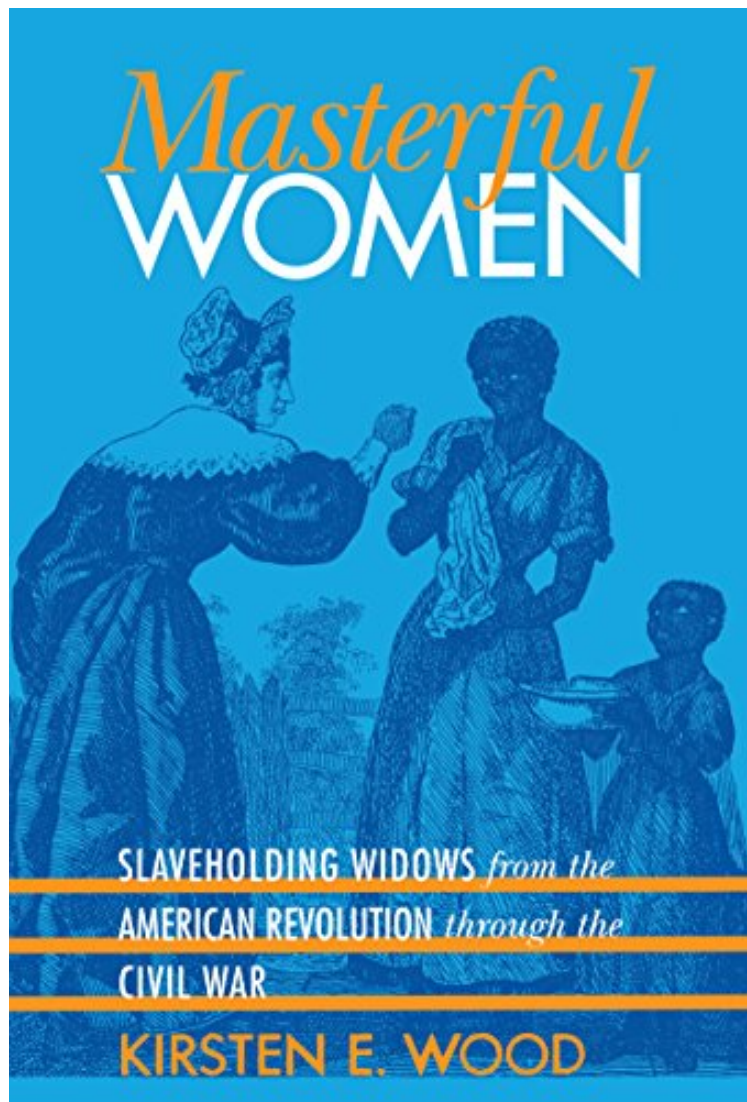


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Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War (Gender and American Culture)

Kirsten E. Wood

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Kirsten E. Wood : Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War (Gender and American Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War

(Gender and American Culture):

Many early-nineteenth-century slaveholders considered themselves "masters" not only over slaves, but also over the institutions of marriage and family. According to many historians, the privilege of mastery was reserved for white males. But as many as one in ten slaveholders--sometimes more--was a widow, and as Kirsten E. Wood demonstrates, slaveholding widows between the American Revolution and the Civil War developed their own version of mastery. Because their husbands' wills and dower law often gave women authority over entire households, widowhood expanded both their domestic mandate and their public profile. They wielded direct power not only over slaves and children but also over white men--particularly sons, overseers, and debtors. After the Revolution, southern white men frequently regarded powerful widows as direct threats to their manhood and thus to the social order. By the antebellum decades, however, these women found support among male slaveholders who resisted the popular claim that all white men were by nature equal, regardless of wealth. Slaveholding widows enjoyed material, legal, and cultural resources to which most other southerners could only aspire. The ways in which they did--and did not--translate those resources into social, political, and economic power shed new light on the evolution of slaveholding society.

Wood demonstrates that slaveholding widows enjoyed material, legal, and cultural resources to which most other southerners could only aspire. The ways in which they did and did not translate those resources into social, political, and economic power shed new light on the evolution of slaveholding society." A positive contribution to women's and Southern history for demonstrating the complexity between the reality of female lives and the rhetoric of prescriptive literature." - "Florida Historical Quarterly" "A positive contribution to women's and Southern history for demonstrating the complexity between the reality of female lives and the rhetoric of prescriptive literature." -- "Florida Historical Quarterly" "Well-written and painstakingly researched. . . . As a study of slaveholding widows in the antebellum South, "Masterful Women" is a very important contribution to the field." -- "Register of the Kentucky Historical Society" "A positive contribution to women's and Southern history for demonstrating the complexity between the reality of female lives and the rhetoric of prescriptive literature." -- "Florida Historical Quarterly" [An] interesting and much-needed study of slaveholding widows. . . . A must read for students of comparative New World slave systems.--Journal of American History Masterful Women is a welcome addition to studies of women, gender, slave-holding and the Civil War in the American South. Wood's analysis is consistently multi-layered, yet concise. . . . Wood has produced a masterful account of the varied, and sometimes contradictory, ways that slaveholding widows exercised agency in a southern economy that, while stressing race and sex subjugation, also proved malleable regarding white women's gender roles.--Civil War History A positive contribution to women's and Southern history for demonstrating the complexity between the reality of female lives and the rhetoric of prescriptive literature.--Florida Historical Quarterly A welcome and comprehensive addition to the scholarship about southern women. Well researched and thoughtful, this book provides a long overdue examination of white slaveholding widows, their special version of mastery, their relationships to family and to others, and their actions and experiences as slaveholders. . . . Smart, commendable, interesting, and important.--Georgia Historical Quarterly General readers seeking a concise view of the Alamo and its role in the Texas Revolution will find this a good place to start.--Journal of Southern History Slaveholding widows, Kirsten Wood shows in this fascinating study, led lives that deviated profoundly from the Victorian ideals of masculine protection and female self-abnegation and succeeded in assuming many of the powers associated with southern patriarchs. In few other historical studies has women's agency been so clearly and convincingly demonstrated.--Steven Mintz, University of Houston Well-written and painstakingly researched. . . . As a study of slaveholding widows in the antebellum South, Masterful Women is a very important contribution to the field.--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society Wood offers a wonderfully rich and revealing reading of slaveholding widows' particular kind of mastery over a long period of southern history. Masterful Women makes an important contribution to the literature on women, gender, and slaveholding society in the American South.--Stephanie McCurry, University of Pennsylvania [A] fine book. . . . Nicely written and peopled with memorable . . . characters, this book is an important contribution to the literature on women, gender, and plantation society in the Old South.--North Carolina Historical A lively read for Civil War aficionados, history buffs, and anybody interested in quirky stories.--Miami Herald In this engaging study of southern society, Wood further explodes the thesis that elite southern women remained in the private sphere, only reluctantly assuming authority during the Civil War.--Choice About the Author Kirsten E. Wood is assistant professor of history at Florida International University, where she is also affiliated with the women's studies and African/New World studies programs.