



# Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society

*Mary Beth Norton*

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# Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society

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**Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society** Mary Beth Norton

In this pioneering study of the ways in which the first settlers defined the power, prerogatives, and responsibilities of the sexes, one of our most incisive historians opens a window onto the world of Colonial America. Drawing on a wealth of contemporary documents, Mary Beth Norton tells the story of the Pinion clan, whose two-generation record of theft, adultery, and infanticide may have made them our first dysfunctional family. She reopens the case of Mistress Ann Hibbens, whose church excommunicated her for arguing that God had told husbands to listen to their wives. And here is the enigma of Thomas, or Thomasine Hall, who lived comfortably as both a man and a woman in 17th century Virginia. Wonderfully erudite and vastly readable, **Founding Mothers & Fathers** reveals both the philosophical assumptions and intimate domestic arrangements of our colonial ancestors in all their rigor, strangeness, and unruly passion.

"An important, imaginative book. Norton destroys our nostalgic image of a 'golden age' of family life and re-creates a more complex past whose assumptions and anxieties are still with us."--Raleigh News and Observer

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