

Enterprising Women: Gender, Race, and Power in the Revolutionary Atlantic (Race in the Atlantic World, 1700-1900)

Kit Candlin, Cassandra Pybus

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In the Caribbean colony of Grenada in 1797, Dorothy Thomas signed the manumission documents for her elderly slave Betty. Thomas owned dozens of slaves and was well on her way to amassing the fortune that would make her the richest black resident in the nearby colony of Demerara. What made the transaction notable was that Betty was Dorothy Thomas's mother and that fifteen years earlier Dorothy had purchased her own freedom and that of her children. Although she was just one remove from bondage, Dorothy Thomas managed to become so rich and powerful that she was known as the Queen of Demerara.

Dorothy Thomas's story is but one of the remarkable acounts of pluck and courage recovered in *Enterprising Women*. As the microbiographies in this book reveal, free women of color in Britain's Caribbean colonies were not merely the dependent concubines of the white male elite, as is commonly assumed. In the capricious world of the slave colonies during the age of revolutions, some of them were able to rise to dizzying heights of success. These highly entrepreneurial women exercised remarkable mobility and developed extensive commercial and kinship connections in the metropolitan heart of empire while raising well-educated children who were able to penetrate deep into British life.



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