



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 223

Name: Green, Catharine Ray

Dates: (29 Oct 1731 - 10 Sep 1794)

Colonial Society: RI

Date added to ROA: 4-6-2025

Service: Correspondent

Authority: Roelker, William Greene, edited and annotated. Benjamin Franklin and Catharine Ray Greene, Their Correspondence, 1755-1790 (Philadelphia: American Philosophy Society, 1999). v.vi, 1-5, 677.

Biography:

Catharine was an articulate, witty, and politically astute woman best known for her long-standing friendship and correspondence with Benjamin Franklin.

Born on Block Island, Rhode Island, to Simon and Deborah Ray, she later became the First Lady of Rhode Island through her marriage to William Greene Jr., a future governor of the state. They married on April 30, 1758, and settled in Warwick, Rhode Island, where they had seven children.

Catharine first met Benjamin Franklin in December 1754 during his journey from Boston back to Philadelphia. They traveled together through parts of Rhode Island, visiting her sister in Westerly before parting—Franklin heading south and Catharine returning to Block Island. This brief meeting sparked a lifelong correspondence characterized by warmth, humor, and intellectual engagement. Their letters, collected in *Benjamin Franklin and Catharine Ray Greene: Their Correspondence, 1755-1790* (ed. William Greene Roelker), reveal mutual affection and wit.

Franklin fondly called her “Katy,” writing in 1755, “*Begone, Business, for an Hour, at least, and let me chat a little with my Katy.*” In another, he playfully remarked, “*You are a dangerous woman, your wit and beauty being equally engaging.*”

Catharine died on September 10, 1794, and is buried at the Governor Greene cemetery on the Greene family farm in Warwick, Rhode Island. She is remembered not only as a devoted wife and mother, but as one of the most intellectually engaging female correspondents in Franklin’s life.