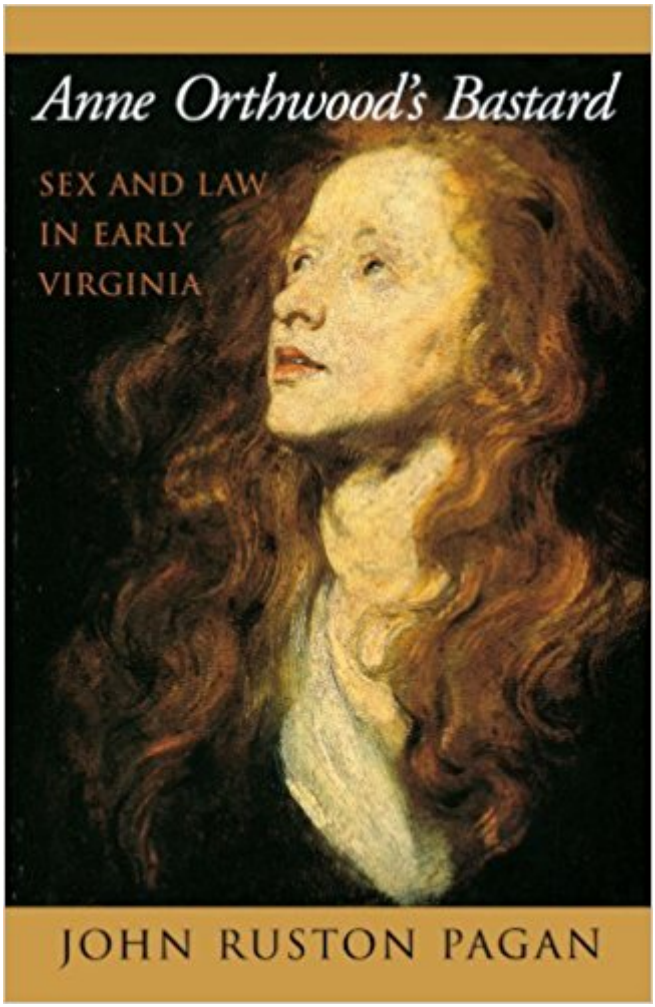
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Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Sex And Law In Early Virginia



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Synopsis

In 1663, an indentured servant, Anne Orthwood, was impregnated with twins in a tavern in Northampton County, Virginia. Orthwood died soon after giving birth; one of the twins, Jasper, survived. Orthwood's illegitimate pregnancy sparked four related cases that came before the Northampton magistrates -- who coincidentally held court in the same tavern -- between 1664 and 1686. These interrelated cases and the decisions rendered in them are notable for the ways in which the Virginia colonists modified English common law traditions and began to create their own, as well as what they reveal about cultural and economic values in an Eastern shore community. Through these cases, the very reasons legal systems are created are revealed, namely, the maintenance of social order, the protection of property interests, the protection of personal reputation, and personal liberty. Through Jasper Orthwood's life, the treatment of the poor in small communities is set in sharp relief. Anne Orthwood's Bastard was the winner of the 2003 Prize in Atlantic History, American Historical Association.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Pagan's Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Sex and the Lawin Early Virginia spin engaging yarns that tie together the best of recent scholarship while also interweaving fresh historical questions and issues....the kind of work tailor-made to grip and hold the imaginations of undergraduates in early American survey courses everywhere."--Reviews in American History"Four cases provide the basis for John Ruston Pagan's intelligent and highly readable book." --Virginia Magazine of History and Biography"superb analysis of the colony's nascent social, economic, and judicial structures. . . .

terrific scholarship that adds significantly to historians' understanding of early Virginia. . . . Microhistories succeed when their case studies illuminate larger themes; at their best, the stories they tell rate as literature. John Pagan scores on both counts."- The Journal of Southern History "John Pagan's subtle and sophisticated research and analysis and his lucid and evocative writing bring to life these Virginians of 350 years ago. The character sketches of the servants, justices of the peace, planters, jurors, and of Anne Orthwood and her lover are gems of historical writing....[An] excellent book."--Richmond Times-Dispatch

John Ruston Pagan is a Professor in the School of Law at the University of Richmond, Virginia.

I read this book for a college class and, holy cow, is it good. Pagan uses a series of court cases arising from a tryst in early colonial Virginia to open a window into the culture then under construction. The colonial authorities either modified or enforced English law in a manner deemed appropriate for the new environment they found themselves in. How and why they did it is extremely fascinating. Pagan mentions in his conclusion that the underlying story is operatic in its dimensions and he isn't lying. The text is a slim 150 pages so this would be a perfect book to buy for people who want to introduce themselves or their lives ones to the joys of historical scholarship. It is interesting enough for the lay reader and meaty enough for professional historians.

I like history books and enjoy the unusual angle which this author takes to discuss politics and culture in the early colonial period. The book is easy to read and generally kept my interest piqued. There were a few times where I felt that the author was rambling a bit and over analyzing a particular point but that never last for more than a couple of pages before it turned interesting again. One thing I had not anticipated is just how much the book focuses on law, including the development of common laws and statutes and discussion on how the local courts came to be, and how judges and jurors were selected, with lots of case examples used for context. Notwithstanding the title, I had not expected that law was the primary topic of the book, which it really is - the story of Anne Orthwood is more secondary.Overall, I do feel this book added to my knowledge and understanding of the past in a way that other history books do not. It reinforced a lot of what I have already learned about the time period, and added other insight. For example, there was quite a bit (relatively speaking, given the small populations) of unmarried sexual encounters in 1600s, and often the fathers would deny paternity and (if the mother died or was poor) leave the child to be sent off to involuntary servitude while still an infant. So, in essence, lots of children grew up having no

parents and no family to call their own - I had not thought of that happening in the late 1600's. Strange how men would place so much emphasis on family and religion, and at the same time completely abandon their own child because admitting to a sexual encounter with a lower class female would hurt their reputation.Overall, highly recommended. While it was not a book that I 'could not put down'- it was one that I looked forward to reading each evening until I finished.

Provided unknown to me early history of colonial Virginia.

As a history major I found this very dry and boring and a friend of mine who is a lawyer felt the same so it missed both marks. Don't read unless you have to for school or something.

Was very helpful in research of family history. Anne Orthwood's Bastard: Sex and the Law in Early Virigina was very enlighting "WHO KNEW'

Very interesting .... allows the careful reader to draw parallels between the politics and society of the Orthwood case and recent political efforts to control social behavior, especially that of women.

Who would have guessed that Colonial Virginia was one giant daytime television show? It's amazing that the Victorians managed to pretend that respectable people weren't interested in sex. This book is a great reminder of the opposite --before them and after them it was a gigantic aspect of visible society.

An interesting book for anyone interested in the evolution and development of the law. The story of the bastard is mildly interesting, but the book reads more like a text than a novel. I think it could have been better written to make it more of a "page-turner".

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