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## British Army Women in the Seven Years' War

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# British Army Women in the Seven Years' War

## **Cover Page Footnote**

I would like to thank Dr. Peter Way for both his guidance and encouragement.

Professor Larry Kulisek Essay of the Year

**BRITISH ARMY WOMEN**  
IN THE SEVEN YEAR'S WAR

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**ABSTRACT**

During the Seven Years' War, many soldiers' wives and female camp followers contributed to the British war effort in numerous ways and did so in the face of great oppression. Using the themes of labour, conditions and dangers, sexual and domestic life, illicit activities, and discipline and punishment, Celena Meloche's *Larry Kulisek Award* winning essay demonstrates that the presence and labour of women within the army were essential to British success. Most importantly, Meloche provides a comprehensive literary and contextual analysis of a number of primary sources that is sure to captivate students of war studies and gender history alike.

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The Seven Years' War impacted more than just the soldiers who fought during its many battles. The War also impacted – and was impacted by – women. Many soldiers' wives and female camp followers (hereafter referred to as army women) contributed to the British war effort in numerous ways, and did so in the face of great oppression. Using the themes of labour, conditions and dangers, sexual and domestic life, illicit activities, and discipline and punishment, this essay will demonstrate that both the presence and labour of women within the army were essential to British success because without women the army would have been strained to recruit, maintain, and care for its soldiers. It will also show that, to contribute to the war effort, army women were expected to be subordinate to the military – an institution which used gender to control them, belittle their contributions, and which also exposed them to the horrors of war.

Most historians will agree that women have traditionally been left out of most military histories, including those of the Seven Years' War. This is largely due to a lack of primary sources. As Holly Mayer points out, women's contributions to the Seven Years' War have largely been left out of the official military records.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there are even fewer records written by women. Thus, the main primary sources regarding women during the war that do exist – mainly the orderly books of officers – were written by men and have very few, dispersed references to women. These sources are also largely biased against women, reflecting what Dr. Peter Way deems the popular “misogynous view” during the time.<sup>2</sup> To combat the silence of women, and the biases towards them, historians have taken two approaches to incorporating women into Military History – the Women's History approach and the Gender History approach. The Women's History approach often attempts to demonstrate that women were both present during and contributed to warfare. Sarah Fatherly takes this approach in her work, “Tending the Army: Women and the British General Hospital in North America, 1754-1763,” as does Holly Mayer in her article, “From Forts to Families: Following the Army into Western Pennsylvania, 1758-1766.” Both women do an excellent job of highlighting the contributions of women to the Seven Years' War. Indeed, one main strength of the Women's History approach is that it combats the neglect of women's contributions by revising traditional narratives to include women and give them agency. However, the works by Fatherly and Mayer are also symptomatic of the shortcomings of Women's History. Fatherly details

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<sup>1</sup> Holly Mayer, “From Forts to Families: Following the Army into Western Pennsylvania, 1758-1766,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 130, no. 1 (January 2006): 5.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Way, “Engendering War: Military Masculinities and the Making of Britain's Eighteenth Century American Empire,” Scholarship at UWindsor, <http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/historypres/> (accessed October 5, 2013), 3.

both the contributions of women as nurses and the impact this role had on their lives during the Seven Year's War but she does not examine or explain why this role was delegated to women. Mayer follows a conventional military narrative of the war and only interjects women where and when it is convenient. Neither Fatherly nor Mayer – nor any Women's History approach – puts army women into context by examining the institution of the military. This may be seen as a major failing. It is not sufficient simply to add women into the existing narratives as Women's History does.

To truly understand army women, their roles, their contributions, their lives, and the impacts of war on them, one must also examine the military – a highly gendered institution which has largely excluded women. Moreover, army women and their contributions may be best understood in relation to soldiers – that is, the men who did the fighting. Without men to fight, there would be no military and no need for army women. Therefore, a Gender History approach seems better suited to a discussion of British army women during the Seven Years' War. However, a traditional Gender History approach, which would focus on women's right or capacity to serve in the military, will not suffice. As Marcia Kovitz argues in her work, "The Roots of Military Masculinity," the service of men should also be problematized since men are not any more innately aggressive or characteristically better suited to warfare than women are.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this paper will examine the context of the military, and include discussion of males within the army, both of which are necessary to promote a better understanding of the presence and activities of army women during the Seven Years' War.

As Professor Peter Way points out in his work, "Engendering War: Military Masculinities and the Making of Britain's Eighteenth Century American Empire," the role of women in the military has traditionally been neglected because war has been promoted as a masculine – or manly – endeavour.<sup>4</sup> There is great, ongoing debate over why war has been deemed masculine and mainly fought by men. The two general arguments are that women are biologically less suited to war and that war has been socially constructed as a male undertaking. While this debate is not particularly of interest in this paper, the arguments of Kovitz – who favours the latter argument – are. She demonstrates that the military uses gender – and more specifically appeals to bravery and masculinity, that is, gender expectations – to antagonize men into fighting wars, which has not always been an easy endeavour.<sup>5</sup> This is because wars, including the Seven Years' War,

<sup>3</sup> Marcia Kovitz, "The Roots of Military Masculinity," in *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, ed. Paul R. Higate (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Way, "Engendering War," 1.

<sup>5</sup> Kovitz, "The Roots of Military Masculinity," 5-6.

require men to risk their lives and, consequently, do not serve the soldier's personal interests. Rather, as Way concludes, during the Seven Years' War the military used gender to "serve the interests of nobles and gentry, merchants, and manufacturers."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many of these same members of the upper classes served as commanding officers during the Seven Years' War. As officers they ensured that, as Way puts it, "the army's command structure imitated models of family governance," in which they—the officers—"constituted the patriarchs."<sup>7</sup> Not only did these officers control their men by taking on the role of the patriarch—or father figure—but they also used this structure to control army women. Consequently, during the Seven Years' War, the military was a highly gendered institution where men and army women were both subordinate to high command. However, as Way argues, "common soldiers...were not irredeemably inferior in the way that women were; as they had the potential for action."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, due to the "misogynous" views of the time, women were clearly seen as the weaker, inferior sex.

As a result of this attitude, the military was also able to use gender to distinguish itself from the rest of society. Kovitz conveys that the military promotes itself as masculine and the rest of society as feminine.<sup>9</sup> This gender division is also used, as Kovitz points out, to paper over differences among men, and their masculinities, within the institution—due to rank, jobs, and class.<sup>10</sup> Thus, during the Seven Years' War, setting the "manly" military apart from "womanly" society gave the army credibility. Overall then, due to the structure of the military, both men and women within the army were subordinate during the Seven Years' War but women were additionally seen as inferior. This was likely to impact the lives of British army women and the contributions they made to the war.

### LABOUR UNDERTAKEN BY BRITISH ARMY WOMEN

As Peter Way states, "women have always fulfilled a valuable function in the reproduction of warfare, serving a variety of support roles, and contributing to a domestic sphere for soldiers."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, while the military was a masculine institution, British army women were allowed to follow and be part of the army because they undertook a variety of forms of labour necessary to the war effort. For instance, Sarah Fatherly argues that, by 1754, "military commanders had long allowed a limited number of

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>9</sup> Kovitz, "The Roots of Military Masculinity," 6.

<sup>10</sup> Kovitz, "The Roots of Military Masculinity," 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Way, "Engendering War," 3.

women to be officially attached to regiments” and “in return for nursing, washing, and cooking, these women received food rations and quarters in encampments and garrisons.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in his order book, British General Edward Braddock stated on April 7th, 1755, that “a Greater number of Women [had] been brought over than those allowed by the Government sufficient for washing with a view that the Hospital might be servd [sic].”<sup>13</sup> Evidently, Braddock – an officer – saw the necessity of women as nurses and with good reason. Fatherly argues that, after Braddock’s failed expedition in 1755, “the [general] hospital would not have been able to cope with what regularly became a staggering number of sick and wounded had it not been able to rely on the labor of army women who worked as nurses.”<sup>14</sup> Nursing was, arguably, the most important role that army women took on. Without their labour in hospitals, soldiers would not have received the care they needed and many more likely would have died, seriously harming the war effort.

Army women also contributed to the war machine in other ways. As Paul E. Kopperman notes in his work, “The British High Command and Soldiers’ Wives in America, 1755-1783,” women took on jobs like laundering, cooking, hiring themselves out to officers and their families, sewing and mending uniforms, and herding livestock during marches.<sup>15</sup> John Knox shows this to be the case in his *Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America*. In April 1760, Knox reported that “the women are all ordered to cook for, and attend, the men at work with their victuals; also to nurse the sick and wounded.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, many nurses were simply female camp followers or soldiers’ wives who were ordered by the higher command to help in the hospitals. Thus, these same women likely took on many different forms of labour throughout the war. In fact, as the British nurse matron Charlotte Brown recalled in her journal, on June 5, 1755, “all the Nurses [were] Baking Bread and Boiling Beef for to March to Morrow,” and again, on June 9, they were “busy baking Bread and boiling Beef and Washing [sic].”<sup>17</sup> This labour was very important. Without women to cook, clean, do laundry, and maintain uniforms, soldiers would have had to do these tasks for themselves, thus limiting the time and energy they had to do other forms of necessary labour or battle preparations. Moreover,

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Fatherly, “Tending the Army: Women and the British General Hospital in North America, 1754-1763,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10 (Fall 2012): 567.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Braddock, *Major-General Edward Braddock’s Orderly Books, From February 26 To June 17, 1755* (Cumberland: Will H. Lowdermilk, 1880), xvii.

<sup>14</sup> Fatherly, “Tending the Army,” 568.

<sup>15</sup> Paul E. Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers’ Wives in America, 1755-1783,” *Journal Of The Society For Army Historical Research* 60 (1982): 15.

<sup>16</sup> John Knox, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760* (London: John Knox, 1769) 2:297.

<sup>17</sup> Charlotte Brown, “The Journal of Charlotte Brown, Matron of the General Hospital with the English Forces in America, 1754-1756,” in *Colonial Captivities, Marches and Journeys*, ed. Isabel M. Calder (New York: MacMillan, 1935), 180-1.

without women these tasks – except for cooking – may have been neglected altogether and, consequently, the men would likely begin to suffer from diseases and other problems— like dysentery and lice – which come about from poor hygiene and exposure to the elements.

Overall then, army women were helpful to the war effort because of the many support roles they took on. Their labour as nurses, laundresses, and cooks – which allowed soldiers to be both cared for and maintained – was especially useful to the war machine. Officers clearly understood the necessity of women and, thus, they allowed a number of women to be paid and provisioned by the army in return for their labour. However, the usefulness of army women did not stop many officers from severely limiting the number of army women they allowed or, as Way puts it, from “[viewing] women as threatening to the war effort.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, officers were influenced by the prevailing gender norms and misogynous attitudes of the time. Consequently, women were ordered by officers to fill support roles, doing labour that was deemed “womanly” – such as cooking and cleaning. This feminization of labour helped officers reinforce the patriarchal structure of the military. It also meant that, despite their contributions, army women were treated with less respect than men because they were viewed as inferior and less essential to the war effort than soldiers were.

### CONDITIONS AND DANGERS FACED BY WOMEN IN THE ARMY

Both the presence of women and the labours undertaken by them during the Seven Years' War exposed them to many of the harsh conditions and dangers of war – which very different from those women, and men, would face at home or in civilian life. As Fatherly, notes “women working for the hospital faced heightened dangers of illness, military attack, enemy capture, and even death.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, nurse matron, Charlotte Brown, recounts how both she and her brother became sick in the summer of 1755 while traveling with the British general hospital and how her brother later died from his illness.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, during that same summer, Brown and her companions were “all greatly alarm'd with the Indians scalping several Familys within 10 miles [sic].”<sup>21</sup> This was a very real threat. For instance, Brown recalls seeing “2 men and a Boy that were brought into Town Dead, scalped by the Indians,” and claims that “it was the dismallest Sight [she] ever saw [sic].”<sup>22</sup> Additionally, in his *Journal of Proceedings from Willes's Creek to the Monongabela*, Harry Gordon reported on July 23, 1755, that he “turn'd

<sup>18</sup> Way, “Engendering War,” 3.

<sup>19</sup> Fatherly, “Tending the Army,” 568.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, “The Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 183-184.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

about on hearing the Indians Yell & Saw them Tomohocking some of our women & wounded people [sic].”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, on June 12, 1759 at Fort Edward, an order was given to prevent the scalping of women or children and stated that two enemy men would be killed for every one woman or child harmed by the enemy.<sup>24</sup> These examples make it clear that scalping – including that of women and children – was ongoing during the Seven Years’ War. They also indicate that both soldiers and army women were subject to Indian attack, which could in turn result in severe injuries and death. Women and men could also be taken prisoner. On November 15, 1759, Major General Jeffery Amherst wrote to William Pitt that he had received word that the French had left “270 [British] Prisoners women & children included” near the Otter River.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, an extract of a letter from a gentleman on the river Richtigouch, on July 10, 1760 states that “sixty [English] men and seven women [were] taken in...small vessels for Quebec,” and that these prisoners “suffered five days” with “little provisions, and only brackish water to drink,” before being “transported into the hold of the frigate, and worse treated there.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, not only could both women and men be taken prisoner, but they faced harsh conditions once captured.

Army men and women were also susceptible to harsh weather conditions. Charlotte Brown’s journal states that on June 6, 1755, she and her companions were subjected to “a great Gust of Thunder and Lightning and Rain so that we were almost drowned,” and the next day, “all the Sick allmost drown’d [sic]” due to rain.<sup>27</sup> In another instance, Brown states that, on January 19, 1757, she “[received] Orders to remove to the Hospital which was no better than a Shed and it was so excessive cold that [her] Face and Neck were frost bitten in moving [sic].”<sup>28</sup> These dangers and conditions, and many others, were likely experienced by all army women. Soldiers’ wives and female camp followers would have been the first to be denied rations when supplies waned – since they were not the ones fighting and, thus, less necessary. There were also likely times when the entire military – men and women included – suffered from hunger due to problems with supply shipments. Altogether then, not only were both army women – like Charlotte Brown – and soldiers fearful of being seized by Indians or scalped, but they were exposed to other dangers and conditions

<sup>23</sup> Stanley Pargellis, ed., *Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1969), 108.

<sup>24</sup> *Commissary Wilson’s Orderly Book: Expedition of the British and Provincial Army under Maj. Gen. Jeffery Amherst, against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, 1759* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1857), 22-23.

<sup>25</sup> John Knox, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1914), 3:73-74.

<sup>26</sup> Knox, *An Historical Journal*, 3:403.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, “The Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 180.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

of war – like hunger, rain, drowning, and exceedingly long marches.

Thus, army women, like soldiers, were exposed to the horrors of war and constantly put themselves at risk of capture, injury, disease, and even death. Despite these risks, however, army women remained present throughout the war and their supporting roles contributed greatly to the British war machine. Yet, just as their contributions were belittled, so were their sacrifices. Women still largely did not make it into official histories and fewer death and casualty statistics survive regarding women. In fact, Dr. Caleb Rea is one of few men who actually includes women in his war statistics. For instance, Rea states that on July 18, 1758, there were “10, 12, or 14 women kill'd and missing [sic].”<sup>29</sup> Rea likely records this because he was a doctor and not an officer. Officers likely did not concern themselves with the capture or death of a woman because their strict limits on female camp followers meant that there was always an abundance of women eager to follow the army. Put more simply, women were much more replaceable than soldiers. Moreover, the military was a masculine institution that encouraged men to sacrifice their lives – and, thus, officers likely thought that to call attention to women's sacrifices would jeopardize the structure and credibility of the army.

### SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC LIFE

Army women's presence contributed to a domestic sphere for soldiers. As Mayer states, “accepting wives aided recruitment and retention, and women's labour helped feed, clothe, and care for the men.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Mayer recounts how Captain Ourry, in July of 1761, “admitted that one way he kept [his volunteer companies] was by provisioning their women and children.”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Kopperman tells how Lord Loudoun, in February of 1756, “directed that “Some allowance shall be made [for the recruiter] for the passage of a small number of Women and Children, which he will be indispensably Obligated to take for the Success of the Affair and the acquisition of proper Men.”<sup>32</sup> Overall then, maintaining a family life seems to have been important to many soldiers and, consequently, the presence and care of their women and children was important to recruiting and maintaining them. Yet not all officers saw the benefits of women and families within the army. General Wolfe's Instructions from Bamff in 1750 stated, “the officers are desired to discourage matrimony among the men,” because “the long march and embarkation that will soon follow” and “many

<sup>29</sup> *The Journal of Dr. Caleb Rea*, ed. F. M. Ray (Salem: Essex Institute, 1881), 44.

<sup>30</sup> Mayer, “From Forts to Families,” 29-30.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives,” 16-17.

women in the regiment are very inconvenient, especially as some of them are not so industrious, nor so useful to their husbands, as a soldier's wife ought to be."<sup>33</sup> Evidently, most officers – including Wolfe – only wanted women who offered a direct contribution – that is, labour – to be part of the army. More importantly though, Wolfe's order shows that soldiers, army women, and their domestic lives were subordinate to army control – which was influenced by the misogynous attitudes of the time.

Controlling the domestic lives of soldiers and army women also meant that the army exercised control over their sexual lives. Kopperman suggests that “some officers believed women debauched the troops and worse, spread venereal disease.”<sup>34</sup> Since venereal disease is spread through multiple partnering, this suggests that men and women were engaged in sexual relations outside marriage. This was likely the result of the military's own sexist policy prohibiting marriage. However, it was army women – and not men or policy – who shouldered the blame for promiscuity and the spread of diseases. As Kopperman argues, many officers simply saw all army women – that is, both female followers (prostitutes included) and soldiers' wives – as the carriers of disease.<sup>35</sup> For instance, *The Journal of Charlotte Brown* makes it clear that she was a widow, who left four children behind in England.<sup>36</sup> Not only did Brown's separation from her children likely affect her experience of the Seven Years' War, but her widowhood made her a target. Brown recalls, in her journal entry from April 16, 1756, “the Dutch had a very bad Opinion of me saying I could not be good to come so far without a Husband” and that she was mistaken for an officer's mistress.<sup>37</sup> In this way, Brown's story shows how all army women were thought to be prostitutes. This view likely fueled many officers' negative attitudes towards women and contributed to the number of army women allowed being restricted. Desertion also led to negative views of women and the military exerting its control over domestic and sexual lives. As Way claims, “desertion constituted the army's main concern when it came to the impact of sexuality.”<sup>38</sup> Kopperman concurs, stating that, “eighteenth-century troops deserted with alacrity and it is likely that many a soldier left camp in order to be reunited with his wife.”<sup>39</sup> It seems reasonable to add that many a soldier may have deserted simply to be reunited with a lover

<sup>33</sup> James Wolfe, *General Wolfe's instructions to young officers: also his orders for a battalion and an army; together with the orders and signals used in embarking and debarking an army, by flat-bottomed boats, &c. and a placart to the Canadians; to which are prefixed, the duty of an adjutant, and quartermaster* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1778), 45-48.

<sup>34</sup> Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives,” 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, “The Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 176.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>38</sup> Way, “Engendering War,” 12.

<sup>39</sup> Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives,” 26.

or to court a lover – since men in the military greatly outnumbered army women. Thus, it seems that officers used army women as scapegoats – passing the blame for immoral behaviour, disease, and desertion onto them to maintain the integrity of the military and its men. Overall then, during the Seven Years' War, British army women were present, having sexual relations with troops, forming families, and, altogether, contributing to the war effort by keeping men within the military. Yet this contribution did not help women overcome the negative attitudes they faced from officers; in fact, it may have even worsened them. Additionally, because both army men and women were subject to the authority of high command, their chance at a normal domestic life was destroyed.

### ILLCIT ACTIVITIES

The actions of army women were not always conducive to the war effort. As Kopperman suggests, “never under orders and sometimes contrary to them, many women sought to augment their income by vending merchandise, food, and liquor to the troops.”<sup>40</sup> The sale of alcohol to troops was particularly offensive to officers because this jeopardized their ability to maintain order and control over their soldiers. Indeed, on January 1, 1750, Wolfe stated that a list was going to be made to keep track of the women permitted to sell alcohol so “that proper measures may be taken to prevent their contributing to the uncommon villainies that have of late brought a reproach upon the regiment.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, drunk soldiers were seen to reflect poorly on the military. Consequently, army women in general – as possible purveyors of alcohol, sometimes against direct orders – were likely seen by officers as an obstacle to maintaining both the discipline and validity of the military.

Women were also involved in other illicit activities that could potentially challenge the military. For instance, on December 23, 1753, Wolfe's Instructions stated that there had been “complaints from the people in the neighbourhood...against some women of loose disorderly conduct,” and that “the soldiers have in an open, indecent manner frequented these same women, to the great dishonour not only of the corps they belong to, but to mankind in general.”<sup>42</sup> This seems to be an acknowledgement of prostitution, which was not uncommon. The journal of Lieutenant Bass also seems to make reference to prostitution in an entry from September 23, 1758. The passage reads “...about three o'clock the whole town of Sodom was Pulled Down and Sot on fire Viz [?] were was a Number of

<sup>40</sup> Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives,” 15.

<sup>41</sup> Wolfe, *General Wolfe's instructions to young officers*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Womans hutes which mad great Disturbens [sic].”<sup>43</sup> While this passage seems to show a moral opposition to prostitution, the act had greater consequences for both men and women – such as sexually transmitted diseases, like venereal disease. Therefore, prostitution could lead to health effects that impede the ability of soldiers to fight and reduce the effectiveness of the military.

Most women who took part in these illicit activities likely did so to subsidize their income. Army women needed to care for themselves – and many for their children as well – and they depended solely on the military for their livelihood. Yet, as already demonstrated, army women and their contributions were not as valued by the military, and women were the first to be removed from rations and provisions lists. In addition, few women were paid for their services and, when they were paid, their pay was much less than that earned by men. Indeed, Paul E. Kopperman states that “nurses received six pence per day for their services, while laundresses were paid a shilling, cooks one shilling eight pence, and matrons two shillings or two shillings six pence,” and he argues that, “considering their importance in the scheme of hospital care, all, but particularly the nurses, were underpaid.”<sup>44</sup> Altogether then, the negative attitudes of the military high command against army women were exacerbated by the women’s illicit activities. Indeed, these activities sometimes posed a direct challenge to the health and integrity of the army. However, those same misogynous attitudes were the cause of women and their contributions being belittled and, consequently, army women not being provided with the money and supplies they needed to care for themselves and their children – the very reason for their misconduct.

## DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

Due to the gendered nature of the military, army women, like soldiers, were subordinate to the high command and had to follow the orders of officers to maintain their place in the military, their paid employment, and their rations. This is demonstrated in a letter written by Martha May to British military commander, Henri Bouquet. In the letter, dated June 4, 1758, May begs for Bouquet’s pardon so that she may continue to travel with and care for her soldier husband, as well as “carry Water to the Soldiers in the heat of battle.”<sup>45</sup> Additionally, General

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin Bass, “A Journal of the Expedition against Fort Frontenac in 1758 by Lieut. Benjamin Bass,” *New York History* 16 (October 1935): 461.

<sup>44</sup> Paul E. Kopperman, “Medical Services in the British Army, 1742-1783,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 34 (1979): 436.

<sup>45</sup> Henry Bouquet, *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. S.K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Autumn L. Leonard. (Harrisburg: Historical and Museum Commission, 1951), 30.

Braddock's orderly books state that the "articles of war" were read to women as part of the company they "[belonged] to."<sup>46</sup> Both of these examples make it clear that army women were subordinate to the command of the army and its officers and, as the case of Martha May particularly shows, army women were well aware of this. Moreover, women within the army, like soldiers, could be punished for their disobedience since the structure of the military is based around maintaining order and control of its members. Indeed, as Fatherly points out, "army women were, like the men, subject to martial law" and "if they disobeyed general or regimental orders, punishments ranged from whipping to expulsion from the regiment."<sup>47</sup> General Braddock's orderly books show this clearly as one order threatens women, as well as soldiers and Indian traders, with death if they stole or wasted provisions.<sup>48</sup>

This is also demonstrated by General James Wolfe's instructions from January 1, 1750 which state that "no soldier's wife is to suttle or sell liquor without the major's leave, on pain of imprisonment; and leave will only be obtained for such as are particularly recommended by the captain or commanding officers of companies."<sup>49</sup> On July 2, 1759, Wolfe instructs that "no woman [was] to be petty sutler in the camp without proper authority, on pain of being struck off the provision rolls."<sup>50</sup> Later that same month, Wolfe ordered that "followers of the army; any who are known to sell liquors that intoxicate the men, are to be forthwith dismissed, and sent aboard ship."<sup>51</sup> Altogether then, Wolfe aimed to maintain control over the women in his forces by using the threat of punishments like being imprisoned, receiving no provisions or being sent away. While these punishments may not necessarily have been the same as those received by men (women likely received milder punishments due to being the "weaker" sex), the fact that women received punishment at all shows that they were subject to army discipline and control. Overall then, in order for British army women to make their contributions to the war effort, they had to follow military discipline or risk being punished. However, there are very few records of women being punished by the military. This is not to say that women were not punished. It simply suggests that the instances of them being punished simply did not make it into official records – likely because women were deemed inferior and their actions not worth the time or ink.

The Seven Years' War affected women and saw many soldiers'

<sup>46</sup> Braddock, *Major-General Edward Braddock's Orderly Books*, xxx.

<sup>47</sup> Fatherly, "Tending the Army," 572.

<sup>48</sup> Braddock, *Major-General Edward Braddock's Orderly Books*, xlvii.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

wives and female camp followers contribute to the British war effort in numerous ways. Thus, the British victory during the Seven Years' War cannot be understood simply as the result of male actions. This essay used the themes of labour undertaken by women, conditions and dangers faced by women, family life, sexual life, illicit activities, discipline and punishment, to demonstrate that the presence and labour of women within the army were also essential to British success. Without women the army would have struggled to recruit, maintain, or care for its soldiers. It has also shown that the lives of army women were exceedingly difficult and especially impacted by the gendered nature of the military which played off the prominent, misogynous views of the time.

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