

Houston Philosophical Society Dinner and Lecture

Cohen House, Rice University

15 November 2018

6:00pm cocktails - 9:15pm close

At 8:00 pm President Furlow called the meeting to order and welcomed all and introduced guests. Ballots were distributed to members to vote upon the nomination of Dr. Lavender as a new member. It was reported that the nomination was approved.

President Furlow then introduced his wife, Lisa Pennington, and noted that she and he would give a program on “Thanksgiving Special: Did Women’s Work Save Plymouth Colony?” Please see the attached Abstract for the Speakers’ biography and program contents.

When preparing a report on the progress of the Maryland colony for Lord Baltimore in England, Maryland colonial secretary John Lewger advised his master, Lord Baltimore, that the colony needed a dairy business to survive and thrive, but that the ratio between men and women in the colony, 6 to 1, precluded the development of a dairy economy. “The dairy will require a woman,” Lewger advised, but no women colonists were available to begin such a business.

What roles did women play in the early settlement of America, especially Plymouth colony? Contemporaneous records relegate them to silence and second-class status. Well-known narratives, such as Governor William Bradford’s book *Of Plymouth Plantation*, discuss the roles corn, codfish, and the fur trade played in New England while ignoring the lives of women. Now, with the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower’s arrival, the founding of Plymouth, and the first Thanksgiving looming before us, it is time to re-examine America’s founding. Archaeological excavations, Plymouth’s land and probate records, Dutch Golden Age art, and traditional narratives enable us to understand the contributions of America’s founding mothers.

After questions and answers from the members, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.