



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 114

Name: Brodwell, Mary (Freeman)

Dates: 1 Jan 1629/30 England - 2 Jan 1729/30 Philadelphia

Colonial Society: PA

Date added to ROA: 3-3-2024

Service: Historic Founder, Midwife, and Shopowner

Authority: : Death notice of Mary Bradway [sic]. The Pennsylvania Gazette, 6 January 1729/30, p. 4; Justice, Alfred Rudolph, Descendants of Robert Taylor (Philadelphia: Alfred R. Justice and Joseph W. Taylor, 1925), 20.

Biography:

The life of Mary (Freeman) Brodwell is both common and extraordinary. Common, in that as a Quaker widow living in Philadelphia, she supported herself and her two daughters as both a midwife and shopowner. Extraordinary, in that after her husband died in 1673 in England, Mary made a drastic change. She left behind her 21-year-old son Isaac, and boarded the ship Unicorn, headed for Pennsylvania, with her daughters Mary (18) and Sarah (16.) They arrived in Philadelphia in December of 1685.

Mary Brodwell didn't just create a new life, but a very successful life. By the time she died, her probate records indicated she had wealth to share. Her son Isaac, still in England, was remembered, along with his children. Her granddaughter Ann Paul, along with her husband Henry, were the beneficiaries of Mary's shop goods, which were carefully inventoried at the time of her death. Her surviving daughter Sarah, her multitude of grandchildren and great-grandchildren were all left either money or household items as detailed in her will. She even left money to "ye poor people" at a Meeting House in Philadelphia.

In her death notice, which was published in The Pennsylvania Gazette, she was remembered as a noted midwife who "wore well to the last" who was known to "see to read without spectacles a few months since." The most amazing part of this notice was the claim that Mary died exactly one day after her Hundredth birthday.