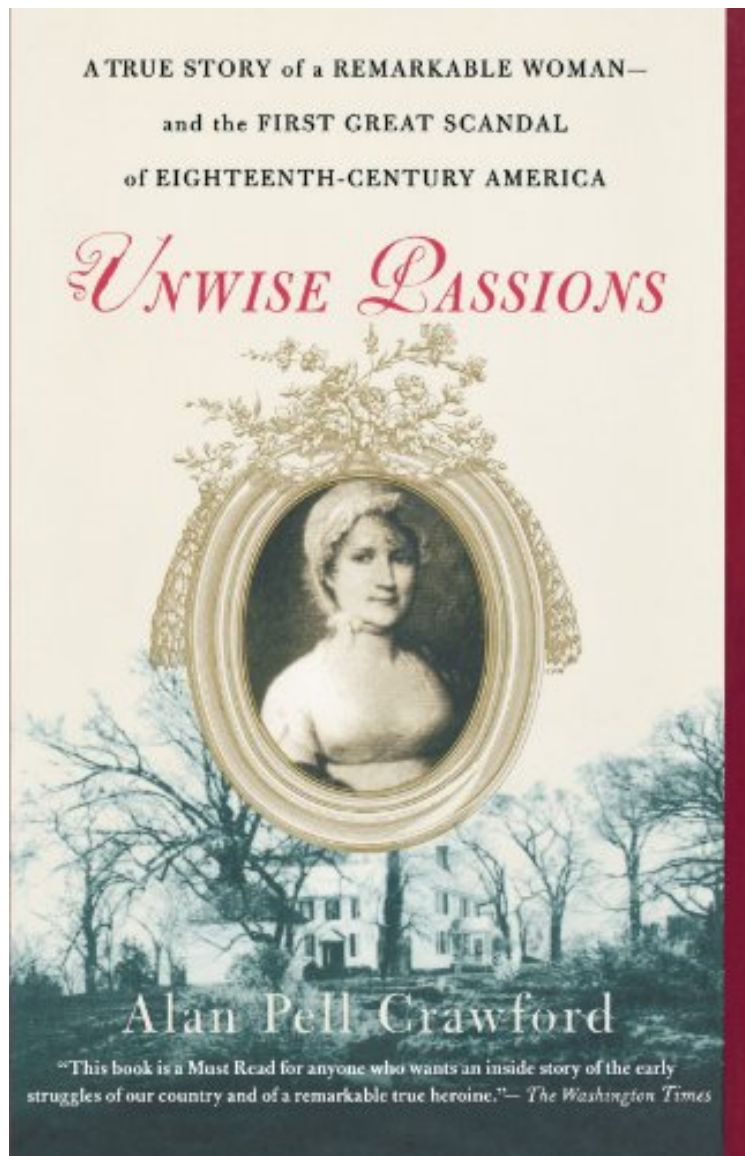


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Unwise Passions: A True Story of a Remarkable Woman---and the First Great Scandal of Eighteenth-Century America

Alan Pell Crawford

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Alan Pell Crawford : Unwise Passions: A True Story of a Remarkable Woman---and the First Great Scandal of Eighteenth-Century America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unwise Passions: A True Story of a Remarkable Woman---and the First Great Scandal of Eighteenth-

Century America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful book
By D. R. Warnock
I'm a big fan of historical non-fiction but, I have to admit that I picked up this book with some hesitation. I wasn't so sure that I would enjoy the American historical aspects this book offered because my tastes generally run to the British Victorian era. Imagine my surprise when I found it to be quite a lovely book (in spite of the story) that turned out to be immensely readable and very interesting. Initially Nancy Randolph seems a bit naive and a little short on the ability to stand up for herself after being involved in a terrible scandal, but by the end she proves to be the most stable and competent member of her extended family. The protagonist, Jack Randolph, deals with the demons of alcohol and opium abuse (and perhaps some sort of mental illness) by lashing out at the only person who can't/won't fight back. Eventually she does begin her retribution and, while it fails to completely destroy Jack, it does provide some long-awaited satisfaction. The story includes Thomas Jefferson, his daughter, Patsy, and other recognizable historical people which makes this tale even more interesting. I highly recommend this book for anyone who reads historical non-fiction.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good Mix of History
Spicy Scandal
By Lola092563
I was surprised to find this book a page turner, I stayed up late to keep reading "just one more chapter". Details the events surrounding a life changing incident in an early American political family, and the fallout scandal that followed the players 20 plus years later. In the meantime, this family is closely involved with the creating and sustaining of the new democracy - there are a few quite colorful characters. The book gave me an interesting view to how early American politics worked, family and everyday life in early America. I believe the author did a good job of creating a quick paced plot with good historical documentation. How the scandal was handled by the players involved reveals their characters; and this reminded me that people haven't changed all that much in 200+ years.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Gerrie Smith
Interesting and historical insights into colonial times and sensibilities.

In the spring of 1793, eighteen-year-old Nancy Randolph, the fetching daughter of one of the greatest of the great Virginia tobacco planters, was accused, along with her brother-in-law, of killing her newborn infant. Once one of the loveliest and most sought-after young women in Virginia society, she was immediately denounced as a ruined Jezebel, and the great orator Patrick Henry and future Supreme Court justice John Marshall were retained to defend her in her sensational trial. In the tradition of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, Alan Pell Crawford brings to life this gripping account of murder, infanticide, and prostitution charges, and of unimaginable treachery, moral decline, and great heroism played out in the intimate lives of this nation's Founding Fathers. It is the true story of the privileged and pampered children of the new country's aristocratic families as they struggle to find their place in an increasingly democratic America, where their values and position in society are under siege. Above all, it is the story of the indomitable Nancy Randolph, who is hounded out of Virginia by a scandal that will haunt her and everyone she loves for the rest of their lives. In the early 1790s, after Nancy goes to live with her sister Judith and handsome brother-in-law Richard at their remote plantation, called Bizarre, rumors fly throughout Virginia that Nancy has given birth and Richard, knowing the child to be his, has killed it. After an inquest, Nancy is ordered off the plantation by her cousin John Randolph and, reduced to poverty, she must find her way in a new and forbidding world. Eventually she flees to New York where she forms an unlikely alliance with the immensely rich Gouverneur Morris, a signatory of the Declaration of Independence. Meanwhile John Randolph, a protégé of Thomas Jefferson who becomes a notorious wit and controversial member of Congress, a duelist and a drug addict, sp

.com *Unwise Passions* traces the trajectory of aristocrat Nancy Randolph's tempestuous life, beginning with her privileged birth in 1774, continuing through a series of scandals that eventually sent her North, and concluding with her death in 1837. But this engaging, accessible biography also serves as group portrait of the Virginia aristocracy--and of its declining fortunes, as the colonial oligarchy was supplanted by an unrulier democracy. When she was only 18, Nancy was accused of having borne a child to her own sister's husband, Richard Randolph, who then allegedly murdered the newborn. Defended by Revolutionary legend Patrick Henry, Richard and Nancy were acquitted, and she returned to live with him and her sister. But the rumors persisted, and Richard's sudden death in 1796 only made them uglier. Many of the ugliest rumors were voiced by Richard's younger brother, Jack; Nancy's former suitor. Jack improved the debt-riddled family estates while he pursued a political career as a fiery states-rights congressman (a career that gets nearly as much of the author's attention as Nancy's life). Virginia-based journalist Alan Pell Crawford doesn't conclude definitively whether or not Jack actually believed Nancy had murdered his brother and had sexual relations with a slave, but the congressman certainly hated her enough to throw her off the family farm and repeat those stories later to her husband. At age 34, reduced to poverty and living in New York, the long-suffering Nancy married Gouverneur Morris, another wealthy veteran of the Revolutionary generation. Their happy union produced one child and endured until his death. Crawford, also the author of *Thunder on the Right*, pens a lively narrative that vividly evokes his characters: kindhearted, rather frivolous Nancy; urbane, unshockable Morris; irascible, overwrought Jack; and a host of cousins who are scattered throughout America's inbred, gossipy high society. Good fun and good

history, to boot. --Wendy Smith
From Publishers Weekly
In 1792, 18-year-old Nancy Randolph of Virginia, a supremely eligible and sought-after beauty, gave birth to a baby rumored to have been fathered and subsequently killed by her sister Judith's husband, Richard Randolph. Although no body was found (supposedly, slaves had seen a dead white baby lying atop a trash heap) and Richard was acquitted, Judith and her husband's brother Jack never forgave Nancy. Indeed, they went out of their way to make her life miserable, aided by the fact that no southern gentleman would now have her. Nevertheless, like a true-life Scarlett O'Hara, Nancy willfully declared, "I shall rally again," and she did. While her vengeful relatives fell into ruin (the heady days of the southern tobacco-dominated economy and the lavish lifestyle of the plantation owners were dwindling decidedly and irreversibly), she headed north, married the wealthy Gouverneur Morris, who had hired her to run his household, and lived happily ever after. Crawford's (*Thunder on the Right*) account has the makings of a great story of intrigue, passion, greed, honor and lust set in the South, replete with an extraordinary supporting cast that includes Thomas Jefferson, a long-time family friend and relative; Francis Scott Key and Patrick Henry, who served as Richard's legal defense. But despite extensive research, Crawford, a former U.S. Senate speechwriter, fails to bring Nancy's character to full life and never seems to dish up the meat of his story, leaving it merely an interesting tale for those who like their history light and with a whiff of scandal. Maps and illus. (Nov.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Booklist
Crawford plays historical detective, re-creating the circumstances of a shocking scandal that permeated the cream of Virginia's plantation society. When rumors spread that she had given birth to her brother-in-law's child, Nancy Randolph, one of the most sought-after postrevolutionary belles, was socially ostracized. Richard Randolph, denying the accusations that he was Nancy's lover and had murdered their illegitimate newborn, was successfully defended in court by the incomparable Patrick Henry. Even more amazing than the sensational details of the sordid affair is the fact that the disgraced debutante somehow managed to rebuild her life after being banished by both genteel society and her own family. This elaborate historical expose pays equal attention to both the prelude to and the aftermath of one of the most infamous episodes in the annals of eighteenth-century America. Margaret Flanagan
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