



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

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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 son. Once one of the most sought-after young women in Virginia society, she was denounced as a ruined Jezebel, and the great orator Patrick Henry and future Supreme Court justice John Marshall were retained to defend her in a sensational trial. This gripping account of murder, infanticide, prostitution charges, moral decline, and heroism that played out in the intimate lives of the nation's Founding Fathers is as riveting and revealing as any current scandal -- in or out of Washington.

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

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Author : Alan Pell Crawford

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From Reader Review Unwise Passions: A True Story of a Remarkable Woman---and the First Great Scandal of Eighteenth-Century America for online ebook

Kathleen Bianchi says

The true story of Anne Cary (Nancy) Randolph. Born pre-Revolutionary times. Just eighteen accused of killing her baby impregnated by her brother-in-law. She was found innocent in a court of law but considered guilty for life by others. A whiff of scandal in those days and it followed you forever. Her other brother-in-law spurned by her spread horrendous lies about her for years afterward. One of the things I found amazing was how many Randolph's married their cousins "only a Randolph is good enough for a Randolph." After Nancy's mother died Her father remarried and the new wife ousted Nancy out. She went to her sister's where she was seen to be too familiar with Judith's husband. Even after the baby fiasco, she remained at her sister's. Eventually moved north and she took a job as a housekeeper with a man that she had known as a young girl. She married him had a wonderful marriage and had a son. He died and again due to a relative who had stolen money from them she was in poverty again. She worked her way out of poverty and that is why she was such a remarkable woman she persevered through so many adversaries and came ahead.

LillyBooks says

This was a pretty run-of-the-mill nonfiction book that seemed unfocused to me. The primary scandal as mentioned on the back blurb is interesting, but then the book meanders too much into persons and events of minor consequence.

Karen Hogan says

They say truth is stranger than fiction. This holds true about this story about a plantation owners daughter who creates a scandal in post revolution America. Her brother in law, John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia was a despicable snake. Enjoyed reading this book which also gave some insight into the lives of our famous forefathers, like Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson.

Nightwitch says

Very readable history book with a fascinating story, well-told. My primary complaint would be that, like many books set this far in the past focusing on a single event/person, there isn't really enough information to give us a sense of Nancy as a person, so instead Crawford uses a lot of background filler; we find out a ton about people tangentially involved in the story, the politics of the time, etc., some of which is relevant and some of which kind of isn't. The beginning of the book is also clogged up with a lot of genealogy which feels kind of overwhelming.

Chanie says

I had already read America's First Daughter which laid out the facts of the Nancy Randolph scandal. It biased me against Crawford's version of the story. I also found the book to be more a collection of data than an attempt to understand or explain Nancy.

Beth Withers says

As I was reading America's First Daughter by Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie, I did research on the internet to enhance my reading. While doing that, I came across this book about an incident that is mentioned in the novel. Unwise Passions is a nonfiction book about Nancy Randolph, the sister-in-law of Jefferson's daughter Patsy. She was accused of a heinous crime (mentioned in the novel), but even after being found innocent, suffered greatly from the accusation. It was interesting to see that scandal isn't new to our history! Nancy's story is interesting, interwoven with names of people recognized from American history.

Sandra Heinzman says

I read this for my at-work book club. It's about a crime in VA that I never heard about before, and takes place mainly in the area where I live (Richmond)! It was so good, that I had to look up more stuff about it and find more pictures to look at. We had a really good discussion about it at work. I highly recommend it! It's non-fiction and really happened!

Elyse says

I am a huge Downton Abbey fan but the Randolph family of Virginia wins hands down in the drama department. And THIS story isn't fiction. It is actual American history. The author uses correspondence and newspaper articles to fill out events. And what events they are! Some of the story will have to remain a mystery but the reader can speculate on what transpired using the pieces of information the author presents. The main character of this story is Nancy Randolph. She is a member of the leading aristocratic family in 18th century Virginia (Thomas Jefferson was a relation). At the age of 18, she is accused of delivering a baby out of wedlock and, with the help of the supposed father (her sister's husband), murders the child and disposes the body under a pile of shingles. But are these accusations true? A lot of people thought so. As Nancy picks up the pieces of her shattered life she shows great resolve and manages to survive and prosper.

Alana Cash says

The story of Nancy Randolph is horrific, ultimately satisfying, and always fascinating. There remains a mystery around her scandal that apparently cannot be solved. What really happened?

The book is very well-researched, and I recommend reading this book not only because of the "scandal," but because it gives a wonderful account of the post-colonial years of the US. The major names from history are presented in quite a different light than the iconic portraits that we've come to know - Jefferson, Madison,

Monroe, Clay, the Randolphs - and presents the politics of that time period in the same dysfunctional light as we experience now. There were no saints. There are so many names that an index would have helped to remember where these people first appeared in the book to refresh my memory of their relationship to Nancy. There is a family tree and that is helpful.

The writing is easy to read, and because the stories of all these people are so interesting, I didn't mind that the author sort of hopped around a bit.

I read the Simon & Schuster hardcover of the book and it was very odd to find so many quotes in the book without footnote numbers in the text, then at the end of the book find a list of numbered footnotes. What happened? I also noticed there were a couple of errors in the family tree (it appears that a couple of people were immortal as there is no date of death).

Margaret Elder says

I enjoyed this book primarily because I live close to where much of the action took place, and I'm very familiar with some of the historical characters in it. It almost seemed like two books in one, though, with the first half about "Nancy" Randolph, and the second half on John Randolph of Roanoke. Even though the two were tied together at the end, I did feel that there was disunity in the book. For example, even though Gouverneur Morris is an important character at the end, there is a chapter earlier in the book that just "came out of nowhere" about him. At that moment, he was not involved with the characters or their problems. The material on him should have been saved for later. While I frankly think the book could have just focused on "Nancy," the material about John ("Jack") Randolph of Roanoke was interesting to me as I live in the same county that he did in the waning years of his life. This is an interesting story, and it shows the lives of the early Virginia aristocracy in ways that are not flattering but are certainly fascinating.

Jennifer says

There was nothing really amazing about this book, but nothing bad either. The title makes it sound like the book is going to be more scandalous than it is, so I was disappointed in that. There's just a lot about the case that is completely unknown. But, it was a fast read and the setting was interesting.

Hannah says

What a life Nancy Randolph Morris lived. Beset by scandal in 1793 at the tender age of 18, Nancy was labeled a murderess, a prostitute and a gold digger. In her thirties, after living a life of privations, she married Grosvenor Morris and had a child at age 37. Her sister, Judith and her cousin John (aka Jack) Randolph, had it in for her for decades, but she managed to survive the scandal of her youth and thrive under the love of her wonderful husband.

Excellent non-fiction story detailing the turbulent Randolph family and the second generation of America's founding fathers. TMZ and Hollywood Insider's got nothing on these 18th century scandals! wowza....

Linda Childs says

Enjoyable to read about an early 19th century scandal instead of watching today's new broadcasts and still get a lot of American (Virginian) history.

Katie Ritter says

Great nonfiction book but reads almost like a novel, so doubly enjoyable. The story of a rich, entitled daughter of one of the founding families of Colonial Virginia which has to be read to be believed. WHAT A JOURNEY SHE HAD! And she was smart, kind, apparently humble for the most part, uncomplaining, wicked strong when she needed to be. Really, really enjoyed learning of her life.

Would have given this 4.5 stars be of a little difficulty sometimes in following the story when it jumped around a couple of times, but honestly, wasn't worth dinging what what a very carefully researched, well presented true story of a woman caught in the worst of circumstances.

Christine says

No the most engaging writing style and the author sort of wandered all over the place and seemed unable to focus on the main people involved in the history of the scandal. Still, this book did contain a lot of information about the Randall family, who were related to both the Jefferson and Washington families, allowing one to get an idea about society at that time amongst the upper classes, who were not founding fathers but rubbed shoulders with the same. Not sad I read it, but I won't re-read it and I'm glad I only paid \$3 for it.
