



# Hanging Ruth Blay: An Eighteenth-Century New Hampshire Tragedy

*Carolyn Marvin*

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On a cold December morning in 1768, thirty-one-year-old Ruth Blay approached the gallows erected for her execution. Standing on the high ground in the northwest corner of what is now Portsmouth's old South Cemetery, she would have had a clear view across the pasture to the harbor and open sea. The eighteenth-century hanging of a schoolteacher for concealing the birth of a child out of wedlock has appeared in local legend over the last few centuries, but the full account of Ruth's story has never been told. Drawing on over two years of investigative research, author Carolyn Marvin brings to light the dramatic details of Ruth's life and the cruel injustice of colonial Portsmouth's moral code. As Marvin uncovers the real flesh-and-blood woman who suffered the ultimate punishment, her readers come to understand Ruth as an individual and a woman of her time.

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