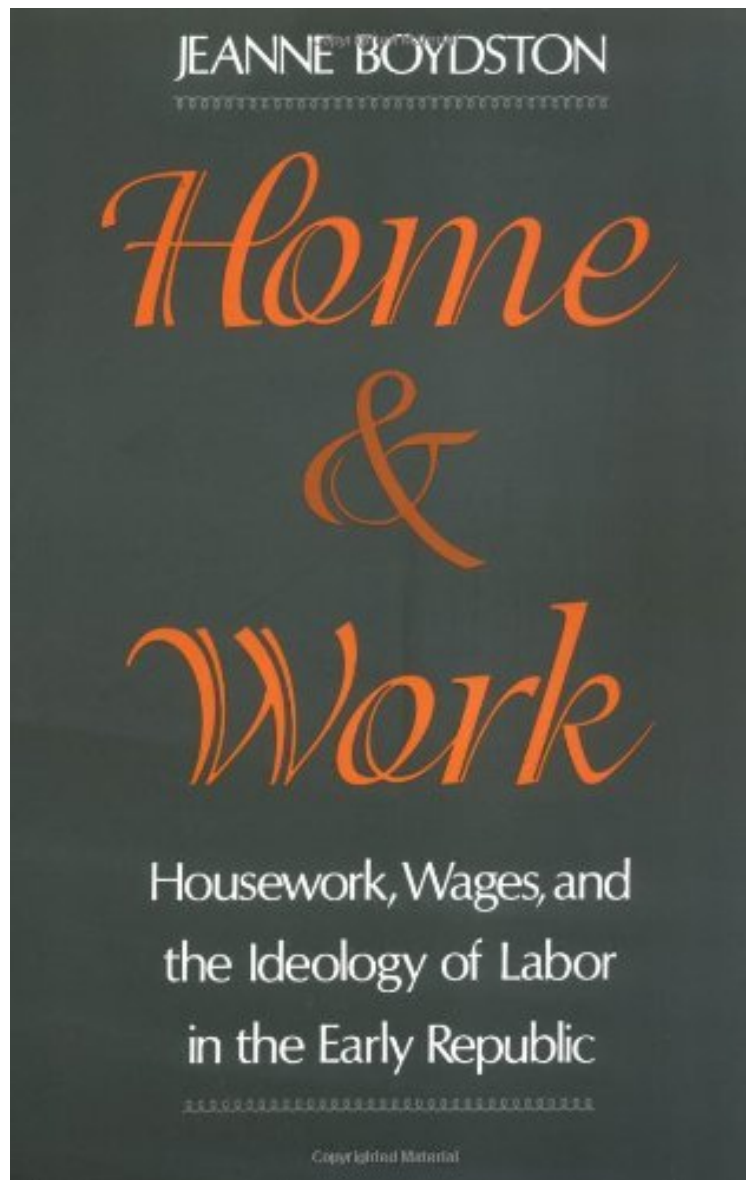


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Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic

Jeanne Boydston

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Over the course of a two hundred year period, women's domestic labor gradually lost its footing as a recognized aspect of economic life in America. The image of the colonial "goodwife," valued for her contribution to household prosperity, had been replaced by the image of a "dependent" and a "non-producer." This book is a history of housework in the United States prior to the Civil War. More particularly, it is a history of women's unpaid domestic labor in the context of the emergence of an industrialized society in the northern United States. Boydston argues that just as a capitalist economic order had first to teach that wages were the measure of a man's worth, it had at the same time, implicitly or explicitly, to teach that those who did not draw wages were dependent and not essential to the "real economy." Developing a striking account of the gender and labor systems that characterized industrializing America, Boydston explains how this effected the devaluation of women's unpaid labor.

"A provocative analysis of women's long-ignored economic activity in the Early Republic and the rhetorics that surrounded it. Ideal for undergraduate courses in women's and labor history and essential for graduate students in American history."--Philip Scranton, Rutgers University"Boydston's thoughtful, stimulating, and carefully researched study has taken us a large step forward in our understanding of the history of early American women's work."--Journal of Economic History"Boydston's focus on women's unpaid labor in the home within the broad context of changes in the antebellum northern economy sets her work off from a myriad of other books....Boydston has achieved a goal that many women's historians strive toward: she has demonstrated that only through examining the 'women's sphere' in its most classic sense can we understand the shape of American history in the antebellum years."--American Historical "Boydston, in her quiet, analytical way, delivers suggestive or unconventional ideas at about one per page....Brief, brilliantly complex, consistently engaging, her book will influence scholars of the subject for years to come."--Choice"Boydston's study of housework stands out in the recent and growing literature on the subject for the details she provides, but more so for the profound questions she raises about the valuing of labor."--Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography"Boydston makes ambitious arguments that are predicted on a belief in a changing ideology."--Journal Of The Early Republic"This valuable study...provides a useful vehicle for assessing how the field has evolved in the United States since the end of the 1960's."--International of Social HistoryAbout the AuthorJeanne Boydston is at University of Wisconsin, Madison.