

# Ladies of Quality: Loyalist Scotswomen in Revolutionary America

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## RESEARCH

### EVERYDAY LIVELIHOODS

- Many Scotswomen in North Carolina found their lives to be similar to their lives back home, albeit slightly more arduous. They were educated, tied to small farm agriculture, and had a complex relationship with the law and the degree to which it afforded them agency.
- Due to agriculture's focus as the basis of the Highland economy, most migrants incorporated small farming into their lifestyles in the colonies, and Scottish women adopted the roles of both caretaker and farmhand for the sake of their families. Young Scotswomen in the 18th century found it relatively easy to obtain primary and secondary education due to the values of Highland society. Many women were teachers, traders, and skilled dealers in the market-place.
- Women manipulated the system to obtain property or protection, such as Magdaline Campbell obtaining a 640-acre grant along the Cape Fear, or Isabella McAllister establishing a marriage contract so that her children, not her husband, were holders of her property. Scotswomen were well educated and had the means to access institutionalized instruction, but their marital status was the most definitive factor in determining their position in the colony.

### MIGRATION

- Migration to North Carolina was driven by Scotland's economic crisis and the political incentive of receiving a pardon. North Carolina's quitrent land-grab system appealed to many Scots who suffered from financial instability, particularly women who aimed to manipulate the system in their favor. The presence of family who already resided in the colony also motivated many women to move.
- Those who migrated to the colonies in the years immediately after the Jacobite rebellion and those who arrived just before the revolution dawned had different motives for their political affiliation, but both groups were motivated to ally themselves with whichever political group they believed had the best chance at safeguarding their ways of life.

### POLITICS BEFORE THE WAR

- From a series of preceding insurgencies, colonists became familiar with the political chaos and instability of the NC colony. As a result, many Scotswomen developed their allegiances based on the interests of themselves and their families rather than the unreliable state.
- As the Regulator Rebellion entrenched itself in the affairs of the general government, its influence over the lives of women bore significant weight as their husbands became bound in the conflict. Comparatively, those who arrived in the early 1770s experienced the extended brunt of the Scottish economic crisis but not Carolinian society's political chaos. For many, the opportunity and security of allying with the English crown was more appealing than that which was offered by the patriot cause.

### REVOLUTIONARY LIVELIHOODS

- Following the breakout of the war, many Scotswomen found themselves managing estates and businesses alone while others actively engaged in anti-revolutionary causes, such as Florence McDonald's role in active loyalist recruitment
- Participation in the war meant putting property and livelihood on the line, as the Carolinian Committees of Safety and English Crown targeted the property and assets of those they deemed as traitors.
- Despite their heavy ties to their families and husbands, many Scottish women found avenues to act in the war, often by means of recruitment or protest.

### THE AFTERMATH

- After the British army's defeat, the state government auction off loyalist's goods and lands for financial gain, which led many to flee back to Great Britain.
- Some Scotswomen petitioned the British government for financial compensation for their losses and were successful in receiving claims and pensions.
- The British government's recognition of Scotswomen's loyalty to the Crown through awarding them compensation shows the power that came with self-identifying loyalty.

## CONCLUSIONS

Following the Jacobite Rebellion, many Scottish women emigrated to NC seeking cheap land and economic opportunities and asserted agency through the legal code and family dynamics. Faced with North Carolina's political instability and disconnect from local populations, at the outset of the Revolutionary War, many Scotswomen sided with the Loyalist cause. After the war's conclusion, these women went on to advocated for recompense for their losses from the British government and were granted recognition for their wartime efforts. Throughout this period, Scottish women consistently proved themselves to be individuals who asserted their agency, not only by maintaining economic security, land ownership, and political voice, but also through wartime involvement.

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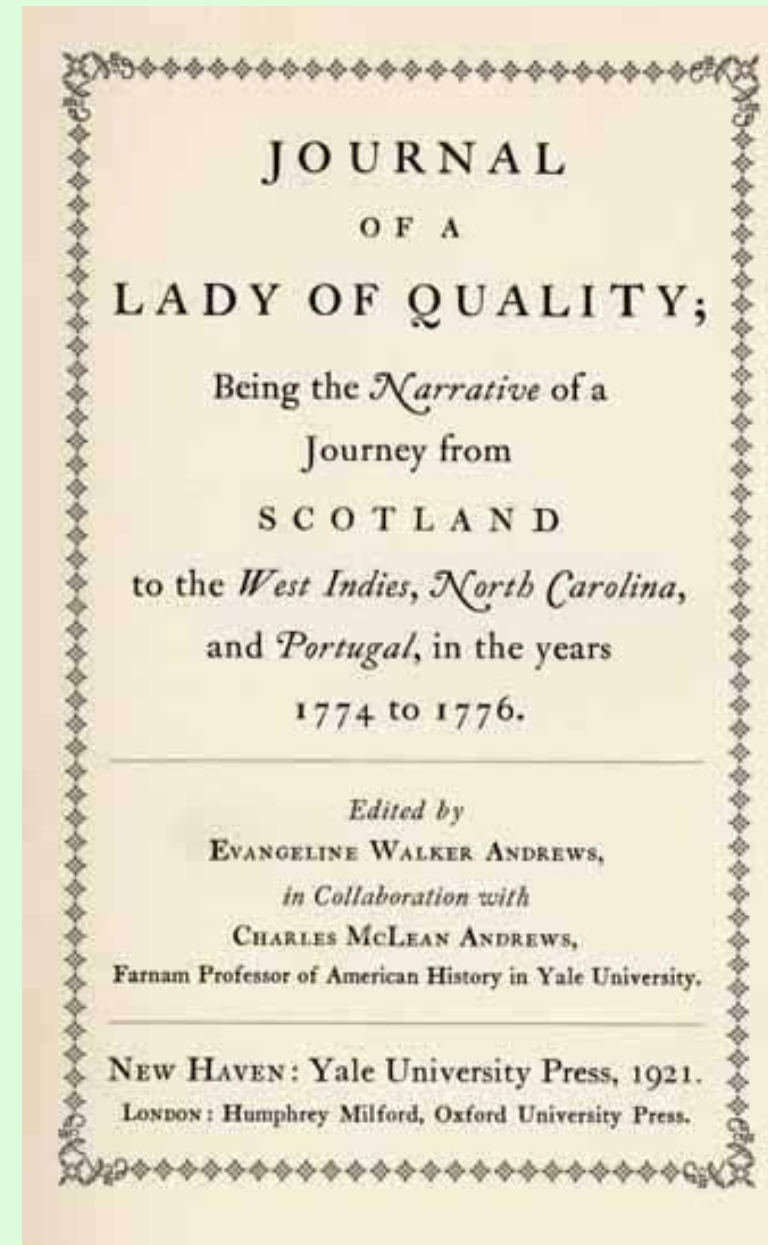


Fig. 1 Title Page of Janet Schaw's diary



Fig. 2 Portrait of Flora MacDonald

## MY QUESTION:

How did military, political, economic, and social factors influenced Scottish Loyalist women in NC before, during, and after the American Revolution?

## ABSTRACT

Due to overwhelming migration preceding the American Revolutionary war, Scottish families formed a significant basis of North Carolina's population, government, and economy during the mid to late 18th century. After the fallout of the Jacobite rebellion led to a wave of Scottish migration, newly arrived Scotswomen found a colony entrenched in political flux. As a result, for many Loyalist Scotswomen, their actions in the war were not necessarily fueled by an allegiance to the British government but more so by their familial and financial ties. Additionally, these women not only engaged in political and military forums but also used the war as a platform to assert themselves in the government in its aftermath.

## BACKGROUND

- Scottish society, particularly Highland society, operated along a semi-feudal clan system, with lairds functioning as landlords and martial leaders. Lairds were connected to a coat of arms and tartan, which identified different Scotsmen and their clans.
- The 1745 Jacobite rebellion was one of the most influential events in Scottish history and marked a turning point in the nature of Scottish society. The defeat at Culloden Moor marked the dismantling of the entire Scottish clan system and their cultural erasure by the British government.
- The English government used the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion to implement laws that destroyed the clan system and brought the Highlands under political supervision. This led to widespread poverty and unrest in Scotland, which later influenced Scottish loyalties during the American Revolution.

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