



BEN FRANKLIN'S WORLD

Episode 437: Lauren Duval “The Home Front: Civilian Life in Revolutionary America’s Occupied Cities”

[00:00:00] Announcer: You’re listening to an Airwave Media podcast.

[00:00:04] Liz Covart: *Ben Franklin’s World* is a production of Clio Digital Media, and support for this episode comes from the Massachusetts Historical Society, the first historical society founded in the United States in 1791.

[00:00:17] Lauren Duval: He brings not only himself, but a number of livestock. He has a handful of servants who accompany him, including a Black servant of uncertain freedom; it’s unclear if Damon was enslaved or not. And so there’s suddenly, with Cramond’s presence, there’s not just an officer in the house, but the Drinker household becomes so much more porous, right? There are all of these people moving in and out and back and forth to headquarters.

So for the Drinkers, it’s a real adjustment. But even as they have their separate areas of the house, slowly they develop a friendship. And really, their life starts to integrate in a way that, not that anything untoward happens, but they’re living in close proximity, right? And kind of relationships develop. And I think one of the really interesting things about this relationship is we have Elizabeth’s diary telling us what’s happening day-to-day, and how she’s interacting with Cramond.

But her husband is absent, and he’s really worried about the fact that there is a Scottish officer living with his wife and his children. And she’s also writing to alleviate Henry’s fears. And those things don’t always line up, right? So for instance, she tells Henry, “I try to avoid Cramond whenever possible. It’s an inconvenience. We barely see him.” Whereas her diary shows us that she’s having tea with him on an almost daily basis.

[00:01:39] Liz Covart: Hello and welcome to episode 437 of *Ben Franklin’s World*, the podcast dedicated to helping you learn more about how the people and events of our early American past have shaped the present-day world we live in. And I’m your host Liz Covart. When we think about the American War for Independence, we tend to think about it in a particular way. We picture soldiers, battlefields, and camp life. We follow George Washington across the Delaware River, and we count the casualties at Bunker Hill.



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In our imaginations, the war belongs to armies. But what about everyone else who lived through and experienced this war? Ninety percent of British North Americans didn't live in cities. They lived on farms and in towns and in households. And even those who did live in cities, cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah, they lived through and experienced the war, not on a battlefield, but in their kitchens, bedrooms, and living spaces.

American urban dwellers watched as soldiers camped on their commons and in their public squares. They negotiated with officers who showed up on their front doors, and they struggled to keep their families fed, their servants employed, and their households intact. This was the home front of the American Revolution, and it was far stranger, far more intimate, and more revealing of the war than any battlefield narrative has let us see.

Lauren Duval, an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Oklahoma, joins us to explore the home front in the War for American Independence, with details from her book, *The Home Front: Revolutionary Households, Military Occupations, and the Making of American Independence*. Now, during our investigation of how everyday Americans experience the Revolutionary War, Lauren reveals, how the war for American Independence disrupted city life, from trade and freedom of movement to the need to billet British officers in private homes; how class shaped the quartering experience at every turn, from elite men dueling over property damage to British officers beating apothecaries because they didn't believe these tradesmen could be gentlemen; and how periods of British occupation created unexpected openings for enslaved people, dangerous precarious openings, but real chances for them to reunite with families and pursue freedom in ways that peacetime had made nearly impossible.

But first, if you love *Ben Franklin's World*, the History Explorers Club is the place for you to go deeper. It's a membership community for lifelong learners just like you, who want to keep exploring the early American past beyond the podcast. As a member, you'll get access to an active community of people who love history, exclusive conversations with real historians, lunchtime chats with your fellow members and with me, and opportunities to ask the questions that occur to you after an episode like this one ends.



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To learn more about the History Explorers Club and to join us, visit historyexplorers.club. That's historyexplorers.club. Alright, are you ready to explore the home front during the War for Independence? Allow me to introduce you to our guest historian.

Our guest is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Oklahoma. Her research expertise is in the American Revolution and women's and gender history. She has published an award-winning article in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, and her work has been supported by numerous fellowships. She joins us today to discuss her new book, *The Home Front: Revolutionary Households, Military Occupations, and the Making of American Independence*. Welcome to *Ben Franklin's World*. Lauren Duval.

[00:05:21] Lauren Duval: Thanks so much, Liz. Delighted to be here.

[00:05:24] Liz Covart: So Lauren, in *The Home Front*, you note that the story of the American Revolution is deeply entwined with domestic life, and that the household offers us a valuable lens through which we can view how the war for independence unfolded and how everyday people, who actually lived through the war, experienced the war.

And Jane would like to know how you came to study this topic. Was there a letter, a diary, or a historical source that you found in the archives that convinced you to study the home front during the War for Independence?

[00:05:52] Lauren Duval: It's a great question. So this project for me, actually started in graduate school. I was working on a research seminar paper about the British occupation of Philadelphia. I found that so much of the scholarship really focuses on the Meschianza, which is this retirement ball that's held at the very end of the occupation for a British officer. It's totally elaborate. There's costumes and medieval jousts. There's a lot of consternation about it at the time. And it's also some really wonderful scholarship, right, about gender and kind of what's going on in the colonies at this moment.

But what really struck me, as I was looking into this event, is so much of the history of the occupation of Philadelphia focused on this one night that happened at the very end of the occupation. And I got very curious. What was life like for people the previous nine months? People who had had an army taking over their city, camping in public spaces, taking over



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warehouses and schools and churches living in their houses; what does that look like on a day-to-day basis? And so that kind of got me into the project.

And then the thing that really set me on the path of the home front was actually a handful of letters I found from a Philadelphia Quaker named Phoebe Pemberton. Her husband was an exile during the occupation. Right before the British captured the city, the Continental Congress actually exiled a number of prominent Quakers from Philadelphia because they were worried they might advocate for reconciliation, right, and that it would imperil the revolutionary effort. So her husband's among that group.

So she is kind of a female head of household in the occupied city with a number of children at home. And in the spring of 1778, I found this letter that she writes to Lord William Murray of the 42nd Regiment, who is quartered in the family's estate on the Schuylkill River. And he's been misbehaving, mistreating the tenants. And she writes in this letter, basically chastising him for his behavior and actually invokes the language of court martials saying kind of, "you've been behaving very unworthy of a British nobleman and officer."

And it was very clear, right, that she had an understanding of kind of like the military hierarchies going on in the city. She threatens if he doesn't start behaving better, she's going to lodge a complaint at headquarters, which she does shortly thereafter by relaying a complaint to a friendly officer who she also happens to exchange books with on the side.

Murray's ousted, that's not the end of the story though. Shortly thereafter, another general approaches her about quartering in this same house, and she agrees, right. But she actually lays out the terms. She says, you know, "you can do this. But I expect that you'll reserve the garden for my use, because I use that to feed my family and I rely on the vegetables."

And so there were a few distinct things that like really struck me reading through these letters. The first is that Quakers are pacifists, right? And so Phoebe Pemberton clearly has a familiarity with military hierarchies from living in the occupied city, right? Like the military has invaded her life, and she's quite adept at navigating them.

But also that the story is in so many ways at odds with the textbook understanding that we have of quartering. The British Army are forcing themselves on colonist houses, right, that it's this fairly contentious relationship, which does happen sometimes, right?



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But what we see here is that Phoebe Pemberton, like so many female heads of household during the war, wield a great deal of power in this situation. Like she's setting the rules, officers are abiding by them. She's negotiating the terms of these arrangements. And it's the kind of very different understanding of what quartering looks like than what we all learn kind of elementary and middle school.

And so for me, the big takeaway here, war happens on the home front. That it's a place where civilians are interacting with soldiers. That there are civilians navigating the problems that war brings to their communities.

But also, as I dug more into it, I came to understand that the war itself and the disruption of occupation also turns households themselves into fronts. Because one of the things that's really the organizing principle of society in the colonial era is that men will preside over their households and all the dependents who live within it. But what happens in these occupied regions is that men are not in charge anymore, the British Army is.

So there's all of these gender dynamics to parse as suddenly people who have traditionally been subordinated in household hierarchies—whether it's white women, domestic servants, enslaved people—have all kinds of new opportunities in these British occupied cities as men's control of their household is eroded because of the constraints of military occupation.

And this is a story that was incredibly interesting to me, because it's about how the war unfolds in kind of these daily mundane ways. But ways that we're deeply meaningful to people, often more so than politics, right? Because it's happening in their households, it's happening to their families, their property, and really kind of delving into what the revolution looked like for people who experienced it in these very intimate spaces.

[00:10:29] Liz Covart: It's also interesting because as you said, in our imaginations of quartering, the British just go in and say, "we're going to take over your house." And yet you found these records that tell us there are other dynamics at play that complicate this rather simple, imaginative story. And we're going to explore those dynamics further in our conversation.

Now, one question I would like to ask you. When we talk about the War for Independence, we're always talking about battles or perhaps we're talking about camp life in the army for



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men and women and enslaved people, yet we know that the home front existed. But we don't really talk about what civilian life was like during the War for Independence.

And this made me wonder whether we don't think about civilian life during this war, because if you think about the United States' most recent experiences with war—wars such as World War II, or Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars—all of those wars were fought in far off locations from the United States. So do you think this is why we don't often think about civilian life and experiences during the American War for Independence, because for us, you know, in our recent memories, war is always something that's fought and experienced elsewhere and by others, far from American home life?

[00:11:45] Lauren Duval: I think absolutely. And I love that you brought up the 20th century because I think so often the way that the revolution has been written about or the home fronts in the revolution is more reminiscent of the World Wars. So as you said, there's the women who follow the army, the communities around the army. But the home front is this kind of place separate from war, right, where patriotic women are supporting the war effort from afar. They're making homespun, they're managing family businesses and farms. But it doesn't really account for the people who are caught up in the war. And so I think that's one part of it.

And relatedly, I think the other aspect is the way that occupation has actually been characterized in the military scholarship. Often with the military history, occupation is kind of seen as separate from war. It's a break in war, almost. War happens on the battlefields rather than kind of active warfare. But that's not the case for civilians, right, who have an army coming in and occupying their city.

So I think kind of the juxtaposition of these two, right, means that we actually have this big blind spot about the home front in occupied cities where for civilians, it's deeply traumatic. Every city that the British occupied during the war is the site of a major battle or a siege. Urban warfare is constant. And this is something really new for American civilians, particularly those along the coast.

Throughout the colonial period, there's a lot of conflict in the back country, particularly with Native nations. But for nearly two centuries, Anglo-Americans had been partners in Britain's colonial warfare. And during the revolution, for the first time, the full might of the British



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Army has really turned upon Anglo-American colonists and their households, and their property, and their family. And occupation brings war to their doorsteps in a way that is visceral and immediate.

And there's this real blurring of the home front and the battle front that happens there. And I think something that has, as we've been talking about, kind of been obscured by disciplinary boundaries, right. And some of it comes down to sources even. Women's and gender historians, who often the ones writing about the home front haven't typically looked at military papers, even though women are all over military sources.

Similarly, military historians have not been as interested in writing about civilians on the home front, and so they've been talking past each other. And so what my work does is try to kind of sit at that intersection and say like, what does it look like if we try to study war from the perspective of these civilians on the home front?

[00:14:03] Liz Covart: Well I'd love for us to talk about the different types of civilians you discuss in your book. So in *The Home Front*, Lauren focuses on the experiences of early Americans who lived specifically in urban port cities during the War for Independence. Lauren, Pamela wonders why you focused on experiences in urban port cities rather than in more rural areas? She also wonders how civilian experiences with the war may have differed between urban and rural areas?

[00:14:29] Lauren Duval: Yeah, cities are home to only about 10% of the population in British North America. So there are a lot of people who reside outside of cities. But these urban ports, my book looks at six of them: Boston, New York, Newport Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah.

And these cities really hold outsized importance in revolutionary culture, politics, fashion, commerce. These are thriving commercial and political centers that tether the colonies to the larger empire. And so a lot of scholars have looked at these cities as a place where kind of the epicenters of revolution happen in the lead up to the war.

But particularly thinking about the home front, cities offer this really interesting lens to think about it, because a lot of the people who live in cities, particularly the middling and upper classes, are merchants. And these are some of the families who are on the forefront of the



consumer revolution in the eighteenth century, right. And so these are the same people whose domestic identities are increasingly becoming tied to the material aspects of domestic life. By the end of the eighteenth century, there will be more broadly this association between households, domestic life, and Anglo-American identity. But a lot of the forefront of this is in the cities among merchants who are increasingly, progressively tied to their class and racialized identities.

And so kind of looking at the home front, we get this glimpse of how war disrupts these intimate spaces for people who are increasingly associating themselves with their households. That's one aspect of it, right? Kind of theoretically.

Practically, cities are really important to the British war effort. European warfare is premised upon the idea that armies capture cities to preserve supply lines. And I will also say during the revolution, although occupation is primarily an urban endeavor, the British are capturing these cities to secure supply lines. They're nevertheless often radiating out from these metropolitan areas.

Cities are a launching pad to get to other places. And so occupation really emanates for miles beyond the cities themselves. It does affect civilians living in more rural areas. And I would say, you know, urban civilians are more likely to live under martial law, right, to kind of have these day-to-day encounters with the army. People living in more rural areas are more likely to encounter the army in the context of raiding or marauding, more violence. Not that there's not violence in cities, but I think it's different encountering the army in these bursts of intensity as opposed to kind of living alongside them every day.

And so I think in both environments we do see that occupation brings new levels of violence to American life. And I think in some ways, the fact that the boundary is a little tenuous allows for connections to foster. Even people in more rural areas can hear about what's happening in cities. And they can also envision that violence coming to their communities or kind of see how it could have ended their lives as well.

[00:17:20] Liz Covart: To help us more accurately imagine the experiences of urban life during the War for Independence, would you take us on a tour of New York, Philadelphia, or one of the other cities you wrote about in your book, *The Home Front*?



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Because I think it would be really great to hear how life functioned in these cities just before the war, so that we can create a baseline in our understanding for how people experienced everyday life in the cities.

[00:17:44] Lauren Duval: Yeah, so these cities are really vibrant, interdependent communities. City dwellers live in pretty close proximity to one another. Every city looks different. But in a lot of these places, walls of houses might be touching. People can hear what's happening in their neighbor's house or in the nearby apartments. People are constantly out and about. They kind of live in their households as much as they live in their neighborhood.

They go to church. They go to school. They're visiting community businesses. They're going to markets. And so city dwellers really make their lives in these connections between households as much as they do in their own households. And I think that's a really important part of this, because the home front, in the way that I understand it, is not just the house itself, but kind of the broader upending of daily life in a way that for city dwellers is deeply tethered to how they move about the city, how they interact with their neighbors.

And I think it very much varies by class. Cities that have all ranges of people of social status, wealthy merchants, laboring people, enslaved people, free Black people. All of their households look a little different, but I think they are all connected into this web of urban life. Cities are really defined by interdependence in a way that is fully upended when the army shows up.

[00:18:55] Liz Covart: Yeah, and I think there's even more of a freedom of movement in cities that we should talk about too. Because not only were urban dwellers out interacting with their neighbors pretty freely, but they would also go to a market with goods from all over the Atlantic—well really goods from all over the world—that they would purchase. Plus, they'd also encounter people who lived on farms around their city because those people would come into the city to sell their produce at those markets. Plus they'd have captains and sailors who would come off the ships that were anchored in their harbor.

So, urban dwellers would really mingle with all sorts of people inside and outside their homes and in the city. So how did urban dwellers' freedom, this freedom that we've talked about of



purchasing goods and mingling with all sorts of different people change when the British Army occupied these cities during the war?

[00:19:45] Lauren Duval: It fully overturns it all. So occupation transforms American cities. It upends all of these rhythms and routines of daily life that you so nicely just laid out.

The army is taking public buildings, warehouses, churches, stores, for quarters, for stables, for riding academies, for prisons. Politics is shaping some of these requisitions, right, sometimes the army is targeting businesses or houses or churches, right, that they know are sympathetic to the rebellion.

For instance, in Philadelphia, the State House where the Declaration is signed, actually becomes a prison for Continental prisoners, which British officers find quite ironic, and they relish to an extent.

But in addition to that, there's a lot of changes in the physical layout of the city. The army is demolishing houses. They're chopping down fruit trees. They're erecting fortifications. They are trying to create a landscape that can be easily surveilled, because they're entrenching. They're fortifying these cities.

Civilian households become targets of plunder. One of the things that the army also does is offers proclamations of freedom to enslaved people, right. And this is intended as a military measure. It's intended to deprive revolutionaries of valuable labor or resources. But that means that you also have in a lot of these cities—in addition to soldiers themselves and their families, the kind of military communities—large swaths of self-emancipated refugees coming to British lines. You also have loyalist refugees crowding in the streets.

There's a lot of people coming to these cities and really just, they are overflowing. You have lots of descriptions of armies encamping in tents because there's not enough place for people to live. So there is kind of that one aspect of it, where the city just is totally transformed to support military efforts.

The other thing that changes is how people move through the city. Because the British, as much as they are interested in securing the military stronghold, that also means regulating civilian movement. So civilians now have to adhere to things like curfews. They need passes to move through the streets or to cross military lines.



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The army is increasingly surveilling people moving throughout the city. They're overlooking their market activities to make sure that there's not price gouging. There is just a wholesale change in the way that people relate to each other with the often hostile surveillance people feel the army is imposing upon their lives.

And then on top of that, right, as they're just moving through the streets they're encountering soldiers everywhere. Troops are vandalizing stores, overturning carts, often moving through the streets in groups, right. Something that a lot of women find pretty intimidating. They sometimes assault passers by.

And so there's this new level of violence that happens in occupied cities that really fundamentally changes the way that civilians relate to the places they live and how they move through the cities that they had called home.

[00:22:31] Liz Covart: Now, as Lauren definitely describes in her book, *The Home Front*, how really Americans experience the war really depended on who they were, their social status. So wealthy people experience war differently from poor people, men experience the war differently from women, and white people experience the war differently from Black and Indigenous people.

Lauren, one of the wartime experiences that you cover in great detail in *The Home Front* is the experience of Philadelphia, Quaker Elizabeth Drinker and her family. So would you tell us more about the Drinkers and how they experienced war?

[00:23:03] Lauren Duval: So the Drinkers were an upper-middle class merchant family in Philadelphia. They're Quakers, which is an important part of this because Quakers endeavor remained neutral during the war, right? They didn't want to take a side. They are religious pacifists.

And in the decade leading up to the war, they were quite skillful at maintaining their neutrality. But similar to the Pembertons that I talked about earlier at the beginning of the podcast, Henry Drinker is also exiled in that group of Quakers at the start of the occupation of Philadelphia.

And so Elizabeth Drinker is left at the start of the occupation with all of her children—they kind of range and age, from like a toddler up to teenagers, I think there's five or six of



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them—and her sister, along with a few household servants, right, that are kind of left to navigate the occupied city on their own. And she has a really detailed diary in which she recounts every day living through the occupied city, how the family is surviving, how war and occupation has transformed her day-to-day experiences.

But one of the things that's really interesting about the Drinker family is because it's so well documented, between the diary and then letters that Elizabeth is writing back and forth to her exiled husband Henry, we have a great sense of what day-to-day life looks like in the Drinker household, in a way that we might not if it wasn't for war.

Because most people aren't writing about the mundanities of like where furniture is right, or what rooms they're using when they're all sitting out to dinner together in the evening, right? But because the war has separated the Drinker family, she and Henry are writing to each other in great detail about what was going on in the household, which allows us as historians to go in and kind of see what's going on day-to-day.

In January of 1778, so a few months into the occupation, Elizabeth Drinker ends up quartering a Scottish officer, which kind of throws the household into even more chaos. And she writes a lot to her husband, kind of detailing the arrangements of, you know, "here's where he's living. Here are the rules that I've set out for him that he's following." And so it's this really unparalleled insight into quartering arrangements.

But the other interesting aspect about the Drinker family is because it's so well documented, we also have a good sense of what's happening with the servants in the household. And so we have a woman named Ann Kelly who ends up leaving with a British officer. The nature of their relationship is somewhat unclear, right. But she decides to go seek employment with him. We have another woman named Jane Boon who actually marries a Hessian orderly and goes off to start her own household. And so it's this microcosm of how all of these people of different statuses are really experiencing the war as it comes into their lives.

[00:25:28] Liz Covart: I wonder if we could talk more about the Drinker's quartering experience, because I'm trying to imagine this British officer just showing up at my house and saying, "I'm now going to live with you, and I need some of the rooms in your house."



Can you describe the situation of how James Cramond, who was the Scottish officer you mentioned, how Cramond came to live in the Drinker household? And what was that like for the Drinkers to have this army officer sharing their living space?

[00:25:55] Lauren Duval: Yeah, so one of the things that happens when the British take over a city, is that they actually do an assessment of all the available house space. And the quartermaster or barrack master allocates assignments to officers. So clearly the Drinker family's house had been identified as a place with space.

And we know that in the 42nd Regiment, which is the regiment Cramond's part of, officers often drew lots for households. So probably that's what happened, right, he kind of drew a lot and was assigned to the Drinker household. And so he shows up, knocks on the door, asks her about availability of quarters.

And they have these really interesting interactions, because initially she puts them off as she's done with a few other officers earlier in the war. She says, "my husband's not home. I have a lot of children. It's like, isn't a great situation, like please go somewhere else." And like that worked for her a few times. But what Cramond it doesn't. He's persistent. He comes back a few different times.

He also, you can see him trying to present himself as a defender of the household. And Elizabeth tries, you know, "my husband's not here."

And he's like, "that's a good reason to have a soldier in the house. I can protect you and I hear that Hessians might be coming to the neighborhood. I'd be happy to keep your household safe."

So they have these conversations where both of them are performing kind of these gendered roles, feminine defenselessness, masculine chivalry. And over the course of these meetings, they feel each other out. Elizabeth continues to try to put him off. He keeps coming back and saying, "I swear I would be a good lodger. I promise I'll abide by your rules."

And they have several conversations in when she lays out what those rules would be, right. Like no swearing, no drinking, no gambling, kind of staying in certain rooms of the house. And he assures her "like, I am the good tenant. I will do that."



And so ultimately, Elizabeth is hopeful that maybe she can get away without quartering. But after talking to various friends and neighbors, it becomes clear that most houses in Philadelphia are going to have to quarter an officer. And so she decides that Cramond seems like a gentleman. And so maybe she could do a lot worse.

And she agrees to have him move into the household. So Cramond moves in in early January. He brings not only himself, but a number of livestock. He has a handful of servants who accompany him, including a Black servant of uncertain freedom. It's unclear if Damon was enslaved or not. He has a Scottish servant and his wife who live at a neighbor's house nearby, along with several orderlies who are often in the house, right, because officers have these elaborate retinues that travel with them.

And so there's suddenly with Cramond's presence, there's not just an officer in the house, but the Drinker household becomes so much more porous, right? There are all of these people moving in and out and back and forth to headquarters. So for the Drinkers, it's a real adjustment, both kind of feeling that connection to just headquarters and military authorities, but also just what it looks like day-to-day, right?

And so the Drinkers and Cramond kind of settle into a routine. Her servants prepare their meals before his servants do. They store their supplies in separate places. And they kind of settle into life together. Even as they have their separate areas of the house, slowly they develop a friendship, because they're living in close proximity to each other. As much as Elizabeth didn't want an officer in the house as much as, as a Quaker, she is opposed to having the army there.

He's 22 years old. He's kind of age, of family, and apprentices living in the house. By all accounts, he is well-mannered, at least to women. He has kind of a reputation in the army. But he starts to socialize with Elizabeth and her friends. He even walks some of the women home in the evenings acting as a surrogate protector. And really their life starts to integrate in a way that, not that anything untoward happens, but they're living in close proximity, right. And kind of relationships develop.

And I think one of the really interesting things about this relationship is we have Elizabeth's diary telling us what's happening day-to-day and how she's interacting with Cramond, but her



husband is absent and he's really worried about the fact that there is the Scottish officer living with his wife and his children.

And she's also writing to alleviate Henry's fears. And those things don't always line up, right? So for instance, she tells Henry, "I try to avoid Cramond whenever possible. It's an inconvenience. We barely see him." Whereas her diary shows us that she's having tea with him on an almost daily basis.

And so we can kind of begin to parse not only what's happening in her relationship with Cramond, right, what it means for Elizabeth Drinker to experience occupation and quartering, but also how Cramond's presence is really disrupting the household at a broader scale, and Henry Drinker's understanding of the household and his place in it and what it should look like. And start to see some of those fault lines that are emerging because of how intimate occupation is in these spaces.

[00:30:31] Liz Covart: What I find really interesting about your description are a few things. One, Cramond actually talked his way into living with the Drinker's home. He didn't just show up and unilaterally take rooms, he and Elizabeth went through this period of negotiation for living space.

And this is pretty interesting, because we think of these British armies—I think in our imaginative story of how quartering worked—as just showing up and forcing their way into these homes and taking over rooms. But we see that Elizabeth is setting the terms of this arrangement with Cramond and they're working it out.

And that leads me to another surprise from your description, is that I think another way that people are experiencing war, especially in these occupied cities, is it's not just a physical experience, but a psychological one.

If Cramond represents a fairly typical example of a British officer taking quarters, then it seemed like the British Army was really hoping to not alienate the people who were living in these rebellious colonies. And you know, maybe they were hoping that people like the Drinkers would help force a reconciliation of sorts with Great Britain.



And, yeah, I found that really interesting that the British Army, even though it had to quarter men are trying to do so in a way that also kind of wins the hearts and minds of the American urban dwellers, even in this middle period of the war in 1778.

[00:31:56] Lauren Duval: Absolutely. There is a variety of interactions, right? We also have examples of officers forcing themselves and kind of saying at the point of a sword like “I’m quartered here now,” but that does seem to be an exception. There is this sense among the British Army that they are here to win the hearts and minds of this population, right. That they are hoping to reintegrate into the empire at the end of the war.

And I think in particular when we’re looking at households headed by women—right, whether these are widows or just women who are in charge of the household during the war because their husbands are absent for various reasons—there is a real sense among the British Army, this idea of Marshal chivalry, right. That forms so much of the core of kind of how the British officers engage with civilians, particularly female civilians. Is this idea that they’re going to do their best to protect them.

And that they’re going to really try to win over civilians through genteel manners, through social interactions. That they’re going to counter some of the revolutionary propaganda that shows British officers and the British Army and their allies attacking American households. Saying like, “no, that’s not what we’re doing.” Right? “We’re going to show up and we’re going to be well-mannered and behave like gentlemen and woo civilians over to the British side through those social interactions.”

There is this kind of sense that the war on the home front is a war for hearts and minds, and that social terrain of quartering is where a lot of that happens. And so it is very interesting, right? And particularly when we compare what happens in these female-headed households with male-headed households, we can see the extent to which chivalry really reigns in these places where it’s predominantly women.

[00:33:38] Liz Covart: Let’s talk about that. What happened when a soldier drew the short straw and received a billet in a male-headed household, you know, where the male is still living in the city because it wasn’t seen as a threat by the Continental Congress or the British Army. And actually, let’s pause on that question so that we can take a moment for our episode sponsors.



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I don't know about you, but I can't wait to find out what the experience was like for soldiers trying to quarter in male-headed households. It'll be really interesting to find out how men negotiated quartering terms and whether their families felt safer because their father and husbands were at home.

But I do want to take a moment to talk about what makes this podcast possible. As I mentioned at the start, support for this episode comes from Massachusetts Historical Society, the first historical society founded in the United States in 1791. Our partnership with the MHS helps us bring you more resources and keeps our content freely available.

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So thank you for your help and thank you for your consideration. And a sincere thank you to Dawn C., James C., Sarah C., Penelope C., Alicia C., and Catherine C. for your generous support. Thank you for helping to make this podcast possible. Thank you so much for supporting our work.

[00:35:35] Dynamic Ad Break: Audio varies and may shift timestamps in the second half of this episode by 1-2 minutes. Thank you for supporting *Ben Franklin's World*.

[00:35:38] Liz Covart: Lauren, what happened when a soldier drew a billet in a male-headed household? What was their experience like versus the experience that James Cramond had had billeting with a woman-headed household?



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[00:35:48] Lauren Duval: Generally speaking, it's much more contentious. So men who remain in occupied cities, often they're either loyalists, they're disaffected, or they're men who are kind of willing to be flexible in their allegiance because the most zealous partisans are fleeing before the British show up. A lot of men leaving their wives to protect property.

But when we're looking at the men who are left in cities, a lot of them, even those who are loyalists, firmly have this belief that under Anglo-American law, the idea that a man's household is this castle. And that they expect that they will rule over their household, that their demands will be obeyed.

And that's a really stark contrast with British officers coming in, in a city under martial law, expecting to exert their military authority. So you basically have these instances where you have two men both expecting to be in charge of the household, and kind of trying to exert control over the other. And often this results in kind of explosive confrontations that draws the whole household into the fray.

And what's really interesting about these encounters is that they play out differently based on class. So in South Carolina for instance, there's an incident between Dr. Charles Drayton and Banastre Tarleton. Tarleton keeps pasturing his horses in Drayton's prized gardens. He asks them not to. Threats escalate. Actually, Drayton ends up cutting the ears off the horses. It gets very gruesome.

But the two resolve their confrontation, it's, they're going to dual, and then they decide to sit down and have a drink together, because these are two men at the upper classes, they have the rituals of honor, of Anglo-American gentility to kind of work out. Gentlemen do get upset when their property is threatened, right, and they're able to kind of use that language of honor to find an accommodation.

Whereas in Newport, so when we're talking about men of different classes. So there's, in Newport, an apothecary named Joseph Tweedy quarters an officer by the name of John Cambel of the Corps of Engineers. And the two end up coming to blows because Cambel doesn't respect a lot of the rules that Tweedy has laid out for his household.

And Tweedy actually tries to initiate a dual, right? He demands satisfaction, but Cambel refuses to acknowledge it. Instead, he just starts beating Tweedy. And he's brought to a court



martial on the charge of beating “Tweedy a gentleman of the town of Newport” And his entire defense hinges on the fact that he actually committed no crime because Tweedy is not a gentleman, he’s just an apothecary. And so, he ends up not being punished for it.

So we end up seeing the class as this really important part of these negotiations, whether or not officers and kind of male heads of households can respect one another; how they work out these differences in quartering arrangements.

But there’s also examples of, for instance, in New York, a household where Dr. Daniel Kendrick, who’s a loyalist surgeon, comes to constant blows with the loyalist Lieutenant Thomas Pritchard, who’s quartered in his house. They essentially engage in like wholesale household warfare.

They are stomping in the hallway outside each other’s rooms. They’re leaving filth in the hallway. They’re walking horses through the house, leaving the door open to the street, locking the other one out, so the other one can’t get in. They’re having their servants torment the other servants, their wives are getting involved, their children are getting involved. They’re even throwing dirt into the water that servants have collected to do the laundry, right? And so it originates from these two men trying to exert control over their shared space, but emanates out in this way that really disrupts life for everyone in the household.

[00:39:17] Liz Covart: We’ve been talking about occupation experiences on the home front for wealthy and middle classes. But how did people who were in the lower classes experience British occupation? So were shoemakers and other poor tradespeople or laborers also expected to quarter British soldiers in their really small homes? How did they experience occupation?

[00:39:36] Lauren Duval: So only officers are quartered on civilians. So the army typically will put enlisted men into public buildings or warehouses, empty houses. And so it’s only officers who are going into civilians’ households and quartering.

And generally speaking, officers are also of the elites. Some of them are from the aristocracy. They want to be in nicer houses. So there is a demand for quarters among the elite. In some cities because of space constraints, that’s simply not possible. In which case, typically they might end up in houses of poorer people.



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But we also see that, there's examples of a loyalist family from Boston, when they relocate to New York they specifically choose a small house, because they know that an officer can't be quartered on them if they don't have enough room. And so it can happen if there are space constraints.

I think more common for people of the laboring classes is they're encountering soldiers on the streets, right, as they go about their chores, as they're at market. They're out and about the occupied city in a way that the elites are able to withdraw inside often, right, and they send their servants out to go do their errands. And so I think a lot of people of the laboring classes encounter soldiers in that way, or perhaps the soldiers are breaking in plundering, things like that more so than quartering arrangements.

[00:40:54] Liz Covart: Something else that I thought was notable from *The Home Front*, your book, is a reminder that when the British Army entered a city to occupy it, they brought specie or hard currency with them. Which had always been in short supply during the colonial period, but it seemed to be an even shorter supply during the War for Independence.

So could you talk more about this influx of cash, and what it did to urban labor markets while the British are occupying these cities? What did having ready cash in the city mean for people like the Drinkers whose head of household Henry was an exile, which means he probably wasn't able to earn much money and send it back to provide for his family.

So how do people like Elizabeth Drinker and her peers handle their own shortages of cash, especially when the British brought opportunities to earn ready hard money?

[00:41:45] Lauren Duval: Absolutely. In fact, another Philadelphia Quaker, Sarah Fisher talks about at one point during the occupation breaking open a barrel of, she calls it ship stuff, right, but basically her husband had bought it to feed the cow. And she finds it sweet enough to make a bread of. So there is this real sense of scarcity that a lot of elite and middling civilians are not used to.

And so I think the army's hard coin is an enticement, right, for people who, whether it's opening their houses to quarter officers because the British Army does pay, they're supposed to pay civilians for their use of house space according to the Quartering Act. Whether or not



that happens, it depends on the situation, but in theory, they pay, which is a real difference from the Continental Army actually.

And so that certainly weighs into some people's calculations. For instance, in Charleston, Eliza Lucas Pinckney actually comes up with a scheme. She's going to rent her house to people affiliated with the army as a way to get her coin to sustain her family, and she'll move in with her daughter. So people are certainly responding to the army's economic boost that it's bringing. Suddenly there, you see merchants coming to the city to sell their wares.

I think one of the ways that we see it really manifesting in the household is how it upends labor markets. And so the British Army, you have officers coming in who are eager for domestic service. They're eager for women to do their laundry. They're looking for sexual partners. And they're willing to pay, often extravagant wages, in hard coin.

And so for a lot of the women who labor in revolutionary households, that's very appealing. The chance to leave domestic service early, right? Like they're still going to be servants, but kind of do it on their own terms, particularly if they're indentured, right, it's a chance to leave their indenture. And it's a chance to really leverage the value of their labor for a fresh start.

And so what we see happening is servants really fleeing the households of the urban elite to seek work among the army because they know that their labor is valued and will be compensated in a way that it just frankly isn't amongst civilians. And a lot of civilians in British occupied cities are kind of constantly lamenting how hard it is to find good help, to find servants. That either the people who are available don't want to work for them, or they're demanding such extravagant wages that it's impossible to afford them.

So the army's presence, the presence of coin really upends the availability of labor and labor markets in these cities in ways that allows women, in particular of the laboring classes, to really pursue new opportunities with the army that would've been unavailable to them in peacetime.

[00:44:16] Liz Covart: Thus far, we've largely talked about white experiences of British occupation, but you also do a wonderful job in *The Home Front* of covering the experiences of enslaved and free Black men and women.



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So I wonder if we could talk about how Black people experienced periods of British occupations on their home fronts? And whether these periods of occupation offered any opportunities for freedom, just as Dunmore's Proclamation or the Philipsburg Proclamation did for men and women who were willing to flee to British lines and join the British Army.

[00:44:48] Lauren Duval: Yeah, so I think one of the things that is really evident looking at the actions of enslaved people throughout the colonies is that news of those British Proclamations spreads, whether it's Dunmore's Proclamation or the Philipsburg Proclamation.

Throughout the war, somewhere historians have estimated around like twenty-thousand people flee to British lines in pursuit of freedom. They become this beacon of hope where a lot of enslaved people hope that they can bring their kin, bring their families, and secure their freedom for their families in a way that would've been much harder to do during peace time, right. Because the British occupation creates these new destinations of freedom throughout the colonies, often in close proximity, right, people don't have to run as far to get to these destinations of refuge.

That doesn't mean it's easy. And it doesn't mean that freedom is guaranteed. They are often having to travel war-torn landscapes. They're having to make it into cities that are under military occupation, where although freedom is promised, it's tenuous.

Self-emancipated refugees often end up in these clustered housing areas, sickness happens. There's always the threat of being kidnapped or sold by unscrupulous officers. There's no guarantee of protection. Often it comes down to, even though the British have these proclamations that promise freedom, in practice it's often individual officers, right, who are protecting families and their kin.

But that being said, for people who do make it to British occupied cities, they are able to live in somewhat relative freedom with their family and with their kin. And one of the things that we see happening in particular is that there's this big uptick in family flight during the war.

It's a lot easier, particularly for women to flee with children because British occupied cities are relatively closer. And we see British officers commenting on the number of women and children who are flooding to these cities. And in a lot of cases, that's actually at odds of what



the British were expecting. They were hoping that by offering these proclamations, that they would bring enslaved men who could work on fortifications, who could kind of serve in some of the other units of the army.

But we see enslaved people insisting on fleeing together. And they forced the British to deal with them and to protect their families. And that's something that really shapes the landscape of occupied cities because once the British start making concessions and accommodating that, it snowballs. And more and more people show up hoping that the British will protect themselves and their families.

That being said, British proclamations do in theory, only apply to people enslaved by revolutionaries. Loyalists are technically excluded because the British are, as we talked about right, trying to keep the loyalties of Anglo-American civilians, and they want to uphold the property rights of white loyalists.

But in practice, these cities are so chaotic, there's so much going on. It's relatively easy for self-emancipated people to kind of skirt some of those regulations, right, or to just lie. And so you do see people enslaved by both revolutionaries and loyalists making these bids for freedom in a way that is a better chance than they had almost any other point leading up to the war. But it's still very dangerous and very precarious.

But I think the fact that people are willing to take a chance on the British Army just shows what a moment of opportunity this is for Black families.

[00:48:08] Liz Covart: Something that I've been thinking about since episode 333, so for more than a hundred episodes, is that in episode 333, we spoke with scholars about the Franco-American occupation of Yorktown, Virginia in 1781. And the French and American armies occupied that city at the same time that Cornwallis's British Army was occupying that city. So talk about an occupation.

But what struck me was how wealthy people who could afford to move away from Yorktown did so, but they often left behind some of their enslaved people to stay and protect their property. And some of those enslaved people really did stay and did their best in this very dangerous situation, because the siege of Yorktown is happening. But they did their best to protect their enslavers property.



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I got the sense from your book, *The Home Front*, that this type of thing was happening in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other places as well. So I do wonder if you would tell us about this situation. About what kinds of opportunities the departure of enslavers opened for enslaved people and why some enslaved people were inclined to stay and protect their enslavers property instead of running towards the possibility of freedom?

[00:49:19] Lauren Duval: Yeah, I think it's something where it's deeply individualized. And I think in these situations when the army shows up, when an enslave leaves, it presents enslaved people with a moment of choice about how they want to handle this new landscape.

And some do choose to self-emancipate, to pursue freedom behind British lines. But we also see a lot of people who use this moment to get back to their family. Slavery really separated families across great distance, even before the war. And so we do see a lot of people who will take this moment, whether they stay at the plantation and people come to them or where they might go seek out their kin.

That where for them, this moment is a chance to reconnect with their loved ones. And that they choose kind of the relative—on balance, right, kind of knowing the threats that lurk behind British lines—some people choose to stay and to be together with their kin somewhat unsupervised, often, if their enslaver labor has left.

We also see people who use this moment to leverage or negotiate. So, for instance, one of Henry Laurens's plantations in South Carolina, there is a group of related kin who make a bid for freedom to British occupied Charleston. And one of Laurens's employees actually tracks down this group of self-emancipated people and negotiates with them. And they basically get him to concede that if they don't have to work under a specific overseer, if they can stay with their kin, they will come back. They basically have managed to leverage a situation that, for them is—desirable is a strong word, right—but a situation that allows them to be with their family, to feel relatively in control of their workspace.

And so people are making—as much as for white civilians, right—like this is a moment of chaos, of danger, people are trying to assess where safety is, how they can best protect their loved ones. And they arrive at different conclusions.



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[00:51:41] Liz Covart: Well, we have talked about a lot of different experiences today, and you explore even more experiences in your book, *The Home Front*. But Lauren, as you look back on all of the research that you've done and the work that you did to write this book, how do you think these varied experiences of civilian life at home shape the overall American experience of the War for Independence?

[00:51:36] Lauren Duval: I think one of the things that I really found in the course of writing this book is, you know, all of these cities are very distinct demographic. There are things that are regionally specific, but looking at the home front, it becomes very clear that there's more that really connects colonists across these disparate colonies because there is, I think, something genuinely traumatic about experiencing war in domestic spaces and households.

And for a lot of people, that is how they experience the war. It's a threat to their families, their property, their security. And that is deeply disorienting, particularly for people who were unaccustomed to living among active warfare or who were relatively secure in their status.

And so I think for a lot of Americans, throughout the war, particularly white Americans, there is a sense that there's a longing for return to normalcy, right. That when the war ends, that they will kind of all return home, go back to their old routines, be safe with their families. And I think that's something that really resonates. I think a lot of people, regardless of where they live, regardless of their status, feel this sense of dislocation and fear throughout the war.

And occupation really is threatening to a lot of people, even those who do not live in these cities because they can envision themselves and their families similarly threatened. And so I think the war on the home front actually becomes this important touchstone for more Americans to unify around after the war. To kind of say that everyone, throughout the colonies suffered under, under the British, that the British came in, they threatened their families, they invaded their homes. But now the war has been won. That Americans are safe with their families.

And that that in itself becomes a really critical part of how many white Americans envision independence and what it means. This idea that they can sit under their vine and fig trees, that they can be safe, they've secured home rule after eight years of warfare that really upended their lives and threatened their families.



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And so I think this domestic experience of war becomes really integral not only to how Americans experience the war, but then also how they remember it and make meaning of it as they've set upon the path of nation building. That kind of the idea of protecting households, protecting property, becomes really integral to some of the laws, and really goals of the new nation in the aftermath of the revolution.

[00:53:59] Liz Covart: Okay, we should move into the "Time Warp." This is the segment of the show where we ask you a hypothetical history question about what might have happened if something had occurred differently or if someone had acted differently.

In your opinion Lauren, what might have happened if the British had spent most of their resources fighting the war in what the colonists called the backcountry? If problems of supply had not largely restricted the British Army to the Eastern seaboard, how might the experience of the American War for Independence have been different for civilians?

[00:54:30] Lauren Duval: It's a great question and a tricky one. An important caveat here, right, is that the war is also fought in the backcountry. I look at the cities which are strongholds for the army, and as you mentioned, really important to maintaining supply lines, but we do kind of have a sense of what the war looked like in the backcountry because the British are particularly in the South, there is a lot of war waged in the backcountry, particularly in South Carolina and Georgia.

It's this really brutal militia war with a lot of violence, a lot of property destruction. And it's also more, I think that people's interactions with the army here is more transitory, like armies passing through; perhaps marauding, plundering, but you don't see people settling into the same rhythms of negotiated daily life that we see in cities.

So I think what we would see, to return to your question, is there would be a lot of raiding happening in the back country, a lot of property destruction. I think one of the questions to kind of add on to this, is to ask how the world would've been different for which civilians. Because most of the population centers in the colonies are along the East Coast, and so obviously those urban inhabitants, primarily Anglo-Americans, would have had less interaction with British troops just by virtue of geography and where people live.



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Those encounters with British troops maybe would not be as well publicized because they're taking place in more remote regions, which certainly could have alienated fewer colonists from the British, right. It's much easier to become disillusioned with the British when it's happening in the street in front of you or in your neighbor's house. Or when people are reading in revolutionary newspapers about the horrors that the British Army's committing.

In the backcountry, that might just be harder to communicate. And I think the war maybe would've felt further away for a lot of people who live on the coast. That being said, there are certainly Anglo-Americans who live in the back country who would've experienced violence.

I think one of the things that would be much more prominent would be the role of Indigenous allies on both sides, because fighting does happen among Indigenous nations and in Indigenous homelands. Certainly focusing the effort in the backcountry would've brought that even more to the fore. And we know that there are moments of real violence and destruction, thinking about Sullivan's Expedition. And certainly there would've been more of that, I think, had the war been fought more in the backcountry.

Thinking about self-emancipated people, it would be a lot harder for them to reach British lines if primarily the war is waged in the backcountry. There's just not as easy to get to. It's not as in close proximity.

And I think in addition, just kind of from the British military tactic, because the back country is less populated, there probably is less of an impetus to kind of woo civilians, right? To win that war of hearts and minds, and maybe more just violence, warfare, brute force, right, than we see happening in the cities.

The other thing I'll add is I think the fact that the war is fought in and around cities is what makes it, in some ways accessible, lets people feel like it could happen to them at any moment and helps plant some of those nascent seeds of nation building after the war. And so I think if the war was more untethered from those population centers, that whole process of kind of finding unity after the war also would've been a lot harder just because the war would've felt a lot more distant for a lot more people.

[00:57:41] Liz Covart: Lauren, I know you've just finished writing *The Home Front*. In fact, it just hit bookstore shelves, but are you working or planning to work on a new project? Will



there be a sequel to *The Home Front*, but from the point of view of Continental Army occupied cities or towns?

[00:57:55] Lauren Duval: Actually, I think that would be a great project that someone should do, looking at the Continental occupied cities.

So my next project is actually growing out of this book. It's something that I kept encountering in the course of my research. It's an exploration of motherhood and pregnancy during the revolution.

Because one of the ways that this topic has really frequently been discussed in this scholarship is through this lens of republican motherhood where your kind of ideology, the way that women's roles as mothers was this important civic obligation in the new nation.

And likewise, we see throughout the scholarship metaphors of birth. The birth of the republic, right, is all over scholarship on the revolution. But there's very little that actually deals with women's actual experiences with motherhood, with pregnancy, with childbirth, with parenting as war is descending upon their communities. And it's something that I think kept popping up as I was researching *The Home Front*.

And so building off of scholars like Sarah Knott and Nora Doyle. I'm really interested in kind of centering this embodied experience of motherhood and reproduction for the diverse women who are navigating the revolution in this moment, and what it means for them and their families, and to really try to center these women's experiences to gain a fuller understanding of what the revolution meant to these women and for their lives.

[00:59:06] Liz Covart: It makes me think of this one section in your book, *The Home Front*, where Black women who were pregnant would run to British lines just to try and give birth behind those lines.

[00:59:16] Lauren Duval: Yes.

[00:59:17] Liz Covart: In the hope that their children would be born free. So

[00:59:19] Lauren Duval: Exactly.



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[00:59:20] Liz Covart: I think we're looking forward to your new project and yeah. If we have more questions about *The Home Front*, where's the best place for us to contact you?

[00:59:27] Lauren Duval: The easiest way is probably just to look me up on the University of Oklahoma's history department webpage. My email is there, feel free to reach out. I would love to hear from listeners,

[00:59:36] Liz Covart: Lauren Duval, thank you so much for joining us and for helping us better understand how American civilians experience the War for Independence.

[00:59:44] Lauren Duval: Thanks so much, Liz. It was great chatting with you.

[00:59:47] Liz Covart: As Lauren made clear, war is not an abstraction. It lands on doorsteps. It requisitions bedrooms. It turns the established rhythms of households into something unrecognizable, and it does this almost overnight. For the civilians who lived through the British occupations of American cities, the revolution wasn't about ideology or success on the battlefield. It was about whether their family was safe, their property intact, and whether their servants were still going to be there in the morning.

What strikes me most about Lauren's work is how much it complicates the stories that we tell about the revolution. Our history books, and enthusiastic history teachers have led us to believe that quartering was about brute coercion, British soldiers forcing their way into private homes. But the reality that Lauren found was far more layered.

Officers negotiated, women set terms. Class determined who received respect and who got beaten. And the British Army, far from being a blunt instrument of war, was often running a deliberate campaign for the hearts and minds of Americans. Room by room, household by household, the British Army tried not to alienate the very people who might drive reconciliation with the British Empire.

And then there's the other home front story, the one where Lauren was able to trace the actions of enslaved people who saw British occupations not as an imposition, but as opportunities. For those brave enough to flee, families used periods of British occupation to reunite with each other. Women fled with their children with the hope of seeing them freed. While others, like those who had worked for Henry Laurens, used the chaos of wartime to renegotiate the terms of their bondage.



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The war experienced on the home front was just as chaotic and just as real as the war experienced on the battlefield. The experiences were very different, but together they paint a more complete picture of how we should try and understand the war for American independence.

You'll find more information about Lauren, her book, *The Home Front*, plus notes, links, and a transcript for everything we talked about today on the show notes page, benfranklinworld.com/437. Friends tell friends about their favorite podcasts, so if you enjoy *Ben Franklin's World*, please tell your friends and family about it.

Production assistance for this podcast comes from Joseph Adelman, Karin Wulf, and Morgan McCullough. Breakmaster Cylinder composed our custom theme music. This podcast is part of the Airwave Media podcast network. To discover and listen to their other podcasts, visit airwavemedia.com.

Finally, if an army occupied your city and an officer knocked on your door at a quarter in your home, what would you do? Would you negotiate like Elizabeth Drinker or would you try and find a different approach altogether? I'd love to know. So let me know, liz@benfranklinworld.com.

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