



Harlots, Hussies, and Poor Unfortunate Women: Crime, Transportation, and the Servitude of Female Convicts, 1718-1783 (Atlantic Crossings)

Edith M. Ziegler

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In *Harlots, Hussies, and Poor Unfortunate Women*, Edith M. Ziegler recounts the history of British convict women involuntarily transported to Maryland in the eighteenth century.

Great Britain's forced transportation of convicts to colonial Australia is well known. Less widely known is Britain's earlier program of sending convicts—including women—to North America. Many of these women were assigned as servants in Maryland. Titled using epithets that their colonial masters applied to the convicts, Edith M. Ziegler's *Harlots, Hussies, and Poor Unfortunate Women* examines the lives of this intriguing subset of American immigrants.

Basing much of her powerful narrative on the experiences of actual women, Ziegler restores individual faces to women stripped of their basic freedoms. She begins by vividly invoking the social conditions of eighteenth-century Britain, which suffered high levels of criminal activity, frequently petty thievery. Contemporary readers and scholars will be fascinated by Ziegler's explanation of how gender-influenced punishments were meted out to women and often ensnared them in Britain's system of convict labor.

Ziegler depicts the methods and operation of the convict trade and sale procedures in colonial markets. She describes the places where convict servants were deployed and highlights the roles these women played in colonial Maryland and their contributions to the region's society and economy. Ziegler's research also sheds light on escape attempts and the lives that awaited those who survived servitude.

Mostly illiterate, convict women left few primary sources such as diaries or letters in their own words. Ziegler has masterfully researched the penumbra of associated documents and accounts to reconstruct the worlds of eighteenth-century Britain and colonial Maryland and the lives of these unwilling American settlers. In illuminating this little-known episode in American history, Ziegler also discusses not just the fact that these women have been largely forgotten, but why. *Harlots, Hussies, and Poor Unfortunate Women* makes a valuable contribution to American history, women's studies, and labor history.

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