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University of Delaware, 1994

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"TY'ED ABOUT MY MIDDLE, NEXT TO MY SMOCK":

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S POCKETS

by

Yolanda Van de Krol

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

Spring 1994

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ABSTRACT

Women wore detached pockets until the 1840s, or 300 years after men had adopted inset pockets. Not only did women devise a very different means of carrying items with them, but they also made these pockets quite large and often decorated them with beautiful ornamentation. Examining a common object like a pocket demonstrates that women in the eighteenth century created objects based on socially-constructed gender roles, activities, and experiences in response to complex cultural issues.

To put pockets in context, some basic questions were explored. Pockets came into use on a consistent basis toward the end of the seventeenth century, replacing the suspended drawstring bag as a largely female pocket-substitute. Fashion played the most obvious role in the development of the pocket, particularly the hoop introduced in the first decade of the eighteenth century, yet to consider only fashion to understand the pocket is to miss the complex interaction between people, ideas, behaviors, and objects. Women carried many items with them ranging from the obvious to the unusual, for example, for reasons relating to safety and consumerism. Dress construction and the expense of fabric prior to industrialization also influenced pockets.

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While women could purchase pockets, most womem made them following other familiar textile decoration such as crewel work and quilting. Productivity, social calls, and housekeeping skills, among other reasons, provide the contexts to explain why women took the time to embellish their pockets. While not often visible for reasons of orderliness, privacy, and crime, wearing pockets just under the gown or apron allowed others to see the pocket and its decoration more often than previously thought. Finally, pockets did not belong to women alone; artists utilized them as symbols ranging from greed to sexual relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Detachable, bell-shaped bags tied around the waist served as pockets for women until the 1840s and survive as a unique form of female material culture. Women often lavished much time and expense beautifully ornamenting their pockets. Men's fashion, on the other hand, rejected the transitional detached pocket and proceeded directly from the exterior girdle bag to inset pockets in the mid-sixteenth century, approximately 300 years earlier than women. Why is it that women's pockets evolved differently from men's pockets? Both men and women negotiated a similar broad range of societal influences in the eighteenth century such as security, privacy, consumerism, crime, orderliness, tradition, and fashion. But differing gender roles, activities, and experiences caused women to employ alternate strategies from men regarding these common problems. As tangible, protean evidence, pockets illustrate one creative and practical solution crafted by women to meet their specific needs.

Pockets, like other objects produced in the past, reveal much about the culture from which they came. Women did not create pockets in a vacuum, rather they made choices both consciously and unconsciously within a larger cultural framework. The evidence for the options women selected is intrinsic to the pockets themselves.

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Why did women wear such large pockets? Why did pockets remain detached for so long? How did women choose the decorative techniques for their pockets? Finally, why did women embellish an article of clothing that is thought to have been concealed from view underneath petticoats and skirts? A separate set of questions relates less to specific qualities of pockets and more to decisions people made about how to use large, detached, and decorated pockets. How did women choose to wear their pockets and why, and how did artists choose to portray pockets as symbols?

Examining these choices will reveal much about the society that influenced people to make them. It will also show that the simplicity of the pocket's form has often belied its complexity of function. Certainly pockets served a practical purpose in transporting items from place to place. They did so, however, in publicly acceptable ways, hence serving social functions as well. In some instances, moreover, artists adopted pockets to satisfy symbolic purposes.

Pockets abound in museums and historical societies. They vary widely in shape, size, material, construction, and decoration. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has argued, women used their needles more often than their pens. The result is an abundance of pockets and other extant textiles that constitute potentially rich sources of information about early American women's history. Certainly sewing

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skills deserve the same level of attention allotted male-dominated abilities in wood and metal working.[1]

The objective in using objects is to learn about life in the past by teasing out the information embedded in the material culture. While analysis and interpretation provide hurdles and challenges for all types of artifacts, textiles have proven especially elusive as historical evidence. The difficulties stem from the dearth of written records left by women in the past to illuminate their textile production, the ambiguity inherent in clothing and fashion, and finally the general lack of systematic and rigorous examination of textiles in the decorative arts.[2]

Female material culture has implications far beyond the narrow and more traditional focus of women, costume, or textiles. Social historians interested in understanding gender roles in early America will benefit from research that moves outward from an object such as a pocket to explore its broader historical contexts and cultural meanings. The word gender should not be understood to mean "women" or "men" in a biological sense, but rather relationships between men and women. Gender varies from culture to culture. It

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[1]For a more complete argument on the various under-utilized sources available for research in women's history as well as the difficulties associated with using them, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Of Pens and Needles: Sources in Early American Women's History," The Journal of American History 77 (June 1990): 200-207.

[2]Patricia J. Keller assesses the state of quilt scholarship specifically and the need to bring more rigorous methodologies to the study of quilts. Her appraisal also applies to the study of textiles in general. "Methodology and Meaning: Strategies for Quilt Study," The Quilt Journal 2 (1993): 1-4.

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embodies a system of ideas about appropriate social roles and behaviors for both men and women as designated by their common cultural experiences. Like class and race, gender is a socially constructed category created by the activities and influences of both males and females.[3] As such, even when concentrating on female gender issues as in this study, knowledge relating to one sex will shed light on the other.

Gender, then, provides a different way to conceptualize issues, to ask questions, and to move toward resolving--not necessarily answering--questions. Taking a gender approach propels us beyond male-dominated interpretations of history to more balanced accounts that incorporate the diverse ways that women approached and experienced many situations facing both sexes.

To link gender with objects, and to derive meaning from such a common object as a pocket, it was necessary to draw on diverse forms of evidence. These included material culture, documentary material, pictorial sources, literary/non-fictional readings, and existing secondary research. These sources offered insight into uses and meanings otherwise too ordinary to merit written comment by the women who made or used pockets. Taken separately, each category contained important information not necessarily found in, or even

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[3]Angel Kwolek-Folland, "Gender as a Category of Analysis in Vernacular Architecture Studies" (Paper delivered at the 1992 Vernacular Architecture Forum); Elizabeth H. Pleck, "Women's History: Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis," Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History, ed. James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 54.

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contradicting, other sources. Taken together, however, the sources of evidence complemented one another to provide a fuller understanding and to call into question part of the conventional wisdom found in secondary sources regarding pockets. A brief examination of the advantages and limitations of each source follows.

The material culture evidence consisted of 181 pockets owned by 14 institutions and individuals. The most obvious of the attributes, their decoration, appeared in virtually no other source--pictorial, literary, or documentary. Even the capacious size of the pockets would have been difficult to assess without the physical evidence. Whether people realize it or not, they have used material culture as evidence whenever they indicate these basic aspects of pockets. Rather than explore <u>why</u> pockets assumed these characteristics, much existing research has simply revealed <u>how</u> certain pockets were decorated.

Many more subtle and important qualities materialized only after careful scrutiny of and comparison between a large number of pockets. A clear parallel with quilting, for example, emerged. In addition, a surprising number of pockets showed little or no wear at all, as if the maker or someone else had put them aside. Gift-giving and associative memories can shed light on this lack of use. Also, the decoration on many pockets did not fit within the confines of the pocket surface; rather, some designs ran into the outside seams or were severed to accommodate the opening for the hand. These

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characteristics indicate the re-use of previously embellished textiles.

Identifying the country of origin of most pockets proved impossible, since solid provenance was rare. Where the decoration on pockets was distinctly different, pockets demonstrated how women from disparate cultures, particularly German and potentially African-American, adapted their designs to meet their own aesthetic criteria. On another level, even so-called "plain" pockets exhibited the decorative aptitude of women, although one quite dissimilar from the more highly colorful pockets.

The material culture clues provided by pockets served as important evidence in the understanding of a larger cultural context. They also contained limitations and biases. While collections include many plain pockets, they were most certainly under-represented. Accidents of survival and personal preferences tend to skew collections toward those items with the most aesthetic appeal and the least amount of degradation. Collection policies at different repositories also exhibit different biases as seen in this study. Historical societies that receive donations from the local community, for example, tend to have more plain pockets as well as a larger number of worn pockets than museums that rely more on purchased items. Some institutions own a preponderance of single pockets, others more double pockets. Examining many collections assisted in understanding these apparent discrepancies.

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Documentary literature provided evidence for detached pockets in such diverse sources as newspaper advertisements, trade cards, vendue sales, nursery rhymes, historical accounts of events, bills, letters, diaries, advice books, probate inventories, and court cases. On one level this information supported the physical evidence that pockets were detached. More importantly, threading these seemingly unrelated facts together served to connect the people to the objects. This does not mean that women explicitly described why, for example, they chose to wear detached instead of inset pockets. Rather, the scattered details revealed women's activities such as visiting, housekeeping, and re-modeling dresses, and women's motivations relating to security in crowded living conditions. Other clues demonstrated that societal expectations encouraged women to remain busy at all times, and clarified the personal belongings women carried, ranging from the obvious to the unusual. Each of these issues influenced the choice women made to wear detached pockets.

This form of evidence contained its own set of problems. Rarely were the details of the pocket described, such as the decoration or the size. Additionally, some sources related highly personal experiences that did not necessarily represent the practices of a larger group of women. Finally, we cannot assume that women agreed with or followed the prescriptive literature, such as advice books.

Pictorial evidence revealed <u>how</u> women wore their pockets and the influence of the style of dress itself on the method of wear

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chosen. Women did not deliberately display their pockets, influenced in part by issues related to fashion, privacy, and crime. Prints demonstrated that pockets were still, however, visible more often than has previously been thought. Finally, print makers utilized pockets as symbols for a multiplicity of meanings from greed to sexual relations, thus endowing them with meaning recognizable to the intended audiences. Prints were not entirely reliable by themselves. Rarely did they indicate the decoration or size of the pocket. The artists, particularly the satirists, also used conventions and ambiguity not always easily decipherable today.

A sampling of eighteenth-century novels such as Tom Jones and Clarissa revealed an abundance of references to pockets. This evidence expanded the knowledge of what types of items women put in their pockets and pointed to the privacy inherent in their usage. As with prints, the author could have used artistic license to carry a point outside its normal, real-life confines, potentially skewing some of the information.

Pockets have not received much consideration in the existing secondary literature. In most costume books, for example, they failed to appear at all, or else they surfaced in discussions of other items such as pocketbooks.[4] When pockets were mentioned as distinct items, they often served as mere illustrations of the fact that women wore

[4]The most useful information in the costume arena consisted of the book Bags and Purses by Vanda Foster (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1982). While helpful, it focused on other objects and did not concentrate on cultural context.

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detached pockets. Rather than using evidence from the pockets to interpret their meaning, images were accompanied only by physical descriptions and the general time period of usage.[5] The same few quotes and illustrations appeared repeatedly. Secondary sources proved most helpful when providing insight into and historical context for broader issues directly related to the choice for detached pockets such as security, crime, orderliness, consumerism, privacy, fashion, and tradition.

In conclusion, these five sources of evidence will assist in answering the questions of why pockets were so large and remained detached for so long, how and why women decorated them, how visible they were, and how artists depicted pockets as symbols. The answers will illustrate that women devised detached pockets as a practical response to their gender roles, activities, and experiences in the eighteenth century that differed from men's responses to common societal concerns. To understand pockets as they appeared at that time, the stage must first be set with a brief explanation of their evolution prior to 1700 as well as of their use in the nineteenth century.

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[5]This problem is certainly not limited to pockets but is inherent in many material culture studies that incorporate social and economic history: "The danger in this sort of material-culture study is that objects tend to lose their voices. The artifact ceases to exist as text and evidence and is reduced instead to the role of illustration." Bernard L. Herman, The Stolen House (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 11.

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Chapter 1

THE EVOLUTION OF THE POCKET

From the Middle Ages to the late sixteenth century, both men and women used bags or pouches attached at waist-level to the exterior of their clothing on their girdles or belts. The Crusaders may have returned with these pouches, called "amonieres sarrasimoises" or Saracen almsbags, originally intended to carry coins for the poor. Their flat shape and often elaborate embroidered decoration changed little for hundreds of years.[6] Dutch emblem books and genre paintings that so realistically portrayed the common citizen throughout the seventeenth century abound with views of girdle pouches.

During the sixteenth century, the fashionable alternative for women to the girdle pouch consisted of a long hanging drawstring bag suspended from the waist to fall at or below knee level. In a Dutch engraving produced between 1600 and 1610 (artist unknown), the girdle pouch appears on the chamber maid while the stylish hanging bag belongs to the woman of means (fig. 1.1). The prevailing fashion

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[6]Katherine Morris Lester and Bess Viola Oerke, An Illustrated History of those Frills and Furbelows of Fashion which Have Come to be Known as: Accessories of Dress (Peoria, IL: The Manual Arts Press, 1940), 415-16.

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of wearing the roll farthingale, also called a bum-roll, accounts in part for the use of the hanging bag. As seen in the Dutch engraving shown here, the roll farthingale consisted of a thick, stuffed pad tied around the waist. A girdle pouch would have hung awkwardly from the waist, and since the bulk of the roll forced a woman's arms too far outward, it rendered a pocket unreachable. Women accessed the hanging bag differently depending on whether it was visible or concealed. A woman could thus have reached it directly, by pulling aside the parted skirt as in the Dutch engraving, or through slits in the skirts themselves. Alternatively, the bag might hang underneath an apron as in Peter Bruegel the Younger's 1569 "Peasant Dance Out of Doors" (figure 1.2). The hanging bag continued throughout the century; in an engraving done in 1697, an elite woman retains the style.[7]

Hanging bags were not, however, the only means women had for carrying their personal belongings. They also hung their fashionable accessories, such as fans, sweet-smelling pomanders, and mirrors in full view from their girdles.[8] Women may have used this, too, as a

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[7]Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 266, illustration of Nicolas Arnoult's "Feast of the Peace of Ryswick."

[8]The various accessories are visible in many portraits of the day. They are also mentioned in books, such as The French Garden (1605) by Peter Erondell in which a woman in preparation for going out is concerned with her "girdle and all the furniture that be at it" as well as "my purse to wear upon my gowne." Cited in Dorothy Davis, A History of Shopping (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966), 111.

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practical alternative to a pouch or pocket due to the under-structure of the dress. Throughout Queen Elizabeth I's reign and slightly beyond, from approximately 1550 to 1625, fashionable women adopted the farthingale. It changed over time from the Spanish farthingale (cone-shaped) to the French (cylindrical) to the wheel farthingale (drum-shaped), but by stiffly supporting the dress it allowed for the display of expensive appurtenances. After 1625, women wore smaller roll farthingales or multiple layers of petticoats.

Rolls of padding, not unlike the roll farthingale, sometimes supported the farthingale.[9] As this awkward item was not always present, however, it appears that some women adopted an inset pocket late in the sixteenth century. The evidence for them is found almost exclusively in surviving documents from the court of Queen Elizabeth I.[10] In addition, one petticoat with an inset pocket survives at the Museum of Costume in Bath, England, dating to circa 1650.[11] It is not at all clear whether these pockets were prevalent or not, or whether women outside of the court used them. In any case, they do not appear to have used inset pockets very long.

While women utilized the hanging bag to replace the pouch, men adopted the inset pocket instead. The exact date of their usage

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[9]Margot Hamilton Hill and Peter A. Bucknell, The Evolution of Fashion: Pattern and Cut from 1066 to 1930 (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1967), 78.

[10]Janet Arnold, Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd (Leeds, Eng.: W.S. Maney Ltd., 1988), 115, 117, 129, 149.

[11]Ibid., 188.

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remains obscure; however men appear to have had pockets in their trunk hose in the mid-sixteenth century and certainly in breeches in the latter part of the century.[12] Pocket slits or plackets, moreover, almost always visible, played an important role in men's fashions. While women generally left an imperceptible opening for their hands in the side seams of their garments, lace and other decoration made men's plackets stand out. Their position changed with the alterations in fashion.[13] The prominence and endurance of men's plackets differed from those of women. Even when the fashion for tight clothes prevailed, men moved their pockets rather than eliminated them as women would do, for example, throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Women's detached pockets finally appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century when bustles made a brief appearance. By pulling the skirts away from the body without either stuffing or multiple layers to reach through, bustles more easily accommodated pockets. The earliest mention found to date of the concept of

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[12]Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, Occupational Costume in England: From the Eleventh Century to 1914 (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1967), 353; C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington and Charles Beard, A Dictionary of English Costume 900-1900 (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1960), 167; C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1966), 122, regarding men's clothing in 1581: "For half a yarde of fustian for the pockettes for his other hosen vid."

[13]Francois Boucher, A History of Costume in the West (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 260. Circa 1684, pockets moved from a vertical to a horizontal position. Also, Iris Brooke, Dress and Undress: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1958), 52. Between 1700 and 1720, pockets rose from a few inches above the hem up to the hip.

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universal pockets for women (i.e., beyond those worn during the reign Queen Elizabeth I) defines women's pockets as "little bags set on the inside, with a hole or slit on the outside; by which any small thing may be carried about."[14] This implies but does not explicitly define pockets as detachable. Jonathan Swift provides a definite date in Mrs. Harris' Petition published in 1701: "Therefore, all the money I have, which, God Knows, is a very small stock, I keep in my pocket, ty'ed about my middle, Next to my smock."[15]

The ideal dress for the pocket was introduced in the first decade of the eighteenth century when the hoop came into fashion. The pocket used with it resembled both the girdle pouch and the hanging bag in terms of shape as well as decoration. The hanging bag, moreover, preceded the pocket in moving from the exterior to the interior. While there thus existed a fashion continuum with gradual evolutions, we will explore the many reasons other than fashion behind the change.

Pockets remained in fashion until about the 1790s. Their demise was far better defined than their inception and related very directly to fashion. In the Neoclassical period, scanty, clinging dresses with high waists represented the height of fashion. The discoveries of Grecian treasures influenced clothing, architecture,

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[14]Randle Holme, The Academy of Armory (London: London and Westminster, 1688), 95.

[15]Cited in C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, The History of Underclothes (London: Michael Joseph, 1951), 67; shortened version in the Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 ed., s.v. "pocket."

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furniture, and most all of the decorative arts. The Empire dresses rendered detached pockets entirely impractical, since they would have ruined the line of the dress. In 1799 "The Times" cited "the total abjuration of the female pocket."[16] Instead, women carried bags or purses known as reticules.

Reticules retained a shape similar to the pocket and the hanging bag. Even their function remained analogous; the Oxford English Dictionary defines a reticule as "used as a pocket."[17] At this time, however, women carried them in their hands by a handle. Satirical references deriding the reticule and emphasizing the vanity associated with the new Empire dresses resulted in the names "ridicule" or "indispensable" in common parlance.

French women used reticules before the vogue reached England. The first fashion plate in England depicting a reticule appeared in the Gallery of Fashion in 1799. For those women unfamiliar with the fashion, a footnote explained that "Indispensables are bags, which the ladies use instead of pockets."[18] Occasionally women wore balantines, which resembled pockets and hung on the outside of the dress from the high waist. Women made limited use of them, however, since they both appeared too

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[16]Cited in C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1957), 399.

[17]Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "reticule."

[18]Cited in Foster, Bags and Purses, 33.

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similar to the old pocket and broke up the flowing line of the dress.[19]

Not all women adhered to the new fashion. Older women and women outside of the fashion centers, for example, may have continued to use their pockets. As Martha Ballard recorded in her diary, the townspeople put aside four pockets as late as 1806 in the hopes that a wounded girl would recover.[20] Some women may not have known of the new style; in an 1817 novel, a lady from the country admits to wearing pockets, only to have other, more sophisticated women ridicule her.[21]

Pockets returned circa 1825 as the Empire dress gave way to layers of petticoats. Women thus had the option of using pockets, purses, or both. In the late 1830s, The Workwoman's Guide proposed alternate ways to attach the pocket; it could be tied as usual, buttoned to stays, or fastened to petticoats.[22] By the 1840s, pockets were regularly sewn into dresses, although some women most likely retained their familiar detached pockets. Many women changed the function of their pockets from every day wear to a specialized

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[19]Boucher, History of Costume, 341, picture plate 853; Geoffrey Squire, Dress and Society 1560-1970 (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 133, picture p. 134; Aileen Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1988), 132.

[20]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 304.

[21]Cited in Cunnington, History of Underclothes, 118-19.

[22]The Workwoman's Guide (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Company, 1840), 73.

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item used outside the home. In 1881 "Godey's Lady's Book" advertised the same forms as railway pockets, recommending them for safekeeping valuables when travelling.[23] Pockets also returned as part of the colonial revival movement, replete with patterns that do not, interestingly enough, resemble the eighteenth-century pocket very closely.[24] Finally, an 1892 book suggested that women hung old pockets at the head of their beds at night to hold their watches, purses, and so forth.[25]

In conclusion, the detached pocket saw its highest level of use throughout the eighteenth century. The introduction of the inset pocket in the 1840s, however, did not ensure its continued and uninterrupted use. Fashion then, as now, often dictated its disappearance, much to the lamentation of many women.[26] Rather than

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[23]My thanks to Nancy Rexford for bringing this advertisement to my attention. Also Cunnington, Dictionary of English Costume, 168.

[24]M.S. Lockwood and E. Glaister, Art Embroidery: A Treatise on the Revived Practice of Decorative Needlework (London: Marcus Ward & Co., 1878) reprinted by Peter Stansky and Rodney Shewan eds., The Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 81. It has the shape of a triangle with the top snipped off and folded over plus the two bottom corners cut on a diagonal. The directions suggest that women work with silks on velvet, a combination not found in the 181-pocket database.

[25]Susan Burrows Swan, "The Pocket Lucy Locket Lost," Early American Life 10 (April 1979): 41, referring to George S. Cole, A Complete Dictionary of Dry Goods (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Co., 1892), 20.

[26]Butterick Publishing Company, The Art of Garment Cutting, Fitting and Making (London: The Butterick Publishing Co. Ltd., 1894), 73. "The introduction of straight skirts marked the disappearance of the one pocket previously a part of each of the garments of femininity; and ever since, the wearers have mourned its loss...the aggravation of being bereft of pockets was in no degree ameliorated

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return to the detached pocket, though, women substituted the pocketbook and the fanny bag for their inset pockets in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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by the ill advised consolation offered, that one should be thankful that brothers and husbands were still supplied with the usual number."

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Chapter 2

WHY POCKETS WERE LARGE AND DETACHED

"But as to her pockets...they cannot hold all the letters that I should wish to see. And yet a woman's pockets are half as deep as she is high."[27] These words from the novel Clarissa (published in installments between 1747 and 1748) accurately portray what the material culture evidence so clearly shows--women wore enormous pockets by modern standards! The pockets in this study ranged from eight to 22 inches. Only three pockets measured smaller than ten inches long, with the average pocket between 15 to 16 inches in length. Moreover, certain construction techniques such as adding pleats, fabricating the front larger than the back, and making the bottom wider than the top resulted in an even more spacious pocket. Understanding their size requires first determining what women carried in their pockets, and then why women deemed it important or necessary to carry those items with them on their persons. This leads directly to the reasons why women chose to wear detached pockets.

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[27]Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, 1747-48 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), 214.

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What Women Carried

Carrying out definitive research into the belongings women carried would be a Sisyphean task indeed. The evidence is scattered across diaries, letters, lost advertisements in newspapers, dolls, novels, and a host of unexpected places. Often when items carried in pockets were mentioned, only one or two individual articles were cited in a very specific context, precluding a complete inventory of the contents of the pocket. Despite these and other difficulties, it is clear that women carried an immense array of articles with them, ranging from the obvious to the unusual. In many ways the formerly detached pocket seems to have contained the variety of items that women carry with them today in both their pockets and pocketbooks. On the other hand, they carried the articles for different reasons, and the portable items held different meanings than they do today.

One kind of item often found in pockets were sewing implements. Mrs. Ridgely wrote in 1796 of "sizars, thimble, needle and thread"[28] while other women also had similar articles and added pins and tape.[29] Pins could apparently function in many ways; a

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[28]Mabel Lloyd Ridgely, ed., The Ridgelys of Delaware and Their Circle (Portland, ME: The Anthoensen Press, 1949), 94. The context consists of a French woman surprised to find American women with the items listed, "for it was terrible in a Lady to wear a pair of pockets--the French Ladies never did such a thing." While this has been interpreted as meaning that French women never wore pockets, this author believes instead that French women found it entirely unfashionable to wear pockets by 1796.

[29]Ellen J. Gehret, Rural Pennsylvania Clothing (York, PA: Liberty Cap Books, 1976), 73. Her source: The Pennsylvania German Society "Record of Indentures...1770s."

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woman who carried pins in her pocket also found them useful to protect herself from unwanted male advances.[30] Other sewing tools included a needlebook (located in one of the detached pockets of a doll dating to the eighteenth century) as well as gold and silver thimbles.[31]

Other items related to sewing, such as fabrics, were also situated in pockets. Women may have found it convenient at times to carry mending and knitting with them to take advantage of spare moments of time or available light. In other instances the pocket may have transported fabric. This seems likely in situations in which women carried fairly large quantities of material in their pockets such as a yard of silk or a bundle of scarlet.[32]

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[30]Sylvia Groves, The History of Needlework Tools and Accessories (London: Country Life Ltd., 1966), 51. The full quote reads as follows: "Stood by a pretty, modest maid, whom I did labour to take by the hand, but she would not, but go further from me; and at last I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again." The perpetrator is alleged to be Samuel Pepys, from his diaries, on August 18, 1666. This author was unable to verify the quote on the day specified.

[31]Millia Davenport, The Book of Costume (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948), 749; "The Aurora Advertiser" April 22, 1806 (I would like to thank Susan Burrows Swan for this citation); Captain Alexander Smith, The History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen, 1719, ed. Arthur L. Hayward (London: Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1926), 189.

[32]Swan, "The Pocket Lucy Locket Lost," 41; "The Aurora Advertiser" April 22, 1806.

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Women carried other items not related to sewing including snuff boxes, knives, handkerchiefs, and books.[33] A few women toted some unusual and rather bulky articles. One woman, for example, had the following items stolen from her pocket in Boston Common: a worked pocketbook with a pair of stone earrings, two pair of stone buttons which wanted mending, a silver thimble marked "Hannah Bill," a large plain stay-hook in the shape of a heart, a broken silver teaspoon marked "P.M.," and sundry papers.[34] Nancy Shippen carried toys for her child, while Hannah Callender brought a drinking cup from Philadelphia to the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem. She used the cup with her companions to drink to "peace and tranquility" while on a walk in the woods along the Monachosee Creek.[35] Other peculiar objects included a flageolet potentially carried by a woman, as well

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[33]Silver snuff box in Clare Le Corbeiller, European and American Snuff Boxes 1730-1830 (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1966), 14; gold snuff box and knife in "The Aurora Advertiser" April 22, 1806; handkerchiefs in an unspecified newspaper dated October 30, 1775 (I would like to thank Susan Burrows Swan for this citation), in Davenport Book of Costume, 749 (in doll pocket), and in the pocket of another doll, accession number 91.23 dated 1835-1845 at the Winterthur Museum; book in Anne Buck Dress in Eighteenth-Century England (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1979), 203.

[34]"The Boston Newsletter" July 30 and August 9, 1753.

[35]Anne Home (Shippen) Livingston, Nancy Shippen, Her Journal Book; The International Romance of a Young Lady of Fashion of Colonial Philadelphia (Philadelphia: J.B. Lipincott Co., 1935), 190, regarding trinkets. The date was April 17, 1784; George Vaux, ed., "Extracts from the Diary of Hannah Callender," The Philadelphia Magazine of History and Biography 12 (1888): 452, concerning the cup. The date was August 29, 1761.

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as a bird which hung out of the pocket of a Gypsy woman as she told a fortune by reading a palm.[36]

Novels abound with examples of items found in pockets.[37] Novels did contain some of the same objects as indicated in the documentary literature such as handkerchiefs and money, but otherwise the two sources of evidence differed. Gloves, for example, appeared in novels, as did fans, phials of ink, biscuits, and cordials.[38] Objects appearing quite frequently included bottles of hartshorn (i.e., smelling salts), keys, and letters.[39] Finally, in her capacity as a thief, Daniel Defoe's eponymous heroine Moll Flanders carried a number of unusual items with her.

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[36]Flageolet in Smith, Complete History of the Lives and Robberies, 145. Captain Smith wrote this popular book in the early eighteenth century relating the particulars of individual crimes committed by some of the more famous criminals of the day. The sheer volume of detail, however, should render one cautious as to its accuracy. The gypsy with the bird is depicted on two copperplate printed textiles in the Winterthur collection, accession numbers 69.3285 and 85.5.1, dated to 1765.

[37]Evidence from this source is provided separately as the authors of these novels could have used some imagination to fill their character's pockets.

[38]Gloves and fan in Daniel Defoe, Moll Flanders, 1722 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 67; ink in Samuel Richardson, Pamela, 1740 (London: Penguin Group, 1985), 131; biscuit in Richardson, Clarissa, 281; cordial in Tobias George Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, 1771 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 106.

[39]Hartshorn in Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, 1749 (New York: Penguin Group, 1979), 222 and in Daniel Defoe, Roxana, 1724 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1979), 106; letters in Fielding, Tom Jones, 646, 782, 783, 816 and in Richardson, Pamela, 153, 270, 274, 275, 303, and in Richardson, Clarissa, 214, 215, and Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote, 1752 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13, 237.

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Money was also found in women's pockets in everyday life as well as in novels, and its presence raises important questions. Conventional documentation remains remarkably silent on the degree to which women engaged in exchange both as producers and consumers and whether those activities involved hard currency. Barter and credit certainly played large roles in the economy of the eighteenth century due to the scarcity of specie. The use of credit varied throughout the colonies; in Virginia, for example, tobacco notes traded as cash. Written reports describing the act of "buying" do little to distinguish cash from credit and barter. Store account books compound the problem of assessing the role of women in the economy, since they generally list transactions under the name of the head of the household, almost always a man unless a woman was widowed. Despite these difficulties, we will explore in some detail the limited proof in the colonies and the ample evidence in England that women carried money with them in their pockets.

Women in the colonies such as the midwife Martha Ballard had access to cash. While it did not constitute the most typical form of remuneration for her, she did receive payment both in kind and in cash for her services.[40] Landon Carter complained not only that his daughter Lucy spent the seven dollars in cash he had given her to go shopping, but exceeded that amount by drawing on his store credit,

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[40]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, interview with author, August 30, 1993.

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too.[41] Criminals sometimes targeted women travelling on their own because travel required the use of ready money. A couple of highwaymen, for example, stopped Nancy Shippen. She wrote: "As there was no gentleman with us, not even the footman behind the carriage, we determined not to resist but gave all the money we had about us." She continued: "Louisa gave all the change she had about her."[42] Nancy Shippen also lost three dollars while playing cards.[43] Although unclear whether she played with cash or not, she may have gambled with currency since she obviously carried money with her on other occasions. Some women must have carried substantial sums with them. In The Boston Gazette and Evening Journal of January 17, 1763, for example, a woman offered a reward for her lost pocket which held, among other articles, four 18 Pound pieces and three guineas.[44]

Criminal incidents, details of shopping, caricature, and novels provide proof for women carrying cash in England. The preponderance of research to date comes out of the study of crime and costume relating to women in England. During the anti-calico uprising in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, for example, Elizabeth Price had the misfortune to be in search of lodgings when a group of sympathizers espousing protectionism accosted her:

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[41]Jack P. Greene, ed., The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), 2:950.

[42]Livingston, Nancy Shippen, 205. The date was July 2, 1787.

[43]Ibid., 215.

[44]Cited in Swan, "The Pocket Lucy Locket Lost," 41.

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> "Some people sitting at their Doors, took up her Riding Hood, and seeing her Gown, cry'd out Callicoe, Callicoe; Weavers. Whereupon a great Number came down and tore her Gown off all but the sleeves, her Pocket, the head of her Riding Hood, and abused her very much."

She had one guinea in her pocket.[45]

Stories about more calculated criminal incidents provided another source of evidence for money. The sums ranged from small to large; the thief Andrew Baynes expressed disappointment in finding only two guineas and twelve shillings in the combined pockets of three Quaker women, while Old Mobb robbed the Duchess of Portsmouth of 200 pounds.[46]

The history of shopping in England also illuminates women's involvement with cash. Before shops became prevalent, people--mostly women--buying at marketplaces required ready money.[47] Even at shops, some women made payments in cash; one petty grocer named William Wood of the small village of Didsbury in the late eighteenth century

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[45]Beverly Lemire, Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain 1660-1800 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36. This incident occurred on June 13, 1719, and was reported in the Old Bailey Records on July 7, 1719.

[46]Smith, 225 and 38, respectively. Smith wrote about real criminals, but he was not always accurate on the details of the crimes. For more instances of money in women's pockets, see page 189; for instances of women robbed of money (i.e., no mention of pockets) see pages 31, 38, 53, 146, 165, 188, 241, 452, 453.

[47]Hoh-cheung and Lorna H. Mui, Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 157.

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received more money from married women than from their husbands.[48] Women may also have taken advantage of discounts for cash payments more often than men did.[49]

Diaries and novels provide more detail on shopping habits. In his diaries, Pepys wrote: "My wife snappish because I denied her money to lay out this afternoon."[50] In other cases he gave his wife 15 pounds to go shopping; he also "landed my wife at Whitefriars with five pounds to buy her a petticoat."[51] Maids may have undertaken the task of buying at market; Pepys wrote of his servants going to market on a daily basis.[52] Domestics may also have carried the money for their employers when accompanying them on shopping trips; in the book The French Garden published in 1605, a lady ordered her maid: "Joley, pay for this cloath."[53] In both cases, servants carried the means of payment. It is interesting to consider that pockets worn by servants

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[48]Ibid., 215. Ann Hadkinson is used as an example. She paid one guinea after having accumulated a credit balance somewhat in excess of that amount. The guinea payment was a common occurrence; rarely did customers pay in small coins.

[49]Alison Adburgham, Shopping in Style: London from the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 78.

[50]Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970; London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1972), 7:256 (August 21, 1666).

[51]Quoted in Adburgham, Shopping in Style, 10; Elizabeth Ewing, Fashion in Underwear (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1971), 34.

[52]Adburgham, Shopping in Style, 18.

[53]Quoted in Davis, History of Shopping, 107.

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may have been more important and possibly more prevalent than those of their mistresses throughout the eighteenth century.

Caricatures also show women carrying money. Artists characterized Mrs. Siddons in 1784 and the Queen in 1791 with coins spilling from their pockets (figs. 2.1 and 2.2). Money constituted an important element of the symbolism delivering the sardonic message. Its effect would have been less appropriate and effective had women not actually transported money in their pockets.

Women in novels also carried money with them. We have already seen one instance relating to shopping. Others include female characters who because of their travels required money to pay for such things as the coach fare.[54] Other characters encountered robbers who searched their pockets for money.[55] Examples associated with other activities are too numerous to describe fully.

Scattered incidents provide sufficient evidence to conclude that women did in fact carry money in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More directed research is needed to ascertain the amounts of cash and the extent to which women carried money, particularly widows and single women.

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[54]Fanny Burney, Evelina, 1778 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88; Richardson, Clarissa, 281.

[55]Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, 1742 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 119-20; Burney, Evelina, 148.

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Why Women Carried So Many Items

One probable reason for the abundance of objects found in pockets relates to safekeeping. People lived in small spaces and owned few items of storage. Moreover, people had very little privacy in the modern sense of the word.[56] Even a family of average means lived in close proximity with lodgers, neighborhood help, bound domestic servants, servants in husbandry, apprentices, journeymen, and slaves. These strangers either worked in people's homes during the day or lived with them on a full-time basis. Young women from middling families, for example, often worked outside their own families as part of their education. The life of Martha Ballard provides ample evidence that a moderate family hired nieces and neighborhood girls on an as-needed basis to wash, spin flax, weave, and undertake a variety of household chores too complex and time-consuming for Martha Ballard to complete in her capacity as a midwife.[57] Other girls worked under more formal circumstances as apprentices in "housewifery." The father of Sarah Wade, for example,

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[56]People who lived in crowded spaces did not necessarily lack privacy. Rather, they may have resorted to psychological mechanisms such as dreaming or maintaining prolonged silences in crowded situations to attain their conception of privacy. They could also make use of the outdoors as a private space. David H. Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 8, 75.

[57]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls," Work and Labor in Early America, ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 92. For another example, see Joan M. Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 45.

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indentured her to a merchant and his wife in 1826 for ten years to learn "the art and mystery of housewifery."[58]

This proximity with non-family members made theft quite common. Martha Ballard dismissed at least one young woman on the suspicion of theft.[59] Despite the impediments in the law that rendered prosecution of theft difficult by placing the onus of proof on the aggrieved party, court cases demonstrate that tradesmen, farmers, and craftsmen of middling rank prosecuted their employees for pilfering.[60] People obviously attempted to secure their valuables, and for this reason chests, desks, spice cabinets, and other storage items dating to the eighteenth century sport locks. Rather than safeguard their homes as we do today, people locked individual containers as security.[61]

In addition to the paucity of storage containers and proximity promoting theft, possessions were relatively more expensive in the eighteenth century than today. Tea, sugar, needles, and cloth, to name but a few examples, possessed significant value, and their

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[58]Indenture pictured in Susan Burrows Swan, Plain and Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700-1850 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), 26.

[59]Ulrich, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls," 98.

[60]J.M. Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 174.

[61]Barbara G. and Cary Carson, "Things Unspoken: Learning Social History from Artifacts," Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History, ed. James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 194. My thanks to Pauline Eversmann for this citation.

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theft or simply their misplacement caused concern. People carried such objects because of their worth as opposed to their immediate usage. The most logical place for those belongings and the keys used to secure some of them, therefore, was firmly attached to the owner's person.

Consumerism also played a role in the accumulation of items women carried. We have seen specific proof for the vast array of these objects, but in all likelihood women carried many more things than those uncovered in the course of this research. Handkerchiefs, gloves, fans, and snuff boxes, for example, while found in small numbers, probably prevailed more than the findings suggest. Ladies and other women aspiring to the genteel lifestyle considered them indispensable accessories to display a fashionable figure in the eighteenth century. Moreover, during the century the availability and affordability of these items expanded to the lower classes as technology improved with the slow but steady rise in industrialization.

Handkerchiefs, gloves, snuff boxes, and fans did not, however, suddenly appear in the eighteenth century. Rather, all of these accessories were popularized during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). The emphasis on appearance marked an important instrument of her government, communicating her legitimacy

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as a monarch. She also compelled the nobility to spend conspicuously, forcing them into social competition.[62]

By the eighteenth century, the wealthy no longer had a monopoly on these accessories. Manufacturers began to use printing presses, for example, to produce fans at far lower cost after 1720.[63] The size of the pocket would have easily accommodated the elongated fans popular throughout the century. Presumably much of what women carried in their reticules--the replacement for the pocket circa 1790--they had previously carried in their pockets. An 1808 fashion magazine lists the contents of a reticule as a handkerchief, card money, essence bottle, and fan.[64]

Technological improvements similar to those with the fan occurred in other accessories as well, bringing them within the means of more women.[65] As this happened, the rules associated with using them became increasingly more complex. No longer did it suffice to

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[62]Grant McCracken, Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 11-12; Jane Ashelford, Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), 8.

[63]York Civic Trust, The Language of the Fan: An Exhibition at Fairfax House, York, July first to October 31st, 1989 (York, Eng.: York Civic Trust, 1989), 9.

[64]Helene Alexander, Fans (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1984), 50.

[65]For gloves, see Valerie Cumming, Gloves (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1982); for handkerchiefs, see Margarete Braun-Ronsdorf, The History of the Handkerchief (Leigh-on-Sea, Eng.: F. Lewis, 1967); for snuffboxes, see Kenneth Blakemore Snuff Boxes (London: Frederick Muller, 1976) and Madeline Siefke, "Colonial Silver Tobacco, Snuff, and Patch Boxes: Their Manifest and Latent Functions" (University of Delaware thesis, 1991).

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own fashionable accessories; wealthy young ladies received instruction from their dancing masters, for example, in the proper usage of their fans. This artificially-acquired knowledge--one form of "cultural capital"--consisted largely of cultivating subjective, refined taste as well as learned cultural skills such as manners, conversation, posture, and movement. The attainment of this social acumen required time, money, and education, thus serving to distinguish the elite from the lower, competing classes.[66]

The concept of cultural capital applied to visible clothing as well as to concealed pockets themselves. In E.S. Barrett's 1817 novel Six Weeks at Longs, for example, a countrified lady admitted to wearing a pocket after the fashion had entirely passed, provoking the following scene: "Your pocket, Madam! Do you wear a pocket?" "Absolutely," tittered a lady behind her chair, "she confesses to wearing pockets."[67] The pocket was the means by which someone was excluded, by allowing an "inside" secret to unite members "in the know" and to distinguish them from those outside of it.[68]

In conclusion, safety and consumerism may account for the wide variety of objects women carried as documented in period

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[66]Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 56-57, 70-72.

[67]Cited in Cunnington, 118-19.

[68]Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1959), 142; Bourdieu, Distinction, 56. He writes: "Tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance...of the tastes of others."

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sources. Some items were utilitarian, but others were not and often required complicated and unwritten rules to understand. Women's belongings contained many levels of meaning--emotional, monetary, and status-bearing.

Why Pockets Were Detached

In the novel Clarissa, Mr. Lovelace provides us with rare written evidence for detached pockets as he schemed to take advantage of those worn by the heroine to achieve his own ends:

> But if I could find out that the dear creature carried any of her letters in her pockets, I can get her to a play or to a concert, and she may have the misfortune to lose her pockets.[69]

While the many letters he sought would seem bulky and heavy for a pocket, he acknowledged that she probably chose to do so for reasons of security.

Clarissa was not alone; as we have seen, women carried an immense number of objects with them not merely for convenience but in order to secure their valuables. The weight of these items would have required that women stitch their garments very securely. Extant eighteenth-century dresses, however, reveal very crude stitching--coarse at least by modern standards--of approximately eight stitches

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[69]Richardson, Clarissa, 214. The lines most often associated with lost pockets come from a nursery rhyme popular in the first half of the nineteenth century in America and England: "Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Kitty Fisher found it; Not a penny was there in it, only ribbon round it." It is sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." While the identity of the two persons named cannot be substantiated, they may have been celebrated courtesans from the time of Charles II. Iona and Peter Opie, The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), 279.

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to the inch.[70] Even if women had possessed the aid of the sewing machine (invented circa 1850) or had decided to spend the time affixing more and thus stronger stitching by hand, another problem would have presented itself; the weight of the contents would have pulled on the dress and ruined its line.[71]

Loose stitching and detached pockets may also have evolved as practical solutions to a common sewing problem. Irrespective of social class, women frequently re-modeled their dresses or had them professionally altered.[72] Sometimes the changes involved simply adding trim or re-dyeing a dress, but often they entailed taking the dress apart, pressing it flat, and re-cutting. The extent of the alterations depended on whether fashion had changed, a woman's size varied, or a dress had been willed or handed down to a different

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[70]Victoria and Albert Museum, Four Hundred Years of Fashion (London: The Museum in Association with William Collins, 1984), 28.

[71]When inset pockets became prevalent and women also carried articles in their purses, the concept of support still presented itself as a potential problem. Illustrations in Butterick Publishing Company's Art of Garment Cutting, p. 73, show that pockets were most often horizontal instead of vertical, not allowing seamstresses to take advantage of the side seams of skirts to provide additional support. To relieve the stress on the garment, women were instructed to sew stay straps from the corners of the pocket to the waistline of the skirt or dress to "provide ample support for whatever a lady is likely to carry in her pockets."

[72]Janet Arnold, "The Cut and Construction of Women's Clothes in the Eighteenth Century," Revolution in Fashion: European Clothing, 1715-1815 (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1989), 133; Amanda Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods: A Lancashire Consumer and Her Possessions, 1751-1781," Consumption and the World of Goods, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 282; Barbara Johnson, A Lady of Fashion: Barbara Johnson's Album of Styles and Fabrics, ed. Natalie Rothstein (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 19; Buck, Dress in Eighteenth-Century England, 80, 183-84.

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person with another taste or figure. For example, Mrs. Laura Clark wrote of "making over my nankeen into a frock--have made over my old gingham into a gown it looks very well."[73] A permanent pocket would have required additional effort while detached pockets eliminated extra work.[74]

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of the hoop in the early years of the eighteenth century also accommodated the pocket. It began as a round hoop, and by approximately 1740 the hoop, also now called a pannier, flattened out to extend horizontally over the hips. The hoop provided a supporting structure that elevated the garment from the body. Unlike some farthingales, however, the structure did not require a roll of padding to hold it up, thus allowing a hand to access a pocket much more easily. Not only did the hoop conveniently accommodate the pocket, it virtually necessitated one. An inset pocket would have hung awkwardly from the dress draped rather loosely over the hoop, separated from the support of the body, hence swinging uncomfortably with each step. Except for court style, the hoop or pannier remained in fashion until approximately 1790,

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[73]Laura Clark, "The Original Diary of Mrs. Laura (Downs) Clark of Wakeman, OH from June 21 to October 21, 1818," Firelands Pioneer 21 (1920): 2311.

[74]Detached pockets had other unusual consequences. Philip Fithian noted in his diary that Fanny took advantage of them to cool herself off on a particularly humid day: "She sat on a low bench, & put her hand in her pocket, & seem'd exceeding diligent in looking for something--but before she took out her hand she had off both her stockings, & left them both in her pocket!" My thanks to Claudia Kidwell for this reference. Philip Vickers Fithian, Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-74 (Charlottesville, VA: Dominion Books, 1968), 150.

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although in the second half of the century the bustle emerged as a fashionable alternative to the hoop.

The exception to the rule that women wore detached pockets occurred in the coats of women's riding habits.[75] This outfit was considered acceptable--albeit it very masculine--attire. The attached pocket was clearly delineated in a bill dating 1758 for a riding habit "with linings, pockets, etc." at a cost of 2.14 pounds.[76] The reason pockets were considered permissible most likely resulted from the fact that while mantua makers (i.e., women) constructed women's gowns beginning in the late seventeenth century, tailors--exclusively men--continued to fabricate women's riding habits.[77]

In conclusion, detached pockets, with the exception of the riding habit, served as very practical solutions by women to larger eighteenth-century problems. The pockets accommodated the weight of the items carried, the re-modeling of dresses, as well as fashion throughout the century.

Because of the nature of detached pockets, women could choose among a large variety of manufacturing techniques to create an end product suitable to their needs and tastes. Did women follow similar patterns? Did they change techniques as new sewing styles

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[75]Depictions in print sources include Boucher, History of Costume in the West, 263; Phillis Cunnington, Costume in Pictures (London: Studio Vista Ltd., 1964), 96.

[76]Norah Waugh, The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600-1930 (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1968), 117.

[77]Janet Arnold "The Cut and Construction of Women's Clothes," 126.

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came into fashion? How they chose to adorn their pockets is an important step in understanding why they chose to do so.

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Chapter 3

HOW POCKETS WERE DECORATED

Most women made and decorated their own pockets, but they did have the option to purchase them. Although more research needs to be done, especially in the United States, evidence exists in England for a ready-made clothes market for many types of women's clothes and accessories, including pockets. Newspapers, for example, carried advertisements for ready-made garments. Ledgers such as those of the draper Morgan listed pockets for sale.[78] Trade cards circa 1769 for a haberdasher's and a milliner's shop advertised plain--dimity, fustian, and ticking--pockets.[79] Finally, the "Sarah Thrifty Licensed Hawker" doll dating to approximately 1820 demonstrates that peddlers sold all sorts of ready-made accessories, including pockets.[80]

In addition to the ready-made market, women could purchase their pockets second-hand. Magdalena Hummel, for example, purchased a

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[78]Lemire, Fashion's Favourite, 183, 194, 197.

[79]Foster, Bags and Purses, 10.

[80]Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes, 1770-1870 (Manchester, Eng.: City of Manchester Cultural Services, 1983), 54.

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pair of pockets at a vendue or estate sale for seven cents.[81] According to Beverly Lemire, salesmen, pawnbrokers, tailors, and thieves also participated in this second-hand trade.[82] The theft of clothing was a rampant problem, especially in more urbanized areas; in some instances, clothing constituted the largest category of theft, exceeding 25 percent of the totality of goods stolen.[83] Proceedings of court cases detail the variety of garments purloined, from the homes of gentlewomen to servants, including the washerwomen who took in laundry. Pockets were stolen along with other garments.[84]

Despite the availability of ready-made and second-hand pockets, most women, like Frances Baylor Hill and Elizabeth Jervis, chose to create their own pockets at home. Frances Hill wrote in her diary on Friday February 24, 1797: "began a pair of pockets" and on

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[81]Gehret, Rural Pennsylvania Clothing, 73.

[82]Beverly Lemire, "Peddling Fashion: Salesmen, Pawnbrokers, Taylors, and Thieves and the Second-Hand Clothes Trade in England, circa 1700-1800," Textile History 22 (1991): 67-82. Owners of small village stores may also have acted as pawnbrokers; in the novel Low Life (1764), the poor left shifts, caps, aprons, or pockets as collateral when they were denied credit. Cited in Davis, History of Shopping, 216.

[83]Beattie, Crime and the Courts, 187.

[84]Lemire, Fashion's Favourite, 207, "one pair of corded Dimity Pockets" stolen from a woman of "modest competence"; p. 210, "four pair of Fustian Dimothy Pockets" stolen from a gentlewoman; p. 212, "one linen pocket, one worsted pocket" stolen from a servant; p. 221, "a pair of pockets" stolen from a servant; p. 226, "four pair of misello pockets" stolen from a washerwoman.

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Saturday the 25th: "finish'd my pockets."[85] We cannot determine whether she made them plain or fancy. Elizabeth Jervis kept detailed accounts of her clothing expenditures, listing the cost of the fabric needed to make a pair of fustian pockets. She did not mention pockets under other expense categories, such as payments for completed articles of clothing and accessories or for the making of garments by others.[86]

Extant pockets provide virtually the only knowledge available to us that women decorated them. Before exploring why women chose to embellish pockets, it is important to understand the variety of adornment women chose, whether it changed over time, and whether decoration can aid in dating pockets. The types of decoration fall into four major categories: embroidered, pieced, whole-cloth, and appliqued.

The database for this study consisted of 181 pockets catalogued during the course of research. Time constraints precluded approximately twenty so-called plain pockets from being catalogued, rendering them somewhat under-represented in this survey. The institutions and individuals consulted on this project include: Berks County Historical Society (displaying a privately-owned pocket),

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[85]Frances Baylor Hill, "The Diary of Frances Baylor Hill of "Hillsborough" King and Queen County Virginia 1797," William K. Bottorff and Roy C. Flannagan eds., Early American Literature Newsletter 2 (1967): 15-16. I would like to thank Gloria Allen for this citation.

[86]Peter Hayden, "Records of Clothing Expenditure for the Years 1746-79 Kept by Elizabeth Jervis of Meaford in Staffordshire," Costume 22 (1988): 37.

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Chester County Historical Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Dr. and Mrs. Donald M. Herr, Historic Deerfield, the Metropolitan Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Old Sturbridge Village, the Peabody and Essex Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the Valentine Museum, and the Winterthur Museum.

Embroidered Pockets

Embroidery techniques were widely used on pockets; of the 181 pockets documented, 43 exhibit embroidery designs. The most common embroidery technique consists of crewel embroidery, defined as employing a loosely twisted, two-ply, worsted yarn as embroidery thread. Ann Pollard Rowe has thoroughly documented the origins and the history of crewelwork designs on bedhangings. She provides a chronology of design elements and colors, demonstrating how they changed over time and how the output of crewel bedhangings declined significantly after the American Revolution.[87] For this reason, most crewel pockets have been dated to the eighteenth century, assuming that women used the prevailing styles of the day for all of their textile arts. The general decline in crewel embroidery occurred concomitantly with the improvements in cotton printing technology

[87]Ann Pollard Rowe, "Crewel Embroidered Bed Hangings in Old and New England," Boston Museum Bulletin LXXI, nos. 365 and 366 (1973): 102-65. The author dates the height of the blue and white embroidery fashion (as opposed to the polychrome) to the 1760s and 1770s, thus providing possible date ranges for the eight blue and white pockets in the database.

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throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, also evidenced in pockets.

Not all women followed the latest sewing fashions. At least one woman appears to have either continued to make crewel pockets or else modernized an earlier pocket in the nineteenth century. Her pocket combines both crewel design (eighteenth century) and a buttoned waistband (nineteenth century).[88]

Nine crewel pockets in the database contain embroidered dates, ranging from 1745 to 1801.[89] Many of them also feature initials. Dates appear exclusively on the crewel decorated pockets while initials are found on pieced, whole-cloth, and applique pockets.

Women exhibited a wide range of stitches and design elements in their crewel decoration. There did exist, however, one common pattern, consisting of a vine following the contour of the outside edge of the pocket, embellished with flowers and leaves (fig. 3.1). Many variations of this design element occur, such as figure 3.2 where the vine winds away from the edge to fill the entire surface of the pocket. This pocket proved particularly interesting as it was interrupted in progress and never completed. It appears that the seamstress cut the shape of the pocket first and made the crewel

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[88]Located at the Peabody and Essex Museum, accession number 122,773.

[89]The pocket dated 1745 is located at the Winterthur Museum, accession number 69.79; the pocket dated 1801 is owned by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, number 45.657. Colonial Williamsburg, not represented in the database, owns a pocket with a date of 1737.

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design to conform to the profile. It may have remained incomplete due to lack of foresight, as there remained little space to cut the slit opening without impacting the embroidered design.

Another variation of the vine motif consists of a tendril meandering vertically down the length of the pocket (fig. 3.3). In this case, it appears that the vine does not correspond to the profile of the pocket because the embroidery pre-dated the cutting out of the background material. In other words, someone recycled a larger pre-existing textile into a smaller pocket.

The similarity of vine motifs points to a common pattern or design source known to many women scattered across various colonies and continents. Since there is no evidence that women had access to pocket-shaped patterns with pre-printed embroidery designs for purchase, silk and calico fabrics probably supplied the inspiration. From approximately the 1740s until the 1780s, silk designs incorporated vine motifs. The calicos followed the lead of the silks, thus extending the use of vines as well as rendering them visible to more people.

Women preferred to work flowers and leaves with their crewel threads. Occasionally they created more unique design elements such as birds (fig. 3.4) and baskets (as already seen in figure 3.1). Possibly the most unique design consists of a figure of a woman in contemporary dress wielding a staff and herding sheep (fig. 3.5).

While crewel embroidery predominates, women occasionally expanded the repertoire of embroidery techniques on their pockets.

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Three women, for example, chose the Irish or flame stitch as decoration. This embroidery technique remained popular throughout the eighteenth century.[90] Pockets also contain pink and blue cross stitch designs. Women within the distinctive community of the Pennsylvania Germans favored this type of needlework, as evidenced by the more prevalent show towels. Its use on pockets demonstrates how women from different cultures adapted the designs on their pockets to suit their own aesthetic preferences.[91]

Some women used silver and gold metallic threads on their pockets. In one case the seamstress couched the fragile threads down (i.e., laid on the surface of the fabric and secured with other thread) and in the other appliqued them (i.e., the design made separately and then sewn on top of the pocket surface with blind, or nearly invisible, stitches). Fancy background fabrics of silk and satin rival the elaborate threads. The pocket decorated with couching even has an interior fabric of doeskin. Both pockets appear to have been cut down from larger textiles; the appliqued pocket in

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[90]Swan, Plain and Fancy, 228. The popularity of the Irish stitch resulted largely from the ease and speed with which it could be accomplished.

[91]For some examples of Pennsylvania-German inspired pockets with dates ranging from 1781 to 1801, refer to Tandy and Charles Hersh, Samplers of the Pennsylvania Germans (Birdsboro, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1991), 216, 217. One of the pockets pictured in figure 5-21 measures 19" wide by 23" long, larger by 1" in length than any pocket in the database. It does not, however, have tapes or a slit opening; rather, it opens at the two side seams. This object probably functioned differently from a pocket.

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particular raises this issue, as its embroidery dates to approximately 1600.[92]

Pieced Pockets

Forty two women pieced their pockets, the process of constructing a larger piece of cloth by stitching together smaller pieces of different fabrics. This technique has a long history predating the arrival of the European Crusaders in the Near East. Despite its longevity, piecework gained in popularity in Europe and America only in the second half of the eighteenth century as colorful cotton fabrics became more plentiful.[93] Most of the pieced pockets are therefore assumed to date from the later eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. As with embroidery, the parallels between quilting and pocket decoration emerged to demonstrate that women took other fashionable sewing techniques into account.

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[92]The two pockets can be found at Old Sturbridge Village, accession number 26.67.44, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, number 1974.101.1.

[93]For more information on the rise of the textile industry, refer to Alice Baldwin Beer, Trade Goods: A Study of Indian Chintz in the Collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970); Florence Montgomery, Printed Textiles: English and American Cottons and Linens 1700-1850 (New York: The Viking Press, 1970); Florence Montgomery, Textiles in America, 1650-1870 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984). For more information on the concept of self-sufficiency of home production of textiles, refer to Carole Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?," Journal of Interdisciplinary History XIII, no. 2 (Autumn 1982): 247-272; Carole Shammas, The Preindustrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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The printing technique used to decorate the fabric aids tremendously in dating the fabric itself. The three general methods in the time period under consideration consisted of printing by block, copperplate, and roller. In brief, block printing utilizes wooden blocks with designs carved on a raised surface. A dye or mordant (a substance used to fix the dye to the fabric) is applied to the surface to create the design. This time-consuming technique remained common until the early nineteenth century. Copperplate printing, invented circa 1752, involves engraving a design on to a copper plate which is then inked and transferred to a fabric. Designs are almost always monochromatic. Roller printing employs the general concept of copperplate printing but curves the plate around a roller, allowing for a continuous application of the design. Thomas Bell invented this technique circa 1783, and by the early nineteenth century it began to replace the other techniques due to its speed and lower costs.

The ability to distinguish between block, copperplate, and roller printing techniques can prove helpful in dating pockets. Analyzing the pocket based solely on the printing technique, however, would be misleading. Women used leftover fabrics at a much later date than their original manufacture, much as they recycled older embroidered textiles. This is particularly evident in the numerous instances where a single pocket exhibits many printing techniques. Women often utilized both block and roller printed fabrics, for

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example, placing those pockets after circa 1800 when the roller-printing technique dominated.

In using printed fabrics to construct pieced pockets, women most commonly sewed small geometric fabrics together, mainly squares and triangles. Sometimes the pieces created obvious designs, other times women simply sewed the pieces in strips. When an identical design was intended for each of a pair of pockets, the fabrics on each pocket could also match to enhance the composition and create a totally symmetrical effect. More often, the design would be symmetrical, but the fabrics used on the two pockets would differ (see fig. 3.6 for an example of each).

The most recognizable pieced composition incorporated into pockets consists of a star in the base of the pocket (fig. 3.7). Many other patterns, on the other hand, were unique creations of the maker. One such pocket utilizes a variety of silks--plain, printed, brocaded--as well as drawnwork and gold and silver threads.[94] Two other distinctive pockets date to the late nineteenth century as popular techniques for quilts; women used these same design elements on pockets as part of the colonial revival movement. One pocket incorporates a pattern called "log cabin," consisting of increasingly longer strips of fabric sewn around a center square. This design originated in the 1860s and reached its height of popularity in the

[94]Owned by the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accession number 43.252.

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1870s.[95] Made of silk and in excellent condition, its owner probably never meant to wear it. The other later pocket falls into the category of "crazy" quilting consisting of sewing together pieces of fabric of irregular shape and size and embellishing them with embroidery, ribbons, beads, painted pictures, and other tokens. This vogue lasted from approximately 1880 to 1910.[96] The crazy quilted pocket is catalogued as a wallpocket since it has a ring with which to hang it rather than tapes to tie it around the waist. It has the typical shape and slit opening of a detached pocket; its late nineteenth-century maker either converted it to a wallpocket or else misconstrued or updated it as colonial.

Only one of the pockets is truly quilted, meaning it consists of three layers--front, stuffing, and backing--secured with running stitches.[97] Quilting, done for warmth and strength on bedcovers and petticoats, serves very little purpose on a pocket. Extra support, if needed, is most logical on the bottom edge rather than across the entire front. It is thus possible that someone recycled a worn quilt or petticoat into a pocket.

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[95]Barbara Brackman, Clues in the Calico (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, Inc., 1989), 170. Owned by the Historic Houses of Odessa, Winterthur Museum, accession number 71.1297.

[96]Ibid., 145. Old Sturbridge Village owns this pocket, accession number 26.67.33.

[97]Owned by the Metropolitan Museum, accession number CI 41.161.5.

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Whole-cloth Pockets

The majority of pockets in the database, or 93 of the 181, are considered whole-cloth, meaning that they utilize either one large piece of fabric for the front or smaller pieces of the same fabric sewn together to create the image of one entire piece. Whole-cloth pockets fall into two main types: 48 with printed or colorful fabrics on the front and 45 with "plain" white faces.

The printed whole-cloth pockets require the same knowledge of printing techniques to assist in dating them as do the pieced pockets. The larger examples of fabric on the whole-cloth pockets, however, allow for better identification of printing techniques than the often tiny pieced sections. The earliest fabric found dates to approximately 1735 to 1745, and the latest well into the nineteenth century when mechanized roller printing produced a profusion of inexpensive fabrics not always easily dated to specific decades.[98]

Most women made their printed pockets of cotton, but one patterned velvet and five silk pockets also surfaced.[99] Two of the silk pockets are quilted. One of them exhibits stitches that run off into the seam, indicating recycling, while another shows very careful

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[98]The earliest pair of pockets is located at Winterthur, accession number 69.3102.

[99]Velvet pocket, Chester County Historical Society, accession number 1993.762; silk pockets Old Sturbridge Village numbers 26.67.25 and 26.67.29, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities number B2901, Chester County Historical Society numbers 1993.746 and 1993.753.

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quilting following the contour of the pocket, implying deliberate quilting.

Some of the whole-cloth pockets feature unique qualities. One pair is corded, or stuffed between two lines of close quilting or backstitching. It appears recycled, as the construction of the back reveals much of the cording doubled over with a plain fabric inserted to attach the sides (fig. 3.8). Another pocket displays a beautiful copperplate print, one of the few instances that the copperplate technique appears on a pocket.[100] Finally, one woman made a pocket out of leather with the aid of a sewing machine (fig. 3.9). It has a wide slit opening, but instead of a regular base it incorporates a purse. The tape around the waist allows for a large adjustment to be made, the first button set at 18 inches and the second at 33 inches. The seamstress attached the tape to the pocket with two strips of fabric, much the way that inset pockets were attached to skirts and dresses in a Butterick publication in 1894. This late version of a pocket may have been the railway pocket discussed in Chapter One as recommended by The Workwoman's Guide and advertised in "Godey's."

The so-called plain whole-cloth pockets consist of those with white fronts of cotton or linen, devoid of colorful prints or embellishment. Many exist in collections; the 45 discussed here under-represent the true number available for study. Their survival in such quantity supports the assumption that many women wore plain pockets. They raise interesting questions as to the choice women made

[100]Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accession number 48.1218a,b.

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between plain and highly decorated pockets and whether a woman's social class influenced this choice.

The term plain is somewhat misleading; most of the pockets exhibit calculated forethought and a clever use of fabric. The majority of the fronts (25 out of 45) consist of a patterned cotton such as dimity or exhibit a figure in the linen such as diapering or cording, while the backs consist of an ordinary tabby weave fabric. Most of the women thus planned a deliberate presentation front, although not as obvious as on the embroidered, pieced, and colorful whole-cloth pockets.

Many of the plain pockets exhibit mid- and late- nineteenth-century characteristics such as buttons on the tape, reinforcement of fabric around the slit opening, strips of fabric attaching the pocket to the tape, and machine stitching.[101] Outside of those clues, they remain very difficult to date. Patterned linens were readily available in the eighteenth century, and dimity rose in popularity in the early years of the nineteenth century. Size did not necessarily distinguish them; many were the same size of other types of pockets, with the longest pair extending to 18 3/4 inches in length.

One unique pocket is entirely lopsided, as if the maker decided to enlarge the pocket at the last moment and only made an addition to one side. Another pocket shows how one woman made the transition between detached and inset pockets; she cut out a

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[101]Buttons and reinforcement are promulgated in The Workwoman's Guide, the strips in Butterick's The Art of Garment Cutting, Fitting and Making.

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rectangular rather than a bell-shaped pocket, added a diagonal slit instead of a typical vertical opening, and secured the whole thing with a buttoned tape.[102] One plain pocket contains the only full last name to appear on a pocket. Provenance supports the attribution of "M. Evans" to Margaret Evans, a Quaker woman living in Philadelphia. The pocket also contains the number 7 under the name, as does another pair with only "ME" attributed to the same woman.[103] The only other Quaker connection to a plain pocket consists of a doll made by two Quaker girls of their mother about 1840 wearing a single plain pocket.[104]

Appliqued Pockets

Applique refers to the technique of sewing pieces of fabric cut in geometric or representational shapes onto a background fabric, creating two layers where the individual designs unite with the

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[102]The pockets are located at the Chester County Historical Society accession number 1993.758 and the Valentine Museum number V86.75.45, respectively.

[103]It was not unusual for women to number their linen in the eighteenth century. They also numbered undergarments; Fanny Jarvis marked her underclothes between 1818 and 1826, including a plain pocket. This example is found in Tozer, Fabric of Society, 67-68. What does seem peculiar, however, is for Margaret Evans to have placed the same number on two different pair of pockets. These pockets are owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution accession numbers 82.138.10.1A,B and 82.138.10.2A,B.

[104]Winterthur Museum, accession number 91.23.

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support. This method appears on only three pockets in the database.[105]

One pair of applique pockets contains as the design element four bold tulips on each of the pockets.[106] The other two single applique pockets bear a striking resemblance to one another, although owned by separate institutions (see fig. 3.10 for one of the pockets).[107] The applique figures are geometric, some combined to create crosses, and carefully balanced on either side of the slit opening. The pocket similar to figure 3.9 also contains crosses and carefully symmetrical geometric figures. These two pockets bear a marked stylistic affinity with the Bible quilts made between 1886 and 1898 by Harriet Powers, an African-American woman residing in Georgia.[108] With the limited information available to us at this

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[105]The Shelburne Museum owns a unique applique pocket. It contains the three rings, beehive, and hand representing the International Order of Odd Fellows. Accession number 14-1.

[106]Owned by Old Sturbridge Village, accession number 26.67.9.

[107]The other pocket is owned by Historic Deerfield, accession number F892.

[108]For more information on African-American quilting practices and applique techniques used by the Fon of Benin and the Ewe, Fanti, and Ashanti of Ghana, see John Michael Vlach, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), 44-75. Harriet Powers' quilts appear on pages 46-47, 51-53, and plate III. See also Gladys-Marie Fry, Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Dutton Books, 1990).

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point, we can only infer that these pockets follow similar traditions.[109]

Women chose to decorate their pockets with a wide variety of sewing techniques. The decoration varied to follow the traditions women employed in other aspects of textile production and decoration, demonstrating that an awareness of fashion played a role in creating pockets. Dating them remains difficult because of the recycling of older textiles, the usage of fabrics well after their manufacture, and the lack of any noticeable change in size over time. Yet these issues, especially recycling, provide important insights into the motivations behind decoration. Understanding how women decorated their pockets leads to the question of why they spent leisure time and used often expensive fabrics to create a stylish article of clothing that is thought to have remained concealed under layers of petticoats.

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[109]A quilt pictured in Christies's South Kensington Auction Catalog for March 8, 1994, item number 67, has applique figures also reminiscent of Harriet Powers' quilts. The only provenance given for the quilt is that it is thought to have been made in Lincolnshire. No mention was made of the potential maker's background. My thanks to Deborah Kraak for this citation.

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Chapter 4

WHY POCKETS WERE DECORATED

Women decorated pockets for a wide variety of reasons resulting in large part from their gender roles. One motivation was that, from a very young age, girls learned that they should always stay busy and that sewing provided an acceptable way for them to spend their time. Advice books such as The Young Woman's Companion (1841) made that clear:

> Needlework is generally considered part of good housekeeping...Absolute idleness is inexcusable in a woman, and renders her contemptible. The needle is, or ought to be, always at hand for those intervals in which she cannot be otherwise employed.[110]

This idea extended to females of all social classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Options for the display of needlework skills, however, differed between classes. Wealthier women had more time and money for fancy work. Many of them even chose to portray themselves in paintings while executing handwork, especially tatting.[111] They understood what Madame de Genlis meant when she

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[110]Cited in Tozer, Fabric of Society, 74.

[111]Tatting is the process of looping and knotting thread, wound on an instrument called a shuttle, to create lace. Some women carried their tatting equipment in fancy drawstring bags resembling the later reticules.

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considered a tatting shuttle or navette "a symbol, expressing the aversion which all females ought to have to complete idleness."[112]

Whether women followed the recommendations in the advice books or not, they were obviously encouraged to sew and be productive.[113] Many women may not have needed prompting to find enjoyment in certain of their sewing projects, since they may have experienced a level of aesthetic pleasure as well as quiet time to relax. As The Young Lady's Friend stated in 1836:

> There is a soothing and sedative effect in needlework; it composes the nerves, and furnishes a corrective for many of the little irritations of domestic life.[114]

The pleasurable aspects of handwork resulted from sewing both as a private, solitary escape and as a more public, group activity. It was considered socially acceptable for women to sew amongst friends. They often came together to work communally, especially on large projects such as quilts. They also kept themselves busy with individual sewing projects when they intended to visit socially rather than complete a large project. While women rarely mentioned the individual sewing projects they worked on during social calls, many seem to have chosen

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[112]Quoted in Groves, History of Needlework Tools, 86. From Madame de Genlis' Dictionary of Court Ceremonial.

[113]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich uses an analytical tool called "role analysis" that has both behavioral and normative aspects. It involves examining the difference in how people respond--actual behavior--versus what cultural expectations exist--abstract behavior. Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 5.

[114]Eliza Ware Farrar, The Young Lady's Friend (Boston: American Stationers' Company, 1836), 122.

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relatively lightweight undertakings that would not have demanded intense concentration.[115] A pocket would have fit those criteria while simultaneously exhibiting fancy sewing skills, partially accounting for the decoration found on so many pockets.

In addition to keeping a woman constantly occupied, sewing and the frugality associated with saving scraps constituted part of the set of skills associated with the job of housekeeping. Even women at the most privileged economic levels utilized scraps of fabrics. This was due in part to the extraordinary expense of textiles throughout the eighteenth century. They cost so much, in fact, that many poor and middling women probably did not have the variety of scraps necessary to make the coordinated decorated pockets that abound in collections today. Many of the pockets, moreover, utilize fairly large pieces of fabric that are unlikely to have been scraps. Women would also have needed the leisure time to embellish the pockets.[116]

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[115]Jane C. Nylander, Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home 1760-1860 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993), 224-25. Mrs. Sarah Bryant recorded in her diary (located at the Houghton Library at Harvard University) making handkerchiefs and bonnets while visiting her neighbors. Many women also carried knitting on social calls, clarifying the knitting found in a pocket (Chapter 2). Sarah Emery referred to "go-abroad knitting work" or very fancy handwork taken to elaborate teas in Newburyport, RI; Ruth Bascom wrote of carrying her knitting on a less formal visit.

[116]Sally Garoute in "Early Colonial Quilts in a Bedding Context," Uncoverings 1 (1980): 18-27 describes a similar phenomenon in quilts. She used inventories and wills to demonstrate that quilts in early America (before 1750), by definition whole-cloth, were both rare and expensive, not a result of economic necessity. In addition, later pieced quilts made after 1750 often utilize fabrics in such a coordinated way that haphazard scraps could not have been used. Women

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The 39 diaries left by Mrs. Elizabeth Shackleton from 1762 (as a widow of 36) to 1781 exemplify the importance placed on saving scraps in the domestic sphere. These documents contain some of the rare expressions of a woman's attitudes concerning her daily activities, including sewing. As a wealthy woman of minor nobility, she pursued her domestic role with a vengeance. She took pride in her thriftiness, employing scraps of fabrics to make, for example, a pincushion. Her son did not exhibit the same response to matters of housekeeping, and she chided him for his failure to save scraps.[117]

As another part of the housekeeping function, women may have preferred making pockets and other decorative sewing projects to less permanent chores such as cooking and cleaning. Not only did sewing result in concrete, lasting objects, it also allowed for more enjoyment and creativity than some other daily chores.[118] Aunt Jane articulated the difference between housework and handwork circa 1900:

> That's the discouraging thing about a woman's work...if a woman was to see all the dishes that she had to wash before she died, piled up before her in one pile, she'd lie down and die right then and there...when I'm dead and gone there ain't nobody goin' to think o' the floors I've swept, and the tables I've scrubbed...But when one of my grandchildren or great-grandchildren sees one o' these

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either bought fabric to cut up for quilts or else they could afford to purchase extra fabric and accrue sizeable scraps.

[117]Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods," 282-83.

[118]Ibid., 283; June Sprigg, Domestick Beings (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 72.

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> quilts, they'll think about Aunt Jane, and, wherever I am then, I'll know I ain't forgotten.[119]

She may have expressed in terms of quilting what many women felt in the eighteenth century about their various sewing projects.

Women may also have decorated pockets because they exchanged them as gifts. Lady Eleanor Butler recorded in her diary on New Years Day in 1790 that she and her female companion exchanged petticoats and pockets that day as gifts.[120] The wealthy echelons established the exchange of New Year's presents by the late sixteenth century.[121] Embroidered and sweet bags appeared regularly in the accounts of Queen Elizabeth I, thus providing a precedent for the exchange of decorated pockets in the eighteenth century. Another instance of the pocket as a gift came from a letter written in 1782 about an apparently young girl making a pair of pockets for her grandmother.[122]

The exchange of pockets as gifts may explain, in part, why so many beautiful pockets show very little sign of wear, and why so many retain their glaze as if they had escaped washing. It seems odd that women would not have used a utilitarian item like a pocket. A

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[119]Mirra Bank, Anonymous Was a Woman (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1979), 121.

[120]Ronald Blythe, ed., The Pleasures of Diaries: Four Centuries of Private Writing (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 52.

[121]Foster, Bags and Purses, 17.

[122]Alice Morse Earle, Two Centuries of Costume in America, MDCXX-MDCCCXX (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), 2:587. The letter was written by Esther Duche in London to her aunt, Mrs. John Morgan, in Philadelphia.

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gift, however, especially one made by hand with a priceless investment of time and care, may have been too precious to wear every day and thus saved for special occasions or not worn at all.

The ritual of giving handmade gifts may also partially explain why Rachel Pinto owned 7 1/2 pairs of pockets when she died in 1815. She was not unique; probate inventories that itemize clothing in detail show that many women possessed multiple pockets.[123] There must be many other reasons besides gift-giving for women to own such a multitude of pockets when their very detachable nature rendered this unnecessary. Mrs. Cotes in 1764, for example, owned "four pair of Fustian Dimothy Pockets."[124] Since the description of her pockets included only the plain, white fabric, they probably lacked the adornment that made pockets so special as gifts.

Another reason for decorating pockets involves the idea of associative memories, or the remembrance of events, feelings, and

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[123]Winterthur Library: The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Collection 61. The dates of the inventories range from 1796 to 1835. Catherine Smith owned a pair in 1808 (76x273); both Rachel Adams and Mary Benedict owned three pockets in 1803 and 1796, respectively (376x253 and 61x44); Lettia Dougherty owned four pairs in 1802 (54.67.76); Rachel Pinto owned "7 1/2 pair pockets" in 1815 (54.90.54); Susan Ward owned 14 pockets in 1835 (66x20). All of these inventories enumerate other clothes in addition to pockets. Further sources for pockets in inventories include Margaret B. Schiffer, Chester County, Pennsylvania Inventories, 1684-1850 (Exton, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1974), listing two pockets, and Charles and Tandy Hersh, Cumberland County, PA from 1754 to 1778, wherein six of 1,255 inventories in their database contain pockets, with a maximum of two per inventory.

[124]Lemire, Fashion's Favourite, 210.

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people by association with tangible items. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton have shown that objects evoke different meanings for different genders. Meaning for men typically involves action and the self, while for women meaning revolves around contemplation and others. Women give reasons referring to memories, associations, and immediate family significantly more often than men do.[125]

Some girls embroidered their wish for a legacy directly into their samplers. Both Martha Taylor and Tanneke Pears wrote very similar phrases in 1797 and 1766, respectively: "When I am dead and in my grave and all my bones are rotten, when this you see remember me" and "When I am dead and laid in grave and all my bones is rotten, this you see to remember me that I am not forgotten."[126] Not all handwork was that obvious. Scraps of fabric from dresses, shirts, and other garments, for example, supplied women with the cloth to make pockets and quilts. The fabrics served not only to create practical items, but also to conjure up memories of earlier times. Lucy Larcom expressed those sentiments in 1889:

> I liked assorting those little figured bits of cotton cloth, for they were scraps of gowns I had seen worn, and they reminded me of the persons who wore them.[127]

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[125]Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 106, 112-15.

[126]Both samplers are owned by the Winterthur Museum: The 1797 sampler, accession number 91.5; the 1766 sampler as part of a fire screen, number 65.2903.

[127]Bank, Anonymous Was a Woman, 20. From A New England Girlhood.

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She would not have made pockets that late into the nineteenth century, but perhaps the scraps in pockets held similar evocative powers.

Tradition may also have played a part in the decoration of pockets. Earlier bags, such as the sweet bags mentioned above, were decorated. So, too, were the hanging bags. Thus as much as the pocket constituted a new form that broke with familiar objects, the pocket still developed out of and retained certain aspects of its immediate predecessors with which people were familiar. Innovation makes up an integral part of fashion, yet the necessary alterations relate to an historical continuity rather than producing complete change.[128]

Another reason for decoration may stem from a general preference for adornment as demonstrated with suggestive and tantalizing evidence by Lorna Wetherill. She compared men's and women's inventories between 1660 and 1740 and found that women owned a higher concentration of decorated items than did men.[129] Inventories cannot determine how people attach different meanings to artifacts, but they do place pockets in a context in which embellishment played a large role.

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[128]Herbert G. Blumer, "Fashion," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vol. 5, ed. David Sills (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press Limited, 1968), 343; Squire, Dress and Society, 21.

[129]Lorna Wetherill, "A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660-1740," Journal of British Studies 25 (April 1986): 131-56.

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The concepts of the housekeeping roles, associative memories, traditions, and propensity for decoration place the recycling of textiles into a much clearer light. Not all women used scraps to embellish their pockets, nor did women always deliberately assemble them from scratch. In some cases, women trimmed them down from larger, previously constructed and embellished textile items such as bedhangings.

Crewelwork pockets show most clearly that pockets were "recycled"; the designs often run beyond the contours of the pocket, into the seams, or the slit opening severs the motif. It is unlikely that this occurred from inexperience on the part of young girls or poor planning by women. There is no concrete evidence that girls made decorated pockets as beginner projects at boarding schools. Moreover, the relative simplicity of pocket construction and the frequency with which designs are interrupted mitigate against the idea that women consistently erred in their work. Rather, recycling was a deliberate effort to satisfy a complex set of motivations for embellishment within a larger context of appropriate and accepted female behavior in the eighteenth century.[130]

The final and perhaps culminating reason for the adornment of women's pockets relates to their visibility. Did pockets satisfy only the particular decorative needs of the users? Conversely, were

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[130]There is always the possibility that some of these pockets were fabricated to deceive museum collectors and other buyers of antiques. Analysis of threads in the bindings would prove useful to ascertain this conjecture. Linda Baumgarten, interview, October 1993.

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they seen by other people? If so, did women deliberately display their handwork? These issues will be addressed in the following section.

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Chapter 5

VISIBILITY OF POCKETS

While women had many reasons to decorate their pockets, there still remains an apparent contradiction between their adornment and the general assumption that women always concealed their pockets under layers of skirts and petticoats. Analyzing the visibility of pockets will clarify this conundrum. Even though women did not deliberately intend to display their handwork, pictorial sources expose various consistencies in how women wore their pockets that render them visible on occasion. We will then explore how orderliness, privacy, and crime provided a larger framework that influenced how women chose to wear their pockets. Finally, deciphering these illustrations provides evidence that artists portrayed pockets partially for their realistic content, but mainly as symbols to express various social concerns.

How Pockets Were Worn

Pictures provided the best source of evidence for the many ways in which women wore pockets.[131] Some sources proved more

[131]Time constraints did not allow for the examination of extant garments such as dresses, skirts, petticoats, and aprons to uncover more ways that women wore their pockets. A dress at the Northampton

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fruitful than others. Few pockets, for example, appeared in portraits with the exception of the work of two artists, Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805) and Eastman Johnson (1824-1906). This lack of visibility in portraiture has caused some historians to conclude that women wore their pockets under their petticoats at all times. Arguments to the contrary emphasize the conventions and limitations of the depiction of women in portraits where discernable pockets may not have been "appropriate." Pockets do, however, appear in prints, where examples--almost always without decoration--abound. It seems unlikely that women wore pockets intending to display them; rather, the style of dress, and possibly practicality, meant that other people undoubtedly glimpsed a woman's pockets at times. This is not without precedent; the hanging bag, as seen in figures 1.1 and 1.2, also showed on occasion in the same ways that pockets would appear a century later.

One fashion in the late seventeenth and portions of the eighteenth centuries consisted of wearing the skirt of the gown parted in front to reveal a fancy petticoat underneath. A woman could thus have worn her pocket under her outer gown but over her petticoat, allowing for concealment as well as easy access. The print of Mrs. Siddons by James Gillray (1784) best exemplifies this fashion

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Historical Society, for example (Northampton, MA, accession number 66.24), demonstrates the benefits of extant garments. This particular dress dates to approximately 1839-1840 and has pocket slits placed over the pelvic bones. My thanks to Nancy Rexford for bringing this dress to my attention. See also footnote (below) about an apron with similar pocket slits. Furthermore, a child's doll at Colonial Williamsburg wears two underpetticoats, one with pocket slits and one without. The pocket was thus meant to be worn between the two layers.

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(fig. 2.1). Although a caricature of the personality of this popular actress, it realistically portrays her costume.

At one point more of the petticoat showed than of the skirt itself. This resulted in very little cover for the pocket, rendering it partially visible with, for example, a type of dress called a "polonaise" as in figure 5.1 dating to 1778. At the extreme end of this fashion for parted gowns, the skirt retained but a vestigial function, falling in folds from the back of the waist to reveal virtually the entire fancy petticoat. Since a woman could not possibly have hidden her pocket beneath her gown, it generally vanished entirely underneath the petticoat.[132]

Women expose their pockets most consistently in prints when they wear them above their gowns but underneath their aprons. Artists depicted women of various economic levels this way, although the lower outnumber the middling and upper classes, and the truly wealthy do not appear at all. This discrepancy based on status results in part from the less formal dress worn in public by the lower classes as well as from the differences in the types of aprons women wore. Working women needed sturdy, practical aprons capable of withstanding hard work, while many wealthy women adopted embroidered silk or sheer gauze, purely decorative aprons. Only the heavy aprons would have concealed pockets. Some aprons may even have facilitated direct

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[132]For an example of this style, see Valerie Cumming, The Visual History of Costume (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1989), 122. This illustration dating to 1687 is particularly interesting because the woman wears a petticoat with an embellished pocket slit.

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access to pockets; one fancy black satin apron with polychrome embroidery, for example, has pocket slits sewn into the front of the apron over the pelvic bones.[133]

Two representations depict middling or upper class women whose pockets appear without intent from underneath the apron of the wearers. In Thomas Rowlandson's 1791 "Sudden Squall in Hyde Park" (fig. 5.2) and Paul Sandby's 1777 "East View of Nottingham Castle," either a wind gust or movement exposes the pockets under the aprons.[134] At the middling to lower level, a popular print based on a drawing by Rowlandson depicts a realistic, common interior of 1800 called "Inside of a Kitchen at Newcastle." One woman's pocket shows.[135] In another kitchen scene showing a neat Scottish cottage interior, the woman cooking over the fire reveals her pocket.[136]

On the lower end of the economic scale, William Hogarth shows a similar unintentional display of a pocket in his 1736

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[133]Los Angeles County Museum of Art, accession number A.3580.47. I would like to thank Nancy Rexford for bringing this apron to my attention.

[134]Johnson Ball, Paul and Thomas Sandby (Somerset, Eng.: Charles Skilton Ltd., 1985), 353.

[135]Charles Saumarez Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), 372.

[136]Molly Harrison and A.A.M. Wells, Picture Source Book for Social History: Eighteenth Century (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), 22.

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"Lamentable Fall of Madame Geneva" (fig 5.3).[137] Pockets also drop to a woman's side while sitting in Gillray's 1791 "Frying Sprats" (fig. 2.2) and in an 1800 view of a cobbler and his wife.[138] On other occasions, women deliberately pull aside their aprons to reach into their pockets, as in Rowlandson's "Ballad Singer" of about 1800-1805 (fig. 5.4). Women hawking goods in the streets of London, depicted most obviously in the many versions of "The Cries of London," appear with their aprons tied up to insure immediate access to their pockets for convenience in business.[139]

Pockets would also have been visible with "undress" or informal apparel worn by wealthy women customarily in the morning when they did not expect visitors. A woman might, for example, leave off her gown and hoops, wearing the pockets above the exposed petticoat as in a late eighteenth-century re-creation (fig. 5.5). Hoops, as previously discussed, precluded the visibility of pockets. If a woman chose to wear hoops, she would first tie her pockets over her shift and petticoat before being laced into her stays (fig. 5.6, caricature of "tight lacing" dating to 1770-1775). She would then affix the hoops and the gown over the prior layers. Since hoops

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[137]Another example is "The Cov. Garden Morning Frolick" (1747) in John Brewer, The Common People and Politics 1750-1790s (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986), 115.

[138]Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration, 372.

[139]"The Wine Seller" (no date provided) in Julian Faigan, Paul Sandby Drawings (Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors' Council Ltd., 1981), 80; "Four for Six Pence Mackrell" (no date given) in Sean Shesgreen, The Criers and Hawkers of London: Engravings and Drawings by Marcellus Laroon (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 159.

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obscured the pockets entirely, women wearing hoops in public may have chosen plain rather than decorated pockets. Newspaper advertisements offering rewards for lost pockets bear this out; they generally either lack any identifying description or else mention unadorned pockets, often containing quite large sums of money.

The question of how women wore pockets extends to whether they wore one or a pair of pockets. The abundance of single extant pockets could stem in part from inheritance; the heirs may have split the double pockets, or else the maker may have divided a pair in her will. While both are possible--a separated but matching pair, for example, exists at the Chester County Historical Society--it also seems likely that women simply chose between the two options. Some collections have biases toward single pockets, others to doubles, and most possess examples of both.

Why Pockets Were Concealed

Having demonstrated that pockets were often visible but not meant for display, the question remains as to why women chose to conceal them. Women concealed items other than pockets at this time; accessories such as fans, pomanders, and so forth that had previously hung from the girdle at the waist no longer seem to have done so.[140]

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[140]Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 70; Max von Boehn, Modes and Manners: Ornaments (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1929), 249. Using portraits to ascertain the lack of ornament has its own problems and biases. As Claudia Kidwell pointed out in "Gender Identity in Two and Three Dimensions" (Paper delivered at the 1993 Winterthur Conference entitled "Material Culture, The Shape of the Field"), there existed two separate portraiture conventions in the eighteenth century: realistic and artistic. Portraits thus do not always provide the

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Eighteenth-century fans, moreover, were rarely furnished with a loop on the pivot end for hanging as had been the custom earlier.[141] What caused this apparent restraint in fashion?

One of the reasons for the lack of ornamentation may relate to the concept of neatness and orderliness that prevailed in the eighteenth century. Just as genteel men and women wore clean, white linen and lace at the neck and wrists to distinguish themselves from the working classes, the body itself was supposed to display a higher level of cleanliness than before. Dressing tables, for example, appeared in the late seventeenth century, and washstands circa 1754. Neatness and orderliness did not end with the body; they extended to architecture with the symmetrical "Georgian" plan house first introduced in the colonies in the 1690s and common on the landscape by the 1760s.[142]

The notion of privacy may also have proven instrumental in the concealment of objects. On an individual level, privacy embodies many levels of psychological and physical states categorized as solitude, intimacy, anonymity, and reserve.[143] On a societal level, privacy allows individuals to act as they please within the limits

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solid evidence we may seek today.

[141]Alexander, Fans, 44.

[142]Bushman, Refinement of America, 63, 71.

[143]Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England, 1-3. Solitude involves aloneness, intimacy allows for contact with family and friends in a private setting, anonymity occurs in a public arena, and reserve assumes the discretion of family and friends.

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set by the need for social cohesion.[144] The rise of privacy was inextricably linked to the changes occurring in the concept of the individual as well as of the family.[145]

Both personal and social notions of privacy--culturally-determined constructs--evolved in response to religious, social, economic, ideological, and political changes occurring within society in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[146] As a result of these transformations, privacy emerged in the late seventeenth century in England among the wealthy urbanites. The practice spread slowly over the course of the eighteenth century to those members of society able to afford it. Privacy manifested itself most clearly in literature, foodways, and architecture. Diaries, autobiographies, and novels constituted new genres of writing that explored the personal.[147] People moved away from shared communal eating utensils to individual cups, bowls, plates, and forks, and from

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[144]Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1550-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 223-24. I would like to thank Jerry C. Beasley for this citation.

[145]Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England, viii; Christina Marsden Gillis, The Paradox of Privacy: Epistolary Form in Clarissa (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 6.

[146]Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, 221-69, especially 258-67; Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England, 14-18.

[147]Aries, History of Private Life, 385; Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, 226-28.

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undifferentiated, crowded rooms to Georgian plans with central hallways and specialized, separated rooms.[148]

Privacy as a general concept and privacy for women may not always have progressed at the same rate. The majority of women had very little freedom either personally or legally, rendering privacy rather limited. Upon marriage, for example, all of a woman's property reverted to her husband.[149] She could not write a will without his permission. Women's legal positions may actually have declined from approximately 1690 to 1800. The adoption of marital property acts in the third quarter of the nineteenth century finally permitted women to control property and write wills.[150] Under these circumstances, the eighteenth-century detached pocket may have represented the most private place many women had to keep things they wanted to conceal from others. The example of letters may illuminate how pockets could have allowed women a modicum of privacy not otherwise available to them.

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[148]James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life (New York: Anchor Books, 1977), 52-59, 115-17; Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England, 35-41; Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, 253-57; Stephanie Grauman Wolf, As Various as their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth Century Americans (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 61-64.

[149]For information on the limited use of marriage settlements (prenuptial agreements), see Marylynn Salmon, "Women and Property in South Carolina: The Evidence from Marriage Settlements, 1730-1830," Material Life in America, 1600-1860, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 291-309.

[150]Carole Shammas, Marylynn Salmon and Michel Dahlin, Inheritance in America from Colonial Times to the Present (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 6, 35, 36, 61, 113, 210.

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In the novel Evelina published in 1778, the heroine is distressed at receiving a letter from a gentleman with whom she is acquainted, suggesting they exchange letters on a regular basis. It was considered improper for single people not publicly engaged to correspond.[151] That a prohibition even existed suggests that such errant behavior did occur, as Nancy Shippen's correspondence shows. A female friend of hers wrote:

> She [Nancy Shippen] received a packet the other day while I was with her from my friend Leander [a man]. I did not know they corresponded, tho' I knew of their friendship. She Shew'd me the letter in confidence, as illeberal custom prevents a correspondence between the sexes.[152]

According to the editor, Nancy Shippen carried Leander's letters "wherever she went," hidden from her parents and estranged husband.[153] Leander himself acknowledged the meaning the letters must have had for her when he wrote: "You still have in your possession some former letters...by keeping them you seemed to approve of, even to cherish their contents."[154] Considering her lack of options for conveying them securely, she most likely kept them in her pockets.

Other female characters in novels hid letters. A certain number of letters (and other small items) could also fit inside the

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[151]Burney, Evelina, 256, 418. In reality, a character well-versed in etiquette forged this letter to intervene in the budding relationship between the heroine and hero.

[152]Livingston, Nancy Shippen, 191.

[153]Ibid., 126.

[154]Ibid., 259.

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stays or corsets stiffened with whalebone, precluding the pocket as the only means of concealment.[155] In Pamela, for example, Mr. B. endeavored to find Pamela's letters, interrogating her by demanding "are they in your pocket?...are they in neither of your pockets?...are they not about your stays?"[156] Other characters attempted more than just questioning. In Clarissa, the heroine's servant was required to submit to a body search prior to her abrupt dismissal to ensure that she was not acting as a conduit of letters between Clarissa and the outside world. Clarissa wrote:

> She [servant] had been examined about letters to me and from me...she had given her pockets to Miss Harlowe, who looked into them, and put her fingers in her stays, to satisfy that she had not any.[157]

Additionally, in Tom Jones Mr. Western ordered his servant to probe his daughter Sophia's pockets without her knowledge or consent while she slept in search of letters from Tom Jones.[158]

Deliberate concealment of letters and other items by women in their pockets has yet to be ascribed with certainty outside of novels. This may remain the case, since it seems unlikely that many women would have trusted to diaries and letters that they willfully hid items in their pockets for reasons of privacy.

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[155]Richardson, Pamela, 44, 61, 159, 165, 168, 171, 175, 183, 261, 278; Richardson, Clarissa, 374, 398; Defoe, Moll Flanders, 68.

[156]Richardson, Pamela, 270.

[157]Richardson, Clarissa, 43.

[158]Fielding, Tom Jones, 816.

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In addition to orderliness and privacy, crime may have influenced how women wore pockets. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, crime had reached unprecedented heights, particularly in the urban areas from which fashion emanated. The increase in the crime rate resulted from many factors, including the anonymity of cities, their often deplorable conditions, the exposure to luxury goods and aspirations to gentility resulting largely from mercantilism, the rather haphazard meting out of punishment, the absence of the concept of reform of prisoners, and the lack of professional police forces. The point here is not the history of crime, but rather how it may have influenced fashion.[159]

The forerunner of the pickpocket was the "cut purse." This type of thief specialized in severing the cord used to suspend the hanging bag from the waist (fig 5.7). One of the first well-known London criminal entrepreneurs, Mary Frith (1589-1663), was better known as Moll Cut-Purse.[160]

A thief would have had an easier opportunity stealing a bag hanging at or below the knee, unattached to the body, than the contents of a pocket placed directly against the body. This would have applied to both women and men. While men did not adopt the

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[159]For more information on the history of crime, refer to Beattie, Crime and the Courts; M. Dorothy George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Gerald Howson, It Takes a Thief (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983); J.A. Sharpe, Crime and the Law in English Satirical Prints 1600-1832 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1986).

[160]Sharpe, Crime and the Law, 72.

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hanging bag, their inset pockets prior to circa 1700 fell just a few inches above the hem on long coats that reached to the knee. This put their pockets almost as low as women's hanging bags. After 1700, men's pockets rose from the hem to the hip and, in addition, often had loops and buttons as a possible deterrence for pickpockets.[161] It seems plausible that women's detached pockets, in much the same manner as men's hip-level inset pockets, brought the articles being carried closer to the body to render a thief's task much more difficult.[162]

In summary, women chose to wear their pockets underneath gowns, petticoats, hoops, and aprons in response to larger social issues. The rise of culturally-determined concepts such as orderliness, privacy, and crime on a wide scale influenced women to conceal their pockets. Privacy on a more personal level for women may also have played a role.

Symbolism

Print sources depict the various ways women wore their pockets and raise more questions concerning why women chose to do so.

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[161]Brooke, Dress and Undress, 52. Also, in the novel Jonathan Wild Count la Ruse buttoned his pockets to keep Jonathan Wild from stealing money out of them. Henry Fielding, Jonathan Wild, 1743 (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1943), 16-17.

[162]One of the characters in Pompey the Little may have exaggerated when he boasted of his talents as a thief: "My chief dexterity was in robbing the ladies--there is a particular art, a peculiar delicacy required in whipping one's hand up a lady's petticoats, and carrying off her pockets." Francis Coventry, Pompey the Little, 1751 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 90.

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Many of the prints provide yet another level of interpretation--that of symbolism. The following analysis will identify some of the many symbolic functions pockets (almost exclusively unadorned) performed in print sources.

Many pockets appear on women who needed to work to earn their own or to supplement their family's income. Servants working indoors, such as the chambermaid in a 1780 illustration for Tom Jones, are depicted with pockets, in this case patched from wear (fig. 5.8). It is interesting to note that her mistress Sophia, obviously not wearing hoops to cover her pockets (as delineated by the drapery clinging to her thigh and knee), does not show the pockets her father secretly had a servant search. The many "Cries of London" series, as discussed above, also often reveal pockets, as do scenes of women going to market with eggs, gypsies telling fortunes, and women outside of the "Cries" working in markets.[163] The pocket thus serves to reinforce the status of these women as belonging to those segments of society not participating in the genteel life.

Another instance of a pocket used to symbolize a working class woman is entitled "Indolence" or "La Parasseuse Italienne." This oil painting by Jean-Baptiste Greuze dates to 1756 or 1757 (fig.

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[163]Eggs in William Combe, Doctor Syntax's Three Tours: In Search of the Picturesque, Consolation, and a Wife, 1812 (London: Chatto and Windus Publishers, 1878), plate opposite p. 216; Gypsy in Combe, Doctor Syntax, plate opposite p. 150, and Winterthur copperplate textile numbers 69.3285 and 85.5.1 dating to 1765 and pictured in Montgomery, Printed Textiles, 254; Market (dated 1798) in Joseph Grego, Rowlandson the Caricaturist (London: Chatto and Windus, 1880; New York: Collectors Edition, no date), 1:338.

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5.9).[164] The pockets hang on the post of a chair, the woman depicted in disarray and surrounded by clutter. In the eighteenth century, disorderly dress indicated disorderly and immoral conduct.[165] The discarded pockets serve, along with other symbols, to reinforce her laziness.

Artists rarely idealized their working class subjects in the eighteenth century. The pocket was used by Eastman Johnson, however, as part of the iconography to show the brighter side of slavery in the nineteenth century. "Old Kentucky Home--Life in the South" painted in 1859 (fig. 5.10) clearly depicts a slave wearing a bright red pocket, one of the few pockets to display decorative technique. Although the detached pocket no longer retained any stylishness at this late date, Johnson may have intended to portray slaves as owners of valuable things, maybe even money, in an attempt to render their lot less bleak. Alternatively, he may have wanted to show that even under ideal conditions, slaves were still deprived of basic freedoms, such as fashion, enjoyed by the white woman entering the scene from the right.[166]

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[164]Its prototype is "The Idle Servant" by Dutch artist Nicolaes Maes.

[165]Aileen Ribeiro, Dress and Morality (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers Inc., 1986), 102.

[166]The interpretation of this painting as pro-slavery or anti-slavery remains open to debate. This pocket differs in style from the applique pockets that resemble some later African-American quilts (Chapter 3). Another depiction of a slave, although in a much earlier time period, also shows that slave clothing remained entirely different from that of free women. In "An Overseer Doing his Duty. Sketched from Life near Fredericsburg" by Benjamin H. Latrobe March

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Disreputable women also appear with prominent pockets. In "The Prophet of the Hebrews" of 1795, for example, a woman wears an old, mended pocket out of which spills a text describing Isabella Wake who was known to have supported anti-English causes. "The Radical's Arms" (1819) depicts a woman as a figure of the underworld, her pocket stuffed with purses, trampling on the Bible and other prized possessions. "The Lamentable Fall of Madame Geneva" satirizes the Act of 1736 designed to suppress the sale of inexpensive gin. She stands on a pedestal in a crowd, pocket visible near the edge of her apron (fig. 5.3). In the "Harlot's Progress" series, the scene entitled "Advance of Harriet Heedless" of 1780 depicts a woman in the background of a prostitute's workhouse peaking behind a bed curtain, her pocket positioned near her apron. Finally, as part of the "Cries of London," a convicted criminal in 1799 gives her last dying speech and confession (typical of the time), wearing a large pocket over her apron, directly in the middle of her stomach.[167] In all of these cases, the pocket serves as yet another detail to further illustrate disreputable women.

13, 1798, the slave working in the field wears a hanging drawstring bag, an item that had gone out of fashion nearly 100 years earlier. Depicted in Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980), 31.

[167]"The Prophet" in James Gillray, James Gillray, 1757-1815: Meisterwerke der Karikatur (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1986), 89; "Radical's Arms" in Victoria and Albert Museum, English Caricature, 1620 to the Present: Caricaturists and Satirists, Their Art, Their Purpose and Influence (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), 100; "Lamentable Fall," "Harlot's Progress," and "Last Dying Speech" in Sharpe, Crime and the Law, 111, 169, and 217, respectively.

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Pockets also portray greed and miserliness on the part of wealthy women. It was shown earlier that women carried money with them, one form of evidence consisting of coins spilling out of pockets in caricatures. The two instances in which an abundance of coins overflow involve Mrs. Siddons, a famous actress, and the wife of King George III (figs. 2.1 and 2.2, respectively). The former was accused of demanding large fees for her performances and was ultimately jeered off of the stage in 1783 during a performance of "Melpomene." The latter is portrayed as a miser toasting sprats on a gridiron, a lower class breakfast, and wearing the dress of the poor replete with a mended pocket. A companion caricature depicts the King toasting muffins.

The pocket also plays a supporting role in a 1793 caricature on the fashion of wearing padding in the front of Empire dresses to achieve a shapely figure or "modish rotundity"[168] (fig. 5.11). By 1793 the fashion for the pad had passed, and the reticule had begun to replace the pocket. The woman's advanced age, use of a looking glass, Cupid's overturned arrows, and the book Ovid (Art of Love) all serve to further ridicule her. The pocket provided the mechanism for displaying the book Ovid.

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[168]Ribeiro, Dress and Morality, 116. This caricature can be found in the British Museum, Dept. of Prints and Drawings, Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1942), 7:62 (1793, #8389). Further description of the fad is described on p. 60 accompanying the explanation of a caricature depicting a merchant selling pads in various sizes to simulate different months of pregnancy.

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Many artists, especially Rowlandson, used the shape and construction features of pockets to subtly or graphically symbolize female sexuality. In many instances of women depicted in encounters with men, their pockets show. These include: "A Ballad Singer" about 1800-1805 (fig. 5.4) in which a woman reaching into her pocket to pay a street singer makes eye contact with a man in the opposite doorway; one of "The Cries of London" series entitled "Do You Want My Brickdust" (1799) in which a man selling brickdust ogles the young woman holding the container into which he is pouring as an older woman looks on; a scene from the 1812 novel Doctor Syntax's Three Tours: In Search of the Picturesque, Consolation, and a Wife in which a man leers at a young woman carrying her basket of eggs; finally, "Cornwall, An Overlooker" (1812) in which an older woman spies on a young man grasping a scythe speaking with a young lady balancing a bucket on her head.[169]

The pocket as a symbol of sexuality was not always as subtle as in the instances shown above. In his 1810 "Rigging Out a Smuggler," for instance, Rowlandson depicts a woman with two large pockets on which are written "Japan/Old China" and "Tea" (fig. 5.12). While he clearly associates smuggling with capacious pockets, he also very obviously adds a second theme. The correlation with sex is demonstrated by the woman's bare breasts, the three men leering at her, the location inside the sleeping quarters of the ship (indicated

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[169]"Brickdust Seller" in Brewer, Common People and Politics, plate 25; Egg basket in Combe, Dr. Syntax, plate opposite p. 216; "An Overlooker" in Grego, Rowlandson the Caricaturist, 2:240.

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by the man in the hammock), and the suggestive rendering of the shape and folds of the pockets.

Just as women did not create their pockets without considering larger cultural issues, artists did not depict pockets without apparent motives. Pockets appear to have held many levels of meaning, as they symbolized working class women, disreputable characters, greedy and miserly women, outmoded fashion, and sexual relations. The multiplicity of potential themes in some ways contradicts the notion of a symbol as expressing a single, constant, readily identifiable abstract concept. How did the audience decipher what pockets typified in different situations?

Context supplied the most important element in the process of ordering and understanding the visual medium. Pockets served as obvious symbols in some instances more than in others. Most often, pockets constituted one of many details used to further reinforce a particular theme. Viewers could rely on many other supporting symbols besides the pockets to grasp the intent of the artist. Pockets proved most germane to the comprehension of the intended message in those situations relating to greed and miserliness. Their lack of use as positive or genteel symbols may relate to the function of pockets as undergarments, worn close to the body, and thus very private.

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Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The study of detached pockets has shown how women responded to their daily experiences by creating objects to meet their specific needs. While women carried many items with them, pockets served more than the more obvious function of conveying items from place to place. Pockets allowed women to negotiate a broad range of social influences in the eighteenth century such as security, privacy, consumerism, crime, orderliness, tradition, and fashion to suit uniquely female concerns.

Women made many choices about the size, form, construction, and decoration of their pockets. While they had the option to purchase pockets in the ready-made and second-hand clothes markets, most women chose to make their own pockets and to decorate them with crewel embroidery, patchwork assemblages, fancy or plain whole-cloth, and applique techniques. The sewing and embellishment involved in crafting pockets satisfied many needs women had on both personal and societal levels.

The internal and external nature of pockets added to their complexity. Women often wore them on the inside, under layers of clothes, and thus close to the body. They also chose to wear them closer to the surface, where others could glimpse them at times. This

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dual nature of pockets may have allowed artists to use pockets as largely negative symbols.

A multi-contextual analysis that places pockets in functional, historical, social, aesthetic, and symbolic contexts reveals the complex interaction between people, ideas, behaviors, and objects in the eighteenth century. It is their ability to illuminate ordinary, everyday situations rather than manifestations of gentility or social competition that renders pockets so valuable to historians today. Moreover, they help to provide a more balanced view of society commensurate with women's actual presence and participation by incorporating the substance of women's lives at all economic levels into the picture. Socially-constructed concepts of the appropriate gender roles and behaviors designated as female shaped women's lives and artifacts, resulting in detached pockets for women and inset pockets for men. Women did not create pockets in a vacuum; rather, they made choices within a complex cultural framework.

Pockets, like other abundant textiles that fall into the category of material culture evidence, contribute to the whole of our knowledge of the past. Sometimes they confront us with direct questions. How typical or common, for example, were decorated pockets compared to "plain" or less colorful pockets? Did this vary across regions, nationalities, or social classes?

Pockets also generate yet more questions on an indirect basis that historians might not otherwise readily ask. We briefly examined, for example, whether women carried money in their pockets.

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This leads to other questions. What did shopping involve? Did women go to markets daily or weekly? How does this vary in rural and urban areas? There remain many more questions than answers, leaving exciting possibilities for further research. As common, everyday objects, pockets and other textiles prove invaluable to people searching for clues to the lives of women--and men--in past cultures.

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