always conform to an English norm of primogeniture and impartible inheritance, even among the local elite. Although Robert Carter Sr. opted to follow the English tradition, his second son and namesake did not. Robert Jr. would follow the local preference of "share and share alike" in the disposition of his estate. By his last will and testament, made shortly before his death in 1810, he left the remainder of his estate (after payment of a debt to his mother-in-law) to his wife, Eliza, and three children—Robert, Elisabeth, and James—in equal shares.<sup>6</sup>



Robert Jr. was a mariner, and he had married Elizabeth (or Eliza) Harris Howe,

the daughter of a Devonshire glazier, in Dartmouth in 1789. Eliza typified a new generation of gentry women who were adopting local residence in greater numbers. She came out to the area with her husband, and while she may have returned to England on occasion, she was still residing in Ferryland in the 1820s, traveling back and forth occasionally to St. John's, where she ended her days in 1851.<sup>7</sup> By the time of Eliza's marriage, the lives of elite women on the southern Avalon had begun to change. More and more, the household was becoming the primary setting for their activities, as they withdrew from outdoor work. Houses had become larger, with two to three stories, multiple rooms, and elaborate furnishings requiring sharper attention to housewifery, as a more conspicuous display of consumption honed class distinctions.<sup>8</sup> Increasingly, these women's lives revolved around the management of household servants and rearing of children, the entertainment of social peers, and regular visits to St. John's and England to maintain family contacts, to arrange for the schooling of their sons (Eliza's sons, for example, were educated at Teignmouth in Devon), and to check out the latest fashions in furnishings and dress. More and more, their economic inactivity was becoming a hallmark of status and affluence.

Still, it was acceptable for women in difficult financial straits—widows, for example—to engage in certain genteel forms of economic activity, like teaching or inn-keeping.<sup>9</sup> Such was the fate of Mrs. Tree, the widow of an American loyalist captain who had accompanied her husband to Ferryland from Boston. The couple had lost considerable property during the American Revolution, and her husband's estate being thus diminished by the time of his death, Mrs. Tree turned to running an inn by the 1790s to maintain her lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> Eighteenth-century diarist Aaron Thomas described his encounter with the "corpulent" and convivial Mrs. Tree at her establishment, the London Inn, where he found her to be "in a very comfortable situation,... [with] a large and roomy House and Genteel Furniture." He reported:

A Gentleman may have as good a Dinner and Rest at this House as any in Newfoundland. I Din'd here the day I made the Tour on Four Covers, Viz. a Boiled Leg of Pork, Fowls, Lamb, Ducks, Pudings, Green Pease and other Vegetables, served up with Sauces and Gravys. Had an Epicure been one of the Guests he could not a found fault with a single Dish.<sup>11</sup>

While Mrs. Tree was in reduced circumstances, having to run a "House of Entertainment," she was certainly more comfortably appointed than the woman at Thomas's next stop, for, when Mrs. Tree could not accommodate his request to sell him some fowls for his journey, Thomas searched around the settlement and eventually found himself, "amidst the rugged Barren and Houses," at the door of an Irish household:

There was no person at home except a Weoman, the Mother of the Family, and she was ill in Bed. After thumping for some time at the door I heard a voice in the adjacent place (I cannot call it a Chamber). I went into it and beheld the Weoman in Bed, apparently very ill.... She related, at large, how many weeks she had been in Bed, how old she was, how many Children she had got, the age of her Husband, the part of Ireland she came from, how hard the times was, how slow the Fish bite at present and that there was nothing to be got but Flint Biscuits in Newfoundland.<sup>12</sup>

One suspects that her table would not have exhibited the same range of epicurean delights as Mrs. Tree's.

So the widow Tree still enjoyed a certain degree of material prosperity, but she was straddling the boundary of genteel "respectability" and plebeian "vulgarity"—a condition that she recognized herself, as she lamented her lack of proper society to Thomas. "I should like to go to Britain with you for the sight of a *Friend* would be very entertaining to me, having never *yet seen one*," she told him; and then, inviting him to join her in a drink, "... my Friends are my Irish Fishing Servants now in the Kitchen who, I am confident, will be as noisy and as merry and as *friendly* with you as your best *Friends* in England, providing you pay for the *Liquor* [emphasis in original]."<sup>13</sup> Thus, she found her position somewhat compromised by her need to work, her status rather tarnished when compared with other widows of her class who had been better provided for by their husbands' estates: Anne or Eliza Carter, for example, or Catharine Weston and Ann Sweetland—women who did not have to go out into the world to support themselves, women whose financial affairs and litigation in relation to property and estate matters were generally handled by male relatives or other men in their circle.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, throughout the period, marriage was the most acceptable means of support for women of this class, and it increasingly became their only respectable option as their withdrawal into domesticity became an indicator of their class status. Of course, these unions had to be carefully arranged, for marriages among the elite were social and economic partnerships between families, rather than arrangements between individuals, as in the plebeian community. Strategic alliances helped to expand networks and consolidate family holdings; as such, they were instrumental in the formation and reinforcement of class in the area. Because the economic and social stakes were higher, then, these marriages were more heavily orchestrated than plebeian marriages. In the process, genteel women were more subject to commodification, being treated as marriageable possessions by which kinship networks, contacts, and capital could be expanded.<sup>15</sup> Unregulated marriages, by contrast, threatened to erode carefully

established socioeconomic networks. A small island in Ferryland harbor stands testament to the importance of "proper" marriage choices for women of the local elite. The island is called *Nancy's Portion* and lies just off the shore of Isle aux



Bois. It is a small hummock of land with no beach area—useless for grazing sheep or drying fish. According to the oral tradition, it was the only endowment of Judge Carter from his large estate to his daughter Nancy, who had "married beneath herself" and thus incurred her father's wrath.<sup>16</sup>

With pressures on their young to enter into suitable marriages, the middle class on the southern Avalon became a largely endogamous group in terms of ethnicity and class by the early nineteenth century, either marrying within their own local circle or recruiting partners from middle-class families in St. John's or areas in England such as Dartmouth and Topsham, where traditional links to the fishery continued to be maintained. An examination of the partial Carter and Morry family trees in Appendix E, for example, demonstrates a common pool of families from which marriage partners were drawn—Carter, Morry, Sanders, Sweetland, Lemessurrier, Tessier, Rendell, Skinner, Williams—all middle-class families with significant interconnections in their private and public lives.

Daughters were provided with numerous opportunities to meet acceptable future husbands, as these families socialized exclusively amongst their social peers at home and when visiting St. John's and England. While there was a high degree of mixing of middle-class men in terms of their economic and administrative functions as well as social networks (for example, dinners, clubs, trout fishing, hunting and shooting parties), there were various mixed-sex gatherings as well: walks, picnics, boat rides, teas and dinners, dances, carriage and sleigh rides, and carefully arranged long-term visits with families in the marriage pool.

But outside this closely supervised social whirl, the lives of elite women became increasingly circumscribed as the first half of the nineteenth century unfolded. More and more, middle-class assumptions of femininity shaped their lives. Women were no longer expected to carry out the traditional tasks of housewifery, but rather to oversee their execution by household servants. Withdrawal from outdoor work was complete, as women's activities came to revolve around the domestic hearth. Daughters received a general liberal education, and a wide range of interests—from gardening to politics—was encouraged, but their training was directed towards their future roles as wives, mothers, household mistresses, and diverting hostesses—in contrast to the business or professional orientation of their brothers' education.

Like their counterparts in the home country and in mainland colonies, they were expected, as potential wives, to develop "an aura of respectable leisure" and to contribute to a "culture of hospitality" that would reflect well on future

husbands.<sup>17</sup> While plebeian daughters cooked and cleaned, made fish, tended gardens, foraged through woods and meadows for firewood and edible plants, middle-class women went on picnics, sketched pictures, wrote poetry, and cultivated appropriate feminine accomplishments as they strived towards British middle-class ideals.<sup>18</sup> And their gentility and respectability, their everyday behaviors and dress—and, ultimately, the behavior and dress of their children—helped to maintain class boundaries in small communities where the nature of economic activity necessitated substantial mixing of men of both classes.

Typical of this generation of women was Sarah Rendell Carter, a St. John's woman who married Robert Carter (grandson of Robert and Anne Wylley Carter, son of Robert Jr. and Eliza Howe Carter) on 25 April 1815.<sup>19</sup> Sarah was a daughter of a St. John's mercantile family that was part of the Carters' social and economic network. No diaries or letters written by Sarah survive in public repositories, but her husband's journal for the period from 1832 to the day before he died in 1852 still exists, and its entries permit us to steal a glimpse of what life was like for the wife of this local magistrate and businessman.

The diary begins long after the couple had married, and well after the birth of their seven children,<sup>20</sup> so it provides no insight into Sarah's efforts to adjust from town living to life in a fishing community, and from a sheltered girlhood to married life. It does not tell us how the couple were introduced; most likely, she met Robert on one of his numerous trips to the capital, although it is possible that the couple were first introduced on the southern Avalon, for an excursion to Ferryland to stay with family friends would have made a suitable holiday for a young woman of the St. John's middle class, provided she was properly chaperoned.<sup>21</sup> However they met, it is clear that the couple did not immediately set up their own household upon marriage, for on 15 September 1833—more than eighteen years after they had wed—Robert noted the day as the fifth anniversary "of residing at the Northside of the Harbor in my own home." It is likely, then, that the couple had lived for some time in Robert's family home with his widowed mother, Eliza.<sup>22</sup> Given the powerful position of widows in stem family households, we can only speculate whether Eliza's presence eased Sarah's transition into married life or made it more difficult for her to establish herself as household mistress.

Robert's phrase "*my own home*" is very telling, for Sarah seems to have been such a peripheral part of his life. She is a shadowy, amorphous figure in her husband's diary—referred to, when she is mentioned at all, as "Mrs. Carter" or "Mrs. C," never by her first name, and certainly never by any term of endearment.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Sarah seemed to spend much of her time in St. John's

with her family, and frequently traveled to England to visit relatives and to bring her sons, Robert and James, to and from school in Teignmouth, where their father had been educated before them.<sup>24</sup> Their daughters, by contrast, were educated at home, where they learned the domestic skills and genteel arts that would make them attractive potential wives.

The couple led far more separate lives than did plebeian couples of the period. Even on significant occasions such as Christmas Day or wedding anniversaries, Sarah did not appear to be in Ferryland. Note, for example, the following entries:

25 December 1833

...John Pollard and Henry Prim dined with *me* this day.

25 December 1839



...M<sup>r</sup>. Bowman [the newly arrived Anglican minister] & family dined with *me* this day.

25 April 1836



The 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of my wedding day. My wife in England, sailed in December. Not a letter from England to this date, from her or any other of my friends there.<sup>25</sup>

The diary intimates that the couple had not anticipated remaining in Ferryland permanently when they first married, and perhaps as the likelihood of Robert's leaving became more remote, Sarah simply carried on her life elsewhere as much as possible. Certainly, Robert did not have as much opportunity to travel as his wife—likely because of business and magisterial commitments—and a strong sense of claustrophobia occasionally surfaces in his writing:

12 October 1832



This day I accomplished my 42<sup>nd</sup> year, having passed in Newfoundland very nearly 29 years of that time, in which time I have seen many changes but have observed the trade to be of that nature as never to allow any one concerned in the fishery to rise to affluence in



any Outport, useless to regret it as my property lays here and cannot be now realized.<sup>26</sup>

12 October 1840

This day I complete my Fiftieth year of Age—thirty seven of which have been spent in this Place except having gone occasionally to England but not that for 14 years past.

25 April 1841



This is the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my Wedding day the chief part of which period has been passed in Ferryland very contrary to my Expectations when I married ~

That April, Sarah again seemed to be absent. However, she was home on some anniversaries, as in 1835, when Robert recorded: "Walked out over the Downs with Mrs. Carter, Eliza and Fanny. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my marriage. Had no party last year or this."<sup>27</sup>

Yet even when Sarah was at home in Ferryland, her existence seemed frequently to run on a separate track from that of her husband. Unlike plebeian women, who often joined their menfolk in productive work, Sarah's household duties were all indoor and largely supervisory. Even this managerial role must have been limited by her frequent absences—and also, occasionally, by lengthy illness. Through the first half of 1834, for example, Robert's diary is peppered with entries such as: "Mrs. Carter very ill," and "Mrs. Carter ill in bed all day—Did not go out." The entries become increasingly terse—"Mrs. Carter confined to her room to-day"; "Mrs. Carter in her bedroom"; "Mrs. Carter in her room"—and one wonders whether she was availing herself of the fainting couch.<sup>28</sup> Still, she managed to step forth on occasions that spring and other years, usually to join her husband and children in the round of social activities typical of their circle:

16 March 1834

Mrs. Carter, self and son, with J.H.C. [his brother, James Howe Carter] drank tea at Caplin Bay.

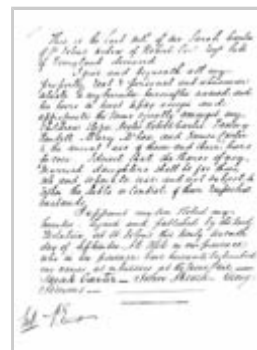
25 March 1834	Mrs. Carter, self and Eliza invited to dine with the Judge, the former did not dine there but came up in the evening, not having returned from sleighing in time to dress.
31 July 1834	Went to Isle du Bois to tea:—Mrs. C. and Fanny my brother, Mr. Shears, S. Prowse and other children.
12 August 1835	A party to dinner at Isle du Bois at my invitation, ladies and gentlemen, which passed off very comfortably.... Danced in the evening.

How much time Sarah spent socializing exclusively with other women in the area is not evident from Robert's writing. Indeed, his diary creates the impression that women socialized more frequently in mixed activities, although this may be because of his inattention to (or unawareness of) the details of women's lives that did not intersect his own. But certainly, her participation in mixed gatherings and in the extension of hospitality to guests was one of the necessary methods by which Sarah, as a middle-class woman, contributed to her family's status. Hospitality was a means of reinforcing the family's public reputation for affluence and power by opening up for scrutiny the circumstances of their domestic lives.<sup>29</sup> The genteel woman was a central image in the tableau, for the figure of the "lady" was important in "constructing social space" through a form of socializing peculiar to the middle class.<sup>30</sup>

As the diary progresses, however, Sarah is mentioned with less and less frequency, and one wonders how much time she was spending away from Ferryland. Perhaps the sorrow of her daughter Emily's death in early 1837 kept her increasingly away from home. Certainly, Robert's socializing took on more homosocial aspects: dinners and shooting parties with male relatives and friends, even a dinner club formed in January of 1842, with six members to meet weekly at Three Corner Pond.<sup>31</sup>

At any rate, it is obvious that Sarah's geographic mobility was much greater than that of plebeian women of the area, while her productive and managerial roles were more limited. But like many women of the period, regardless of class, Sarah outlived her husband by several decades. In her widowhood, she was perhaps

more influential than she had been as a wife in terms of the powers she was granted under her husband's will to act as executor and dispose of real property as necessary for her support (see Chapter 7). Whether she exercised these powers or relinquished the practical control of such matters to male relatives is unclear; certainly, she left court appearances on estate matters to male attorneys. She spent her final years in St. John's and died at her Cochrane Street home in 1879 at the age of 87.<sup>32</sup> Following the principle of equitable distribution typical of nineteenth-century Newfoundland testation practices, she left all her property to her five surviving children equally, with the express provision that the shares of her married daughters "shall be for their sole and separate use and not subject to either the debts or control of their respective husbands."<sup>33</sup>



A slightly younger contemporary of Sarah Carter was Harriet Maria Skinner Carter, the daughter of Harriet Williams and Colonel Thomas Skinner, commander of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment at St. John's. Harriet's family was also part of the St. John's circle with whom the Carter family socialized, and on 27 May 1826, she married Arthur Hunt Carter (a first cousin of Sarah's husband, and the son of vice-admiralty judge William Carter and Catherine Weston) and began her married life in Ferryland.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the marriage was a love match, or perhaps its chief purpose was to shore up St. John's–Ferryland connections. At any rate, monetary gain was not Arthur's primary motivation, for Harriet's uncle George Williams congratulated Harriet from his home in England on having for a husband "a man of sense and liberality who has chosen a wife for her personal merit in despite of the disadvantage of fortune."<sup>35</sup>

In fact, Harriet had not come to the marriage completely empty-handed. She was supposed to be receiving the income from an annuity of £17—a portion of the rental from a St. John's property in the estate of her maternal uncle, Monier Williams.<sup>36</sup> The annuity was actually held by her father, in right of his wife (who was deceased), and had at one point been signed over to another party as security for debt. However, Harriet's brother, Lieutenant Thomas Skinner, had cleared the debt for his father in 1824, with the understanding that the rental thenceforth be paid to Harriet. This was another typical example of the passive property of which middle-class women were beneficiaries. Atypically in this case, however, the annuity did not pass over to Arthur in right of his wife upon their marriage, since it technically remained in her father's name (or so Arthur later argued to the trustees in his bankruptcy). Still, it was primarily Arthur who corresponded with various interested parties in relation to the rental income throughout the years, and it is therefore likely that Harriet had ceded practical

control of this and other financial matters to her husband. This appeared to be the assumption of her English uncle George Williams, who approached her in 1833 to consent to a potential sale of the rental property "when you have consulted with M<sup>r</sup>. Carter (your husband)."<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately for Harriet and Arthur, the benefit of the annuity was never fully realized, as there were ongoing disputes among the beneficiaries of the Monier Williams estate over the disposition of the property, the amount of the rental, and the arrears owed by tenants. As late as 1847 (well after Harriet's death), Arthur was still trying to collect the balance of arrears.<sup>38</sup>

The annuity, although small, might have provided some comfort to the couple in the tenuous financial situation in which they found themselves soon after their wedding. Arthur himself was described in the Anglican parish records as a "gentleman," reflecting the moneyed status of his family, but by the late 1820s and early 1830s he had encountered financial difficulties and was undergoing bankruptcy examinations.<sup>39</sup> Still, he threw himself enthusiastically into farming and agricultural experiments, and successfully applied for a grant of land at Merrymeeting River, Ferryland, which he had already staked and clear-burned.<sup>40</sup> Harriet boasted to her English relatives that he was "indefatigable in his exertions on his new estate."<sup>41</sup>

Harriet had received the liberal education typical of young women of her class, and she carried out a correspondence with her uncle George Williams in England that demonstrated not only a high degree of literacy, but also an interest in international politics and agricultural experimentation (especially in introducing new plant species into Newfoundland).<sup>42</sup> Indeed, George placed a good deal of stock in Harriet's observations about farming as a viable alternative to fishing on the island. In 1827, he commented in a letter to Arthur on Harriet's acumen:

I mean to... acknowledge the gratification I had from the details which your intelligent wife gave of your country, and its present condition. It would not be the worst proof that Bathurst and the rest of them who set themselves up to govern our colonies gave of their fitness for the affair if they were to seek such sources of information as this of my cousin Harriett, for the dull fellows in whom they put their trust seem only to mislead them.... Harriets account of the prosperous farms that are growing up around you makes me almost languish for a lot myself of 300 Acres, and I really think I shall make some effort towards it.<sup>43</sup>

Although Harriet's optimism about the agricultural potential of the Ferryland area may have been misplaced, apparently her uncle treated her opinions with respect. Harriet and Arthur sent local plant specimens and produce to George, and he in

turn sent them seeds and seedling plants to introduce into their Ferryland holding. There is one reference to Harriet's sending out servants to pick berries, and her uncle remarks upon the delicious taste of "the Capillaire berries [creeping snowberries], the fruit of her research."<sup>44</sup> It is evident from most of the correspondence, however, that while Harriet was intellectually interested in agricultural experimentation, she was generally removed from the actual process—that the operation and management of the farm was in Arthur's hands and that he and hired servants provided the labor.

In a letter to George, undated but written circa 1830, Harriet admitted, "I am not very strong myself not half so hardy as I ought to be to make an *active Farmers wife* [emphasis in original]."<sup>45</sup> Arthur had been detained by bad weather during a recent trip to St. John's and was so behind in his farm work that he had given over the care of the family's kitchen garden to Harriet, a responsibility that seemed to overwhelm her somewhat, although it would certainly have been a comfortable domain for women within the plebeian community (or, for that matter, Arthur's grandmother, Anne Wylley Carter). Harriet attributed her general feeling of weakness to the fact that she was still nursing her fourteen-month-old daughter, and looked forward to regaining her strength after the child was weaned. One cannot help but compare this lengthy recovery from childbirth with the immediate return to productive work by plebeian women after a nine-day lying-in period.



Turning from matters agricultural, Harriet demonstrated great enthusiasm for the "very pretty gown" of the latest spring fashion that she had recently received from her uncle and her English cousins: "it was the first of it's kind imported into Ferryland," she wrote, "which I am sure you will think added not a little to its value." This was not the only reference in the correspondence between the two in relation to dresses or materials being sent out to Harriet,<sup>46</sup> and she was quite grateful for the gifts, because she was aware of the importance of her dress and her behavior in maintaining social distance in the small community of Ferryland and also in preserving her family's position among their social peers. She wrote:

...my dear kind Uncle I feel truly obliged for the trouble you have taken to put me in possession of the material and information to be *fashionable*. Dress seems every day becoming a subject of increasing importance & without attending in some measure to it we can hardly "pass blameless" thro' the crowd...  
[emphasis in original]

Indeed, Harriet was conscious of her social status and seemed to remain aloof from women of the primarily Irish plebeian community. She was even reluctant to

hire local female help for the kitchen garden, for example: "The people here I am sorry to say are not at all too honest, and if we hire a woman... for a day or two, it is impossible to leave her a moment if we wish the seed to be put in our own ground." This same sense of class and ethnic difference had been articulated some thirty-five years earlier by the gregarious Mrs. Tree. Her experience in the hospitality trade may have made her less fastidious about the company she kept, but her sardonic comments about her Irish "friends" revealed that a sense of separateness from the plebeian community already existed—a distance that was even more pronounced within the next generation of middle-class women in the area.

Still, while Harriet's circumstances differed in many respects from those of most Irish women on the shore, some of her concerns would have been shared with other women in the population. She wrote about family health matters, for example:

...my little girl... 14 months old... had the whooping cough all the winter and the small pox was in Ferryland since the beginning of Lent, my children had not been vaccinated against Cow-pox and no virus was to be obtained until lately, however Thank God they both escaped the former [smallpox] and have since taken the latter disease [cowpox] I hope, effectually [for immunization to smallpox].

In general, however, common experiences such as marriage, childbirth, or potential widowhood did not create gender solidarity across class boundaries on the southern Avalon. Women such as Harriet and Sarah Carter were isolated from women of the plebeian community by education, mannerisms, life-style, and the less explicitly productive, more social nature of their contribution to family economies.

In this last regard, these nineteenth-century middle-class women were even more removed from the larger community than was their husbands' grandmother, Anne Wylley Carter, and one senses their isolation and constant longing to be elsewhere—in St. John's or England, closer to a larger society of their own social peers. Sarah eventually escaped to St. John's, but Harriet's concerns about her inability to endure her new lifestyle were confirmed all too soon. She had five children in fairly quick succession in the late 1820s and early 30s—the last, her namesake, born in August of 1834—and then died the following year at the age of thirty-six.<sup>47</sup> The parish register did not record the cause of her death; neither did her diarist cousin-in-law. She may have fallen victim to a disease such as diphtheria or scarlet fever, or she may have died of complications from giving birth—a common fate for women of the period, and one that ignored ethnicity and class.<sup>48</sup>



Representative of the next generation of middle-class women on the southern Avalon was Mary Ann Simms Carter, who married Robert and Sarah Carter's son Robert in the late 1840s. Mary Ann was the daughter of George Simms, a justice of the peace in Trepassey and colleague of her future father-in-law. Indeed, Robert Carter's diary indicates that she and her parents were occasional visitors to the Carter home in the late 1830s and 1840s; doubtless, the hospitality was reciprocated, and it is also likely that Mary Ann was part of the larger social gatherings attended by members of both sexes. Mary Ann and Robert wed on 1 June 1847, and the couple had ten children over the course of their marriage.<sup>49</sup>

Mary Ann left a tracing of one brief period of her life in the form of a scrapbook, a collection of pencil sketches and poetry assembled in her early womanhood (teens and early twenties) before her marriage to Robert.<sup>50</sup> It suggests a genteel and sheltered upbringing, from the inscription on the flyleaf—"Mary Ann Simms/Given to her at Christmas/By her Affectionate Papa.../1839"—to the tranquil drawings of country scenes (some, far too pastoral to be of the area and possibly done in England or copied from prints) and the various moral sayings surrounded by embossed floral borders. Most of the scrapbook, however, is taken up with



handwritten poetry, the titles reflecting properly feminine concerns of the heart and hearth: "Remembrances," "On the hearts Struggles," "Secret,"<sup>51</sup> "Song of the Spirit of Love," "Friendship," "Domestic Love," "Woman," "The Path of Life."

Typical of the contents of genteel young women's scrapbooks of the period, these offerings were generally not original verse, but copies of poems from other sources that were in fairly wide circulation among members of Mary Ann's class. They served not only as a show of refinement but also as a means of expressing feelings suitable to particular occasions.



Most telling are a series of highly emotional poems entered in 1844 by Mary Ann and a number of friends. Although they are mostly transcriptions, their tone strongly suggests that she was leaving Trepassey, possibly in preparation for marriage. In Mary's hand, "The Brides Farewell" (taken from "The Bride of the Greek Isle," by Felicia Hemans) intimates her desolation at leaving the shelter of her childhood home:



Why do I weep?-to leave the vine  
Whose clusters o'er me bend?

The myrtle - yet, oh! call it mine!  
The flowers I loved to tend?



A thousand thoughts of all things dear,  
Like shadows o'er me sweep

I leave my sunny childhood here  
Oh! Therefore let me weep!

The poem goes on to bid farewell to a cherished sister, who has been a close companion "by stream, by shore, in song, in prayerful sleep"; a doting father, "whose eye o'er all my youth hath smiled"; a loving mother, whose "lips... have lulled me with your strain, eyes... have watched my sleep." Each verse ends with the entreaty: "Let me weep!"

There follows a series of poems that suggest that what was likely an arranged marriage to consolidate two powerful local families was having a profound effect possibly on disappointed romantic partners and certainly on a circle of close girlhood friends. Immediately following "The Brides Farewell" come the following verses (from "Lines Written in an Album, at Malta" by Lord Byron, 1809), signed "John":



As o'er the cold sepulchral stone  
Some name arrests the passer-by;  
Thus, when thou view'st this page alone,  
May mine attract thy pensive eye!

And when by thee that name is read,  
Perchance some succeeding year,  
Reflect on me as on the dead.  
And think my heart is buried there.

Another hand takes over with this unsigned offering:



To Mary  
Lines addressed to a young Lady on bidding  
her farewell

10 Sep 1844

Adieu, dear Maid, stern fate decrees  
That we must shortly sever  
And if we ne'er should meet again  
Adieu adieu for ever.

I'd say could I with impious thoughts  
Accuse the warp of heaven  
Why has the wish to call thee mine



Without the power been given?



And similar outpourings came from "AM<sup>C</sup>LH" or "A.M<sup>C</sup>", who penned several dramatic leave-takings on 11 July 1844—"The Parting Kiss," "Lines on the evening of Separation," and "To x x x x ~" (from "To Emma," also by Byron):



Since now the hour is come at last,  
When you must greet your anxious lover;  
Since now our dream of bliss is past,  
One pang, my girl, and all is over.

The poem goes on to describe various romantic encounters, and ends:



This is the deepest of our woes,  
For this our tears these cheeks bedew  
This is of love, the final close  
Oh! God, the fondest, last adieu!

While it would not have been unusual to write such lines upon leaving a friend's parlor after a visit, the clustering and tone of these verses suggests an emotional parting. One facet was shared by these and all the other love poems appearing in the album: none were signed or initialed by Mary Ann's future husband, Robert Carter.

The scrapbook entries end in 1844, as if signaling the end of Mary Ann's youth. The image that remains with the reader is one of a genteel young woman, much loved and indulged by family and friends, who was suddenly thrust from her childhood paradise into the reality of a marriage of convenience. Whether or not she was happy in her marriage—as, indeed, some parties to arranged marriages were—the public record does not reveal. But her pathway there—from cosseted

child to cultured and romantic young woman, from obedient daughter to dutiful wife and mother—was one that was followed by many other young women of her class in the period.

Mary Ann represents the final generation of elite women during the study period. Her experiences before entering into marriage were quite different from those of young women of the plebeian community at the mid-nineteenth century; indeed, her life also differed significantly from that of her husband's pioneering great-grandmother. The overall impression created by the experiences of the Carter women is one of decreasing influence and increasing withdrawal into genteel domesticity as one generation succeeded the next. Of course, the movement was not simultaneous for all middle-class women of the area, and for a number, domesticity and economic idleness may well have remained more a social ideal than a reality. Mrs. Tree, for example, could not afford the luxury of economic inactivity, her lived experience a contradiction of the model that was being constructed by gender ideology of the day. But it was an ideal that was aspired to by these women and their families in a way that was not embraced by women of the plebeian community in this time frame. The various references to female acquaintances in Robert Carter's diary indicate that a significant number of women were moving steadily towards the ideal by the latter decades of the study period, as they found themselves increasingly circumscribed by the domestic sphere.

### **"Exceptional" Women**

This discussion of women of the local elite, seen primarily through the lives of the Carters, has created an image of a group that was homogenous in terms of ethnicity, but real life is rarely so tidy. While class did tend to be linked with ethnicity along the southern Avalon, with most of the gentry being English Protestant and most of the plebeian community being Irish Catholic (or in the process of being assimilated into that ethnoreligious group through intermarriage), there were exceptions, particularly in the earlier part of the period. For example, in the eighteenth century there were various Irish Protestant merchant-planters operating in the area, some of whose wives and daughters lived at least part of their lives on the southern Avalon.

The Benger family provides a good example. We have already encountered Mary Kirke, the widow of David Kirke Jr., who married James Benger, a merchant from Waterford, and became the matriarch of a significant mercantile and landholding family in Ferryland (see Chapter 4). Their son, John, became a merchant-planter and justice of the peace in the area. He married a St. John's woman, Serah, and the couple had six children: three girls and three boys. Serah resided in Ferryland with her husband (although she doubtless visited her relatives and friends in St.

John's on occasion). Meanwhile, John Benger had formed a partnership with Richard Nason of Youghal, and the two held various properties in Ferryland, Aquaforte, Fermeuse, and Renew's that they used in their trade or rented to various tenants. Their alliance was reinforced when John's daughter, Dorcas Benger, married Richard's son, Richard Nason Jr., in 1754. The parties entered into a marriage settlement. Although details are not available, it is possible that certain properties on the southern Avalon were transferred to Richard Jr. at that time, since Richard Jr. and Dorcas's brother, John Jr., were managing the properties during the second half of the century.<sup>52</sup>

The oral tradition suggests that the marriage between Dorcas and Richard was not a happy one and that Dorcas was one of the unfortunate women for whom an economic union between families did not develop into a companionate marriage. Dorcas bore eight children and died in Ferryland, likely when she was in her late forties or early fifties.<sup>53</sup> Richard moved with his children back to his family home in Youghal, passing the sole management of the properties over to his brother-in-law, John. He ultimately left his Ferryland properties to his Irish mistress, Anstice Gorman, and their son Thomas Nason by his will of 1818; because Thomas predeceased his mother, the properties devolved entirely to Anstice and ultimately to her nephew John Nunan.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Dorcas's sister Rachel had married another merchant-planter, William Dobel, of Boston, in 1765; the couple had six children, all born in Ferryland. Their marriage, from various accounts, appears to have been somewhat happier than that of Dorcas and Richard Nason. Rachel and William left Ferryland in 1782, and William left the management of his Ferryland properties to John Benger Jr. (it is likely that at least some part of the properties had come to William by way of a marriage settlement with the Bengers as well). The couple lived in Ireland for two years and then settled on an estate on the banks of the Delaware River, near Philadelphia, where they were joined by Rachel's unmarried siblings, Thomas and Mary. William died there in 1788, and Rachel "did not long survive the loss of so kind & indulgent a Husband whom she soon followed."<sup>55</sup>

Another Irish Protestant mercantile and landholding family on the southern Avalon were the Ludwigs, also from Waterford. John Ludwig operated out of the area and was justice of the peace there in the late 1720s and early 1730s. Whether his wife, Mary, joined him on the southern Avalon is unclear, but she did inherit his interests in various properties in the area and, in turn, left them to her children, William and Mary Fitzwalter, who remained in Ireland and disposed of the properties by the early 1800s.<sup>56</sup> Thus, there were some Irish Protestant gentry women living or holding interests on the southern Avalon, although most of these families had moved by the turn of the nineteenth century and were winding up their interests in the area.

While the local gentry of the eighteenth century were almost wholly Protestant (be it English or Irish), they were not exclusively so. William Coman, for example, was a Catholic merchant from Waterford City with substantial holdings in the Ferryland area in the eighteenth century. And at least one Irish Catholic woman married into the ranks of the local elite. Catherine Cooney of Kilkenny married Peter Weston, an English Protestant merchant-planter, who would ultimately become a justice of the peace in Ferryland. Their daughter Ann married William Carter, who would become a vice-admiralty judge for the island. Thus Catherine became the matriarch of two powerful local families. She and both her daughters co-inherited considerable property at Peter's death, and she was still administering her portion at the turn of the century, initiating various suits against recalcitrant debtors and tenants (although she was usually represented in actual court hearings by men from her circle).<sup>57</sup> Like her contemporary Anne Wylley Carter, then, Catherine had a hand in the management of her financial affairs and also wielded some power in the broader life of the community. Indeed, when Catholic Prefect Apostolic James O Donel was having difficulty in establishing his nominee, Father Ewer, at Ferryland in the late 1780s because he could not unseat the maverick priest Patrick Power (see Chapter 5), it is likely that Catherine was key in rallying sympathy for the renegade within her social circle. Irish Catholic Church authorities felt that the matter could be resolved if Catherine could be convinced to switch allegiance and use her considerable influence to persuade the gentry community to withdraw their support of Power—a sure indication of her authority because this group was largely Protestant. In 1788, Father Phelan, the Franciscan Superior at Waterford, wrote to Archbishop Troy of Dublin:

I was advised to write to Doctor Lanagan [Bishop of Ossory] in favour of Mr Ewer & had that interest been gain'd, Power must, all at once, fall to the ground: Viz a lady of great influence lives in Feriland by name, a Widow Weston a Roman Catholik & a native of Kilkenny [Power's home county]. I wrote to Dr. Lanagan & requested he'd write to this Lady, & recommend Mr. Ewer to her as being the only clergyman qualified to officiate, and also to withdraw her protection from Power &c. The Doctor has not answered me, & it's very probable he has not wrote to Feriland: this makes me suspect he is for Power.<sup>58</sup>

Typical of her generation of gentry women, Catherine was more powerful than her daughters and granddaughters. And, like the Bengier women, she demonstrates that not all members of the elite on the southern Avalon had an English Protestant pedigree, particularly in the eighteenth century.

However, the ethnoreligious homogeneity of the group began to firm up by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as many Irish merchants

voluntarily wound up their affairs on the southern Avalon or went bankrupt.<sup>59</sup> Yet even this consistency varied somewhat geographically, for in St. Mary's district, a number of Irish names had begun to creep into the grand jury lists by the late 1830s, indicating that at least several members of that ethnic group had become significant property and business owners by that time. This contrasted markedly with Ferryland district, where only a couple of Irish names—Cashin and O'Neil—had sufficient family status and property to be considered "principal Merchants and Gentlemen" of their communities by the latter part of the study period.<sup>60</sup> Neither, however, became part of the Carters' social network.

One more set of exceptions must be noted to the relationship between class and ethnicity in the area. Just as the southern Avalon elite was not entirely English Protestant, neither were all English Protestants in the area part of the local elite. This was particularly true in the eighteenth century, when English Protestant servants were still coming out to the area to work in the fishery. Skilled artisans at that time—carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, sail-makers—also tended to be English Protestant. As noted earlier, however, Irish servants increasingly replaced English servants in the fishery, and the English plebeian community was increasingly assimilated into the Irish Catholic ethnoreligious group. Still, there were holdouts into the nineteenth century, such as the Halls, Perrymans, and Paynes of Aquaforte, or the Boons and Butlers of Ferryland. The women in these families, like Irish women in the plebeian community, were involved in economic production and, like other plebeian women, participated in community life, sometimes in interpersonal confrontations that brought them to the attention of authorities. Several incidents will illustrate the point.

On Wednesday, 22 June 1842, Ellen Payne of Aquaforte lodged a complaint with the court that, on the previous Friday and Saturday, Sarah and Catherine Payne had violently beaten her and had forcibly removed her six-month-old child from her custody.<sup>61</sup> The records are frustratingly sparse, but it is highly probable that these women were related to each other, either by blood or marriage. This could possibly have been a situation in which the two perpetrators felt that the mother was unfit and were taking matters into their own hands as the next nearest female relatives of the child. Although Catherine and Sarah were ordered to give security to keep the peace for twelve months for this particular episode, Ellen's problems with her assailants did not end there. In August of 1851, she again complained to the court that she had been "assaulted, abused, threatened and beaten" by Catharine and Sarah, who had now been joined by Elizabeth Frost and Barbara Sisk (or Sesk), also of Aquaforte.<sup>62</sup> Again, the motivation for the incident is missing from the record, but the episode suggests a collective shaming or disciplinary action by a group of women against another in their community.

A more explicit example of an attempt by English Protestant plebeian women to

enforce community standards again involved women of Aquaforte, including the irrepressible Sarah Payne.<sup>63</sup> The incident unfolds through the recording of two back-to-back court cases in 1854. On 13 July 1854, Mary Ann Perryman of Aquaforte appeared in court to name Marmaduke Clow of Ferryland as the father of her unborn child and to seek support. The very act of confronting him in open court in an effort to make him admit financial responsibility was itself a public assertion of informal power. Marmaduke, however, denied that he was the father.<sup>64</sup> The next day, he was waylaid at Ferryland by Mary Ann's neighbors from Aquaforte, Peter and Sarah Payne, who began to abuse him by John Morry's wharf. Peter was carrying a hatchet and thrust it into the wharf in a threatening fashion. When Marmaduke tried to escape, Sarah Payne grabbed him and struck him several times. Peter and Sarah took turns threatening him with the hatchet, and Sarah varied the routine by throwing rocks at Marmaduke.<sup>65</sup>

The fact that Marmaduke was a court official (acting clerk of the peace) and had sufficient connections to have Henry Morry of the local mercantile elite stand bond for him may have caused concern that the alleged father was going to escape formal justice. Also, the fact that Marmaduke was not originally from the southern Avalon (he hailed from Port-aux-Basques) may have added motivation to the Paynes' concern about his adherence to local norms of behavior.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, if Mary Ann Perryman's claim was true, Marmaduke's upcoming nuptials to Mary Johnson likely gave him strong motivation to deny paternity. Unfortunately, the final disposition of the case is not indicated in the records, but it is worthy of note in terms of the efforts of these women to enforce community standards by shaming a man into assuming his alleged paternal responsibilities. Although evidence on English Protestant women of the plebeian community is sparse, given their relatively low numbers at the time the court records began, these anecdotes suggest a willingness to involve themselves in the politics of interpersonal confrontation. Certainly, they were essential producers in family economies, like their Irish counterparts, and they likely enjoyed a similar degree of authority and status as a result of their productive activity and the generally more equitable gender relations that pervaded the plebeian community during the study period.

## **Conclusion**

The core of the elite community on the southern Avalon was formed by a group of families with English Protestant ethnoreligious ties that held key mercantile, professional, and administrative positions in the community. Elite women were thus members of the most powerful families in the area. They traveled more than plebeian women, received broader educations, enjoyed greater access to amenities and consumer goods, and had better housing and dress. Yet in many respects, they had less influence in their homes and communities than plebeian

women had in theirs, particularly by the early nineteenth century. Unlike plebeian women, who continued to negotiate status and influence for themselves in flakes and fields, in courthouse and tavern, and in the everyday running of their households, middle-class women were increasingly marginalized from the public sphere of economic production, from community politics, and even from the financial aspects of household management. Widowhood gave some an entrée into economic activity, but most confined their public appearances to church-going and properly chaperoned travel and social events, where they conveyed status and gentility through their dress, their mannerisms, and their networks of acquaintances and friends.

This was a process that unfolded over several generations: the relatively public and active lives of Anne Wylley Carter or Catherine Weston, for example, contrasted with the more circumspect activities of the elusive Sarah Carter and her frail cousin-in-law Harriet. But even these earlier gentry women eschewed field and shore work, and were absent from the courtroom and the public house. Increasingly, the activities of middle-class women played out in the domestic sphere or in public gatherings that were highly social in aspect. Totally absent in the study area were the types of activities that gave middle-class women elsewhere a "respectable" admittance to the public sphere—church fund-raising and philanthropic work, for example, or anti-slavery and temperance movements. Along the southern Avalon, the lives of these women focused increasingly inward on domestic concerns, particularly on the rearing of children and the supervision of servants. While their economic idleness became a hallmark of their class, this inactivity disempowered middle-class women and relegated their lives more and more to the mediation of patriarchy.

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** The following discussion will be based primarily (although not exclusively) on women in the Carter family of Ferryland, for two main reasons. First, the family epitomizes the local elite in the study area in terms of their range of activities and life experiences. Second, a fair number of documentary sources are available on the family, making their lives more readily accessible to the modern-day historian. Among these sources are the Carter Family Papers (PANL, MG 31), the Carter-Benger-Nason Papers (PANL, MG 247), the Robert Carter Diary (PANL, MG 920; also available at the Ferryland Museum and at MHA, MF-053 [typed transcript, 1832-37 only]), and the Mary Ann Simms Scrapbook (PANL, MG 708). [back](#)

**Note 2:** HE, Ferryland, correspondence to author, 8 March 1999. [back](#)

**Note 3:** Pocius describes the house of contemporary merchant Arthur Holdsworth in Ferryland. Built around 1770, it measured 60 feet by 24 feet and was constructed of stone. The ground floor consisted of a parlor, counting house, and shop; the second level contained four rooms; the house was topped with an attic fitted as warehousing space for dry goods. The property contained several other buildings: a stable, cooper's shop, barking house, and a row of fishermen's cottages. This house, together with other structures, including another large, two-story structure with hipped attic and chimneys, is shown on the "Holdsworth Map" drawn when the plantation was surveyed for sale ca.



1835. See Gerald L. Pocius, "Architecture on Newfoundland's Southern Shore: Diversity and the Emergence of New World Forms," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 8, no. 2 (June 1983): 13 and 15. back

**Note 4:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 33, Will of Robert Carter Sr., 29 March 1795. Another child, Mary Sanders, had already received her portion, likely before her marriage, and may have predeceased her father. See Chapter 7. back

**Note 5:** This type of annuity typically came from a rent charge on land that had been purchased with the cash portion the wife had brought into the marriage. The rent provided a source of income for the couple and a means of maintaining the wife in widowhood, with the advantage of keeping the main estate intact for the heir. Erickson describes it as "a form of inheritance designed to create dependence." See Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 25 and 70. back

**Note 6:** PANL, GN 5/1/C/9, 8 (12), Will of Robert Carter, 3 June 1810. back

**Note 7:** See: PANL, MG 920, Robert Carter Diary; and FMDB, file 02B, Morry and Carter Families. back

**Note 8:** For example, in PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, there are two sketches of quite elaborate houses. One is labeled "The Judges old house in Ferryland" (possibly belonging to vice-admiralty judge William Carter) and shows the façade of a large, two-and-one-half story stone structure with four portals (suggesting four separate residential units), a central archway for carriage entrance to the stores, six glazed windows on the main floor and twelve on the second, and a high A-framed attic (no chimneys, but this was obviously an oversight). See file 61. The other is a cartoon sketch and shows the façade of a two-and-one-half story structure with two end chimneys for heating, a high A-framed attic, a shed extension at the back, a side extension with a door and three windows, and an ornate entranceway flanked by two glazed windows on either side. In the same garden, there is a smaller outbuilding, possibly a separate servants' quarters, and the property is surrounded by a picket fence. The sketch is not dated, but the paper contains a watermark: John Hayes 1822. See file 66. Pocius provides a description of the substantial home built by the Sweetland mercantile family in Caplin Bay in the early nineteenth century. The house was a full-Georgian structure, typical of those built in Nova Scotia and New England, with imported frame, two and one-half stories, large rooms, large central hallway, and end chimneys, indicating upper-floor hearths for heating. He also describes the contemporary home of the Morry family, a much smaller, but still substantial, "Georgian-influenced" two-story structure with kitchen and parlor on the first floor separated by a central stairway, and two end chimneys, indicating that the upper story was heated by separate hearths, rather than by warm air rising from below. See Gerald L. Pocius, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 204 and 223-24. back



**Note 9:** Of course, teaching was not an option on the southern Avalon until the 1830s. Eliza Coulman, Anne Wylley Carter's great-granddaughter, was the first teacher for Ferryland and Caplin Bay under the newly appointed school board in 1836. back

**Note 10:** In the 1800 family census for Ferryland that forms part of the Pole Papers, a widow by the name of Bridget Tree appears as the head of a household with her son, Philip, aged 28, still living at home. Doubtless, this was the merry widow of Thomas's journal. Nonetheless, there was no record of her holding a liquor license—yet another example of the hidden participation of women in this trade. In 1795, the year of Thomas's writing, a liquor license for Ferryland district was issued to "Frances" Tree—doubtless a clerical error. See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 13, 225-26, Robert Carter to Governor Waldegrave, 7 September 1797 (reporting retrospectively). There are no surviving licensing records for 1796 and 1797. By 1798 and 1799, the licensee is listed in the masculine form of the name, as "Francis" Tree. See PANL, GN 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, box 1, List of liquor licenses issued for 1798 and 1799. The widow had a son Francis, who may have been living with her in the late 1790s, although he had established his own household with wife and one-year-old child by the 1800 census. It is likely, then, that the license was being issued in his name, even though his mother ran the inn. Another possibility is that the license continued to be issued in the name of the widow's late husband, which was also Francis. At any rate, the name—in either the masculine or feminine form—no longer appears on the lists of licensees after 1799. There is no way to ascertain whether the widow died shortly after the taking of the census in 1800, whether



she ceased operating the business, or whether she carried it on informally after the former license-holder had left her household. back

**Note 11:** Aaron Thomas, *The Newfoundland Journal of Aaron Thomas*, ed. Jean M. Murray (London: Longmans, Green, 1968), 110. back

**Note 12:** Thomas, *Newfoundland Journal*, 114. back

**Note 13:** Thomas, *Newfoundland Journal*, 113. back

**Note 14:** Various examples can be found in the court records for the area and in PANL: MG-31, Carter Family Papers; MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers; and MG 920, Robert Carter Diary. back

**Note 15:** This was the case with middle-class women in the home country as well. See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). back

**Note 16:** The oral tradition does not identify which of the judges Carter this story describes. Several generations of Carters held positions in the judiciary during the period: the original Robert Carter was a surrogate and justice of the peace, his son William was a vice-admiralty judge, and his grandson Robert was a magistrate. The story most likely relates, however, to the first Robert Carter, local surrogate, who fought the French in St. John's and whose wife, Anne, spearheaded the defense of the Isle aux Bois. Robert was the original grantee of the island as a result of this service. He and Anne had a daughter Anne (possibly the disobedient Nancy) who married Sam Hill of Topsham; perhaps this was an unsuitable match. After Sam died, Anne married Henry Sweetland, a merchant-planter from Devon, who certainly would have been an acceptable choice. She later married Matthew Morry Sr., thus forging an alliance with another significant mercantile family in the area. Her father's will, described above, leaves the bulk of his estate to his first son, but he likely doled out portions earlier by marriage settlements and trusts—perhaps transferring *Nancy's Portion* at the time of her first marriage. Neither William, the vice-admiralty judge, nor Robert, the magistrate, had a daughter named Anne or Nancy. back

**Note 17:** See Kathleen M. Brown's discussion of gentry hospitality in colonial Virginia in Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 296. See also: Carol Berkin, *First Generations: Women in Colonial America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); and Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*. back

**Note 18:** The Robert Carter Diary (PANL, MG 920) provides some insights into the pursuits of middle-class daughters in the period. The Mary Ann Simms Scrapbook (PANL, MG 708) provides a more vivid view, and is discussed in greater detail below. See also a poem by Tom Flood (a local versifier) transcribed by Ann Carter, 10 November 1843, in the Carter Family Papers (PANL, MG 31, file 63). It is a temperance poem, which obviously appealed to Ann's sensibilities, with a moral lesson about the evil effects of drink upon a fresh-water fisherman, who falls in a pond and drowns after imbibing too much rum:



The moral of this mournful tale  
To all is plain and clear  
A single drop to[o] much of rum  
May make a watery bier.

And he who will not sign the pledge  
And keep the promise fast  
May be in spite of fate a stiff  
Cold water man at last. back

**Note 19:** FMDB, file 02B, Morry and Carter Families; and HE, notes provided during

interview by author, Ferryland, 20 July 1999. back

**Note 20:** Anglican parish records for the area are available from 1820 onwards. They list the baptisms of the three youngest children only (Mary, Harriet, and Emily) between 1825 and 1828. According to FMDB, file 02B, Morry and Carter Families, the first three children (Robert, Eliza, and Fanny) also arrived in quick succession between 1814 and 1817. (Robert's birth date of 1814 precedes the date of his parents' marriage; either this is a transcription error, or his birth was pre-nuptial.) The birth or baptism of the middle child, James, is not recorded, so he was likely christened elsewhere. Harriet died in her infancy, and Emily succumbed to scarlet fever just before her ninth birthday. back

**Note 21:** Throughout Carter's diary, there is a constant traffic of visitors, male and female, between St. John's and the Ferryland-Caplin Bay area. Women, married or single, traveled with suitable companions to ensure that they would not be compromised, either physically or socially. On one occasion, however, one of the Carters' female friends was forced to return to St. John's unaccompanied, and Carter expressed his concern at such an impropriety: "Miss Anna Hoyles left us by the *Snipefish* to return to St. John's against my wishes, there being no other female or other respectable passenger, but Cullin is a steady man and from appearances must have reached St. John's by sunset." See entry dated 6 October 1833. back

**Note 22:** Robert's father died in 1810, but his mother lived until 1851. It is evident that she spent her final years in St. John's, for Robert wrote to her there on a regular basis. back

**Note 23:** Granted, the use of *Mr.* and *Mrs.* by spouses in addressing each other in public was a middle-class affectation in general. See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*. But it seems odd that Robert Carter did not relax this convention in his private journal, even when discussing more emotional matters such as the death of a child or Sarah's frequent and long absences. Perhaps he saw the diary as "public" space, in that it might be read by others after his death. Still, the sense of distance between the spouses is palpable, and this may have been an arranged marriage in which the spouses did not develop any great degree of affection for each other. back

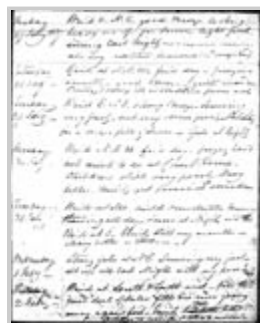
**Note 24:** The diary contains numerous references to the sons' departures and homecomings. Robert also noted on 12 October 1832 that it was his forty-second birthday and that he had passed nearly twenty-nine years in Newfoundland, indicating that he had been in England until he was thirteen years of age. back

**Note 25:** Italics added throughout. Sarah did not return in 1836 until 6 August, although several letters did arrive from her in May and July. She brought their son, Robert, home from school with her. This particularly lengthy stay occasioned the strongest show of sentiment in Robert's diary in relation to his wife: "Thankful beyond all things for safe return of my wife and child" (7 August 1836). Various other entries in the diary also suggest Sarah's absence on other anniversaries. back

**Note 26:** The cod fishery at Newfoundland was, indeed, severely depressed at this time. back

**Note 27:** See entry dated 25 April 1835. back

**Note 28:** See entries dated 27 and 28 February, 10, 13-17, 22, and 25 April, and 25 July 1834. The comments about Sarah's lingering illness all appear at the end of entries about weather and other local news, almost as an afterthought. But Robert was not a man without feelings. He



was moved, for example, to devote an entire entry to the death of his dog: "Poor Snap died of his wounds last night having been dreadfully marred about the head by large dogs a few nights ago, poor faithful little fellow." He is buried at the top of the rock back of the kitchen." See entry dated 2 August 1836. He was also terribly upset when his daughter Emily died of scarlet fever, providing an almost daily charting of her condition to the exclusion of almost any other news until the end: "Poor dear little Emily a little better but my hopes are very faint that she will recover" (12 February 1837); and finally, "Wind N.E. a good deal of snow falling. All hopes of my dear



Emily's recovery fled. At 4 P.M. dear Emily breathed her last—dear little soul" (13 February 1837). See virtually all entries from 28 January to 18 February 1837 (the day of Emily's funeral). back

**Note 29:** See Brown's discussion of gentry hospitality in colonial Virginia in *Good Wives*, 271. back

**Note 30:** Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 227. Errington also observes that gentry women in Upper Canada were "public representatives of their class" and were expected to take an active role in social functions and philanthropic work as a means of reinforcing their husbands' status and influence. See Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), chaps. 6 and 7; quotation from 132. See also: Berkin, *First Generations*; Jessica Kross, "Mansions, Men, Women, and the Creation of Multiple Publics in Eighteenth-Century British North America," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (1999): 385-408; and Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975). back

**Note 31:** The club was initiated on 17 January 1842, and later diary entries indicate that it continued for some time. back

**Note 32:** FMDB, file 02B, Morry and Carter Families; and HE, notes provided during interview by author, Ferryland, 20 July 1999. back

**Note 33:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 45(b), Will of Sarah Carter, 7 September 1866. back

**Note 34:** FMDB, file 02B, Morry and Carter Families; and HE, notes provided during interview by author, Ferryland, 20 July 1999. Harriet's maternal first cousin Ann Williams Hutchings married Arthur's brother, Lieutenant Robert Carter, further demonstrating the interconnectedness of these families. back

**Note 35:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, George Williams to "My dear Niece" [Harriet Carter], 6 August 1826. back

**Note 36:** See PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, files 4 and 10. back

**Note 37:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 10, George Williams to Harriet Carter, 5 March 1833. back

**Note 38:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 10, draft of letter from Arthur Carter to Tom Skinner, 1847. back

**Note 39:** PANL, Church of England Parish Records, Petty Harbour Parish, Ferryland District, box 2. Arthur was the only "gentleman" listed in the records; all his contemporaries' occupations were recorded more specifically—e.g., "merchant," "merchant/planter," "master of merchant vessel," etc. (see Chapter 3, n. 54). It is likely, then, that he had no source of income other than family money, although his adult male relatives were all engaged in mercantile operations, the navy, or the professions. back

**Note 40:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 36. Arthur's request for a government position, however, was refused. See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 38, 400, James Crowdy, Colonial Secretary, to Arthur H. Carter, Ferryland, 15 October 1832. back

**Note 41:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 26, Harriet Carter to "My dear uncle" [George Williams], ca. late 1820s or early 1830s. back

**Note 42:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, files 5, 19, and 26. back

**Note 43:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 19, Excerpt of letter to "My dear Sir" without signature but, from the context, obviously George Williams to Arthur Carter, 13 March 1827. back

**Note 44:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 19, George Williams to [Arthur Carter], 13 May 1827. [back](#)

**Note 45:** PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 26, Harriet Carter to [George Williams], ca. late 1820s or early 1830s. All the following quotations from Harriet are excerpts from this letter. [back](#)

**Note 46:** In an 1826 letter, for example, George indicated to Arthur that when he went to Liverpool to find a vessel to carry his mail to Newfoundland, he would send out some "trifle" and a brief note to Harriet. See PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 19, excerpt of an undated and unsigned letter, but obviously George Williams to Arthur Carter, likely accompanying a short note to Harriet Carter dated 6 August 1826. And on 13 March 1827, George again wrote to Arthur: "I was desirous of sending Harriet some little article of dress by this vessel, but my daughters who are the more competent judges in such important matters say that we had better wait till the 'Spring fashions' come out when we shall be enabled to supply the demands of Ferryland with the newest specimen of taste." See PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 19, George Williams to [Arthur Carter], 13 March 1827. [back](#)

**Note 47:** PANL, Church of England Parish Records, Petty Harbour Parish, Ferryland District, box 2. Harriet's death was also briefly noted in PANL, MG 920, Robert Carter Diary, 20 July 1835. [back](#)

**Note 48:** Maternal mortality rates were high in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Ulrich estimates that the maternal mortality rate experienced by Martha Ballard's patients was 5 per 1,000 births, compared with the late-twentieth-century rate in the United States of 1 per 10,000 births. Still, her record was impressive compared with rates in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English villages (ranging from 10 to 29 per 1,000) or late eighteenth-century London and Dublin hospitals (generally ranging from 8 to 39 per 1,000, with some exceptionally high rates in epidemic years). See Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 170-73 and Table V. British sources also report high maternal mortality rates during the period. The British Lying-In Hospital rates for 1749-88 ranged from 16 to 60.8 per 1,000, and the Queen Charlotte's Hospital mean rate for 1860-64 was 42.4 per 1,000. In England and Wales overall, however, rates had dropped to 5 to 6 per 1,000 by 1850-60. Still, they were high compared with late twentieth-century rates of 0.15 per 1,000 in England and 0.17 per 1,000 in Scotland. See: Irvine Loudon, "Deaths in Childbed from the Eighteenth Century to 1935," in *Childbirth: Changing Ideas and Practices in Britain and America, 1600 to the Present*, ed. Philip K. Wilson, vol. 5 (New York: Garland, 1996), 196-97 and 214, and Tables 1 and 4; and Margaret F. Myles, *Textbook for Midwives*, 8th ed. (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1975), 635. Statistics on maternal mortality are not available for Newfoundland for the study period. However, Mcnaughton provides some early twentieth-century data, indicating that rates were still in the range of 6 to 9 per 1,000 well into the 1920s. Indeed, in 1923, Newfoundland's rate of 6.2 per 1,000 was in the high range for Western countries (which had average rates from 2 to 6.6 per 1,000). See Janet Mcnaughton, "The Role of the Newfoundland Midwife in Traditional Health Care, 1900 to 1970" (Ph.D. diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1989), 66-73 and Tables 1, 3, and 4. All the above sources agree that only in the 1930s did maternal mortality rates begin to decline significantly, and quite precipitously, as standards of obstetric care improved dramatically. [back](#)

**Note 49:** See PANL: Church of England Parish Records, Petty Harbour Parish, Ferryland District, box 2; and MG 708, Mary Ann Simms Scrapbook, 1839-44, particularly the typed family tree charts inserted at the front of the collection. [back](#)

**Note 50:** PANL, MG 708, Mary Ann Simms Scrapbook. [back](#)

**Note 51:** I refer here to the handwritten poems (as opposed to the typeset poems by published poets that appear occasionally throughout). Some appear in Mary Ann's hand; many more were obviously written in the book by friends, as they were addressed to her, written in different hands, and/or signed or initialed by other parties. [back](#)

**Note 52:** A marriage settlement is mentioned in PANL, MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers, file 18, but no details are given. Richard's will of 8 April 1818 also refers to the marriage settlement (apparently, it was dated 8 January 1754), but the only provision mentioned was that a trust of £500 was to be created to provide for any children who had not reached the age of majority and inherited property in Ireland or been properly

accommodated by way of marriage settlements by the time of Richard's death. See PANL, MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers, file 7, Will of Richard Nason, 8 April 1818. back

**Note 53:** Dorcas had died sometime before her sister Rachel left Ferryland in 1782. Speculating that she was in her twenties when she married, it is reasonable to assume that she was between forty-five and fifty-five years of age at her death. See PANL, MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers, files 3 and 37. back

**Note 54:** See: FMDB, Benger Family; PANL, MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers, especially files 3, 18, and 37; and Mannion Name Files, Ferryland, "Benger" and "Nason." back

**Note 55:** PANL, MG 247, Carter-Benger-Nason Papers, files 3 and 37, letter from Elizabeth and Emmeline Bennett to Robert and Peter Weston Carter, 26 June 1847, and notes from a Dobel family Bible. See also Mannion Name Files, Ferryland, "Benger" and "Dobel." back

**Note 56:** Various court cases involving Mary Ludwigg's estate have been cited in Chapter 6. See also Mannion Name File, Ferryland, "Ludwigg." back

**Note 57:** In PANL, MG 31, Carter Family Papers, file 29, there is a certified true copy of a will executed by Peter Weston, dated 14 June 1775, which leaves his entire estate to his wife, Catherine, and two daughters, Catherine and Sarah, in equal shares to be held severally. His wife's share was to be a life interest and, at her death, was to devolve to the two daughters or the survivor of them. Daughter Catherine was to receive her share on her wedding day. Daughter Sarah was to receive her third upon attaining the age of eighteen years. Weston's wife and Edmund Gormond were named executors of the estate and guardians of his daughters. (Note that their daughter Ann received nothing by the will; likely, she had already received her portion in a marriage settlement when she married William Carter.) On 26 September 1776, Governor John Montagu issued a grant of the estate to mother and daughters as co-heiresses and co-executors. See PANL, GN 2/1/A, vol. 6, 149-53. back

**Note 58:** Cyril J. Byrne, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan, and Other Irish Missionaries* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1984), 105-6, particularly 106, Father Phelan to Archbishop Troy, 4 February 1788. Phelan was likely correct in his assumption about Lanagan, because the English Protestant, middle-class community, including Catharine and her son-in-law William Carter, continued to shelter Power for some time thereafter. back

**Note 59:** Only two middle-class marriages in the nineteenth century involved Irish Protestant spouses—both wives, both from outside the area (see Table 3.3). Still, it is difficult to speculate whether or not ethnicity trumped class in marriages among the local elite because the Irish Protestant presence in the area had been too small and too fleeting. back

**Note 60:** The Rules of the Supreme Court established in 1826 stipulated that grand jurors be drawn from "the principal Merchants and Gentlemen" of the community (Rule 20). Petty jurors were to be drawn from those male inhabitants between twenty-one and sixty years of age who owned real property of any amount or rented property at an annual rental of at least £12 per annum; also included on the lists were the sons of the aforesaid while they lived with their fathers (Rule 24). See PANL, GN 5/2/C/1, box 1, Royal Charter instituting the Supreme and Circuit Courts, January 1826, with attached General Rules and Orders of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland. back

**Note 61:** PANL, 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, box 2, *Regina v. Catherine Payne and Sarah Payne*, 22 June 1842. back

**Note 62:** PANL, GN 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, box 2, *Regina v. Catharine Payne, Sarah Payne, Elizabeth Frost, and Barbara Sisk*, 12 August 1851. back

**Note 63:** Sarah herself had other life-experiences that were not atypical for plebeian women on the southern Avalon. She had a child with George Jones in August of 1842; the Anglican minister initially recorded the birth as illegitimate, then crossed out the notation; but Sarah's surname was listed separately, which the minister only did in cases of illegitimacy. The couple had another child in 1845, and this time, the parents were listed as George and Sarah Jones. However, there was no record of the couple having married

within the church, either between the two births, or indeed any time from 1829 onwards, when the marriage records began. It seems likely, then, that Sarah and George may have entered into an informal family arrangement (hence, the minister's uncertainty in recording Sarah's surname and her first child's status). The court references to her as Sarah "Payne" in 1842, 1851, and 1854 reinforce this interpretation. (There is no other Sarah Payne in the Anglican records for this period; Sarah's daughter, born in 1842, was also named Sarah, but likely used the surname of her acknowledged father, Jones. Regardless, she would have been too young to have been involved in any of these incidents that found their way to the courtroom.) Several other plebeian couples within the English Protestant community appeared as parents in the baptismal records, but no corresponding marriages were entered in the marriage records. Given that Anglican ministers were not consistently available in the area, these couples, too, may have entered into informal marriages. [back](#)

**Note 64:** PANL, GN 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, box 2, *Mary Ann Perryman v. Marmaduke Clow*, 13 July 1854. [back](#)

**Note 65:** PANL, GN 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, box 2, *Regina v. Peter Payne and Sarah Payne*, 14 July 1854. [back](#)

**Note 66:** Marmaduke's marriage to Mary Johnson the following year records his place of residence as Port-aux-Basques. See PANL, Church of England Parish Records, Petty Harbour Parish, Ferryland District, box 2, 2 September 1855. [back](#)

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