False Witnesses

"Getting to the Source: Hetty Shepard, Dorothy Dudley, and Other Fictional Colonial Women I Have Come to Know Altogether Too Well" by Mary Beth Norton, in *Journal of Women's History* (Autumn 1998), Dept. of History, Ohio State Univ., 106 Dulles Hall, 230 W. 17th Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210–1367.

It appears that "women's history has finally joined the mainstream," says Norton, a historian at Cornell University and author of *Founding Mothers and Fathers* (1996). But she detects a few dismaying impurities in the new tributary. Examining several recent documentary readers aimed at undergraduates, Norton finds that certain "diaries" or "memoirs" of colonial women included in the books are 19th-century fakes. And two of them, she points out, were previously exposed as such.

In *American Women Writers to 1800* (1996), editor Sharon M. Harris included excerpts from a purported colonial diary by "Dorothy Dudley." It was actually written for an 1876 book compiled by the Ladies Centennial Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Norton says, and was an imaginative re-creation of a local colonial woman's life that was not intended to fool historians. "In 1976," she says, "I pointed out that the contents of the 'diary' resembled no other 18th-century woman's journal in that it focused almost exclusively on public events and revealed an author with remarkable access to other people's correspondence."

Harris also was taken in (as Norton says she herself once was, to an extent) by a purported 1859 memoir of the American Revolution by one Sidney Barclay. In 1995, scholar Sarah Buck, in "an excellent piece of historical detective work," exposed it as "'an inspired hoax,'" showing, Norton says, that the people and places the "memoir" mentions are mostly fictitious, and "the attitudes it expresses are those of the antebellum rather than the revolutionary years." But while acknowledging Buck's exposé, the editors of a series of books for young readers, Judith E. Greenberg and Helen Carey McKeever, nevertheless published an edited version of the "memoir" under the title, *Journal of a Revolutionary War Woman* (1996).

Another document that Norton argues (at some length) is fake is a "Puritan Maiden's Diary" purportedly kept by "Hetty Shepard" during 1675–77. Robert Marcus and David Burner include passages from it in the latest edition of *American Firsthand* (1998), a reader widely used in basic survey courses in American history. "I am fifteen years old to-day," the diarist writes in her first entry—in defiance of the fact, Norton says, that "most 17th-century people did not know the year of their birth (much less the day)."

Even if the 19th-century author of the diary "had not made so many obvious errors, historians should have been more skeptical," Norton maintains. Women in 17th-century America simply did not keep diaries, she explains, because they lacked three essentials: paper (which was scarce and expensive), a high degree of literacy, and leisure—"all of which most American women did not achieve until the 19th century."

How Welfare Lost Its Good Name

"The Invention of 'Welfare' in America" by Michael B. Katz and Lorrin R. Thomas, in *Journal of Policy History* (1998: No. 4), Saint Louis Univ., P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, Mo. 63156–0907.

In the early 20th century, *welfare* was a proud term, signifying the best in modern social policy. How it came to connote the worst, write Katz, a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, and Thomas, a doctoral student there, is an instructive tale.

During the New Deal era, when America's welfare state emerged, the term *welfare* seldom appeared in public without being accompanied by an adjective enhancing its meaning of "well-being." *Social welfare* or *public welfare* referred to a broad array of gov-