A Settler Woman and Business in the Eastern Cape 1840-1848

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Abstract

This working paper explores concerns the remaining business papers of a widowed 'settler woman' who married into the Eastern Cape Pringle family, Harriet Townsend nee Hockly. After sketching the background of the Eastern Cape frontier towns, considering the dearth of research on settler colonial women in South Africa, and commenting on the silence about 'race' in these documents, the discussion examines two particular aspects. Firstly, who and what was a successful entrepreneur? And secondly, when does 'a letter' begin and end in relation to any other writing it is attached to or part of? The analysis suggests that, *contra* thinking about separate spheres and a binary division in the gender order, the business career of Harriet Townsend reveals a more complicated situation. It also indicates that changes occurred within letters as a part of routine writing practices, rather than being developments over time. Overall, Harriet Townsend seems to have been exceptional in the degree of success she achieved, rather than in her business involvements or the responses of male merchants to these; and the business letters written to her also throw interesting light on letter-writing as a social practice.

1 Introduction

1.1 This Working Paper discusses some ways in which the contents of archival documents that are part of the Pringle Papers can throw an interesting and perhaps unexpected light on the role of settler women and gendered 'separate spheres' in the Eastern Cape of South Africa in the 1840s, and also regarding the elements of letter-writing practices.[1] This collection has two main components, which are broadly the business and legal letters of William Dods Pringle (1809-1876), a wealthy Eastern Cape farmer known as Dods and whose first wife Ellen Hart died in January 1846; and the letters and related papers of a business-woman, Harriet Townsend nee Hockly (April 1817-July 1864), whose first husband Edward died in August 1840. They married each other at the end of 1848. Both were from '1820 Settler' groups, people who had arrived in the Eastern Cape through a British government sponsored

[1] Unclassified Pringle Papers, Cory Library, South Africa.

emigration scheme that brought some 4000 ‘respectable’ settlers in organised groups with leaders and who were assigned parcels of land, mainly in the Albany area but also north of this in Baviaans River (Bryer 1984; Crais 1986; Hockly 1957, 1966; Shutterworth nd but 1994; Walker 2013). The 1820 Settler groups had been intended to form a buffer farming population in the then-frontier area of the Eastern Cape, although many soon moved to the growing frontier towns and reverted to the ‘middling sort’ and artisanal trades they had mainly pursued in Britain.[2]

1.2 Dods Pringle was one of the younger half-siblings of ‘the’ Thomas Pringle, a well-known poet and journalist who, after clashing politically with the colonial authorities, returned to Britain in 1827 and became involved in the Aborigines Protection Society and anti-slavery work (Calder 1983; Vigne 2011, 2012). The Pringle family and other members of their Scottish Settler party who remained in South Africa lived and farmed in the Baviaans River area outside the small town of Bedford, forming a clan of successful interrelated families living on large farms in a set of connected valleys (Pringle et al 1957).

1.3 Harriet Townsend was a daughter of the Hocklys, members of Baillie’s Settler party. Her mother Elizabeth (1791-1862) was by birth a Moore of Sloane Street, London, a family of jewellers who owned a number of rental properties and a flourishing jewellery business in which all members of the family worked. Her father, Daniel Hockly (1787-1835), was a well-known silversmith. His silversmithing and jewellery business failed in 1819, and Daniel and Elizabeth emigrated with their then-three children to gain new opportunities. They were among those quickly abandoning or not taking up the farming land allocated them, removing successively to the towns of Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and Graaff-Reinet, with Daniel silversmithing and Elizabeth making and selling millinery and latterly running a small boarding-school in Graaff-Reinet, an administrative centre and religious hub. After Daniel’s death, Elizabeth with then-seven children lived in the towns of Grahamstown and then Cradock.[3] The widowed Elizabeth Hockly used an annuity from her father Thomas

[2] A choice needs to be made between using the term frontier, or that of borderlands, with the latter indicating the fluidity of incomplete authority and complex interactions. Frontier is used for the same pragmatic reason as in Mager (2013: 251-5), that it highlights the existence of a contested arena in which violence, fighting and warfare were often part of the furniture.

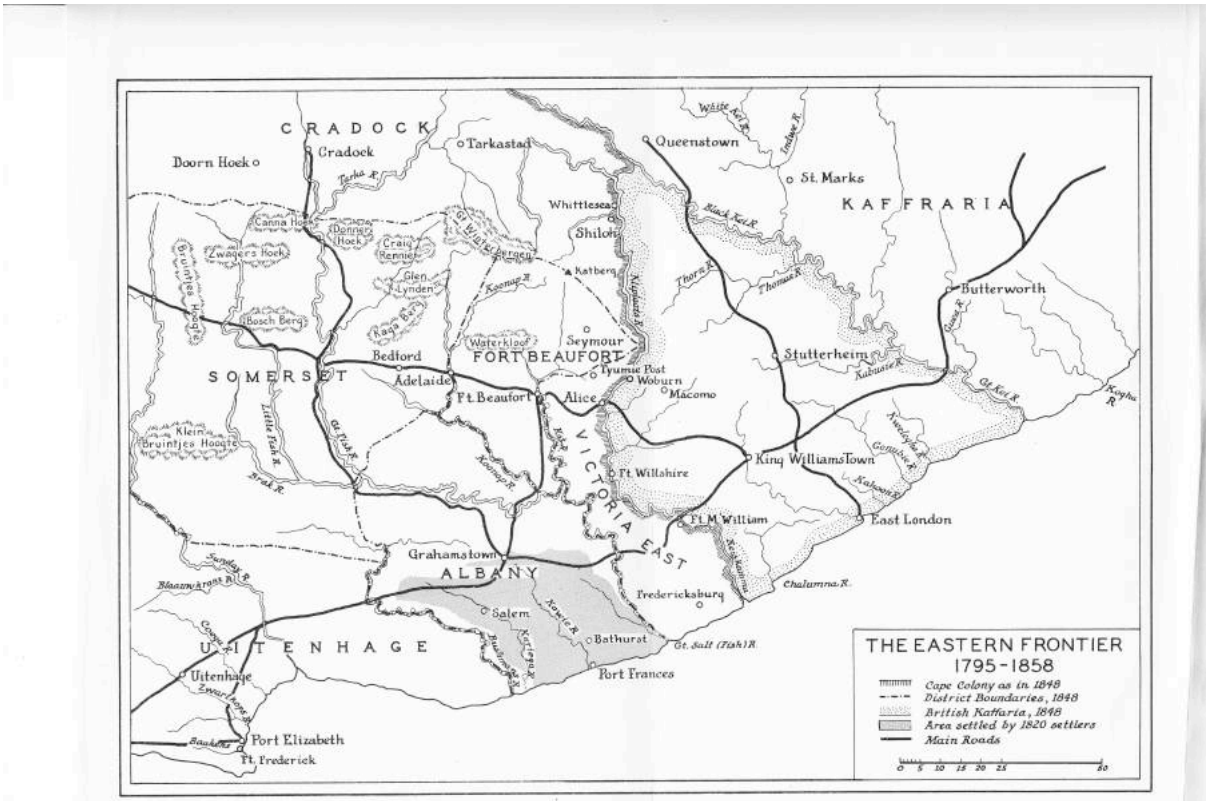
[3] Their children were: Daniel 1814-1819; Elizabeth Ann 1815-1875; Harriet 1817-1874; Frances Chapman 1820-1866; Alfred Moore 1822-1873; Daniel Thomas 1826-1897; Maria 1830-1908; John William 1833-1918.

Moore's Estate to buy and then rent residential and commercial property in Cradock and Grahamstown, and through this she generated further income to support her family.

1.4 In December 1837, Harriet married Edward Townsend (1813-1840), youngest of the three sons of another British jewellery and silversmithing family.[4] After a short period working with his middle brother John, a silver jeweller and plate-maker, in Cape Town, Edward was sent to run a family shop in Grahamstown, then the largest Eastern Cape hub (Marshall 2008). They probably met through Chapel circles, in which both were active. From comments in letters after an 1837/8 visit from Britain from his eldest brother William, head of the family business, it seems the dreamy and religious Edward was also disorganised, lacked practical application and was inattentive to business matters. Harriet, however, was praised by William, who recommended that she should become the 'corresponding clerk' for the Grahamstown shop and take charge of making orders, keeping inventories, writing accounts and sending out bills. Edward then died suddenly in August 1840, leaving Harriet some months pregnant and with two small children, debts, and no means of livelihood apart from the shop's stock and her business contacts and customer-base. Subsequently she relocated to Cradock and ran a similar business to the Grahamstown one from then until later 1848. The extant papers cover the period from approximately the death of Edward Townsend in August 1840 until Harriet Townsend remarried in later 1848.[5]

[4] Children from this marriage were Sarah Elizabeth (b.1837), William Blore (1839-1910) and Mary Ann (1840-1927).

[5] There were seven children of the marriage with Dods Pringle: Ellen b.1850; Edward Dods b.1851; Beatrice Scott b.1853; Harriet b.1855; Alice b.1856; Agnes b.1858; Jessie Dods b.1860.



MAP 5

1.5 The context was the rapidly growing frontier towns of Grahamstown, Cradock, Bedford and Somerset East, which were closely linked by trade and by business generally with Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. They are shown on the accompanying map of the Eastern frontier (Neumark 1957, Map 5). The sources of this growth have been much debated and were clearly complex (eg. Neumark 1957; Guelke 1980, 1988; Newton-King 2009: 1-10; Penn 2005: 9-14). However, important intertwined factors included population increases, the expansion of stock farming of cattle and especially sheep, with produce from this including wool, meat and also soap and hides for a market, with traders, shop-keepers, land agents, attorneys and so on following farmers into the new settlement areas. The scale of distances needs to be appreciated, with distances as the crow flies being: Grahamstown to Cradock around 180 kilometres, Bedford to Cradock around 80 kilometres, Grahamstown to Bedford around 90 kilometres, and with travel to all of them involving difficult mountain passes. Cape Town was the locus for the import, export and distribution of goods (also for those originating in South Africa during the period of discussion, with this changing later). By land and as the crow flies, Cape Town to Grahamstown is about 860 kilometres, and Cape Town to Cradock about 800 kilometres. However, goods were shipped from Cape Town to Algoa

Bay/Port Elizabeth, then by wagon inland. Port Elizabeth to Grahamstown is about 75 kilometres, and Port Elizabeth to Cradock about 250 kilometres, again as the crow flies and with both routes involving difficult mountain passes.

1.6 There were other issues regarding the growth of the settler colonial towns of the eastern and north-eastern frontier. In particular, there was a long series of Frontier Wars, involving fragmentary skirmishes and cattle-raids as well as extended periods of warfare. Those most relevant to discussion here are the sixth Frontier War of 1834-36, the seventh of 1846-47, and the eighth of 1850-53.[6] In addition, in a literal sense there was 'no [cash] money', or very little, both in the frontier area and more widely, although there was considerable economic activity, accumulation and expansion. This was a growing but difficult economic context involving a reliance on credit around a system of quarterly or six monthly payments of accounts associated with small unstable privately-owned banks, locally-issued bank notes which were unacceptable more widely, and a thriving if unstable trade in discounting and exchanging promissory notes and bonds (including slagters' briefs[7]). Dealing in these notes and bills could be profitable, but also disastrous if not honoured, something by no means uncommon and a precipitating factor in bringing about Harriet Townsend's business activities.

2 The Pringle Papers

2.1 To write of 'the Pringle collection' is something of a simplification, for as noted earlier it consists of two fairly separate components. These are the farm, estate and legal papers and letters of the litigiously-minded Dods Pringle, which run from the mid-1830s to the mid-1870s; and the business letters and other papers of Harriet Townsend nee Hockly later Pringle, plus a smaller number of her mother Elizabeth Hockly's remaining papers. Harriet Townsend's papers start when her independent business began in later 1840, and largely end in later 1848 after her marriage with Dods Pringle. It contains around 800 items overall. The

[6] The Frontier Wars each had particular originating factors but were at basis disputes over territory and autonomy between indigenous African peoples, primarily Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, and incoming settlers and also the British military presence (Mostert 1992; Crais 1992).
[7] These were issued by the middlemen who worked for butchers (slagters) to the farmers they bought stock from, and were considered as good as or better than cash.

majority are letters to Harriet Townsend, although the longest and largest are business documents. In terms of numbers of items, the two components are of approximately similar size. Because of the business character of the Harriet Townsend materials, there are just two letters *by* her, for these were retained by her associates.[8] There are, however, around 350 letters *to* her.

2.2 The large majority of these letters are from business associates. There are three groups of these: (i) merchants and agents: a small group of men who operated across the frontier towns and were based in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth as well as locally, with most of the letters from them; (ii) out-workers: women who lived in the frontier towns and on local farms and had time, few material resources but considerable skills in sewing, knitting and so on and generated income of their own by doing out-work for her; and (iii) 'country friends': members of the well-heeled farming gentry who bought fashionable and high quality goods of all kinds from Harriet, which were ordered and sent by post or via friends and out-workers moving between places and delivering goods and receiving orders as they did so.[9] It is also worth noting that even the family letters in the collection – including the remaining papers of Harriet's mother Elizabeth Hockly, also letters from her brothers-in-law William and John Townsend, and her younger brother Daniel Hockly – are mainly about business matters.[10]

2.3 In addition to the letters, there are many much larger items directly related to Harriet Townsend's business activities. These include order and cash sales books, receipts, invoices, stocktaking lists and accounts. While the information provided for the eight years between Edward Townsend's death and Harriet's marriage to Dods Pringle is not fully complete,[11] what survives is extensive. Used together, these materials provide the basis for exploration of her business activities, the role of the merchants she dealt with, her customer-base including

[8] Harriet Townsend to Elizabeth Hockly, 18 September 1843, FM2 32/80, no.278; and Harriet Townsend to unknown, 22 January 1846, FM1 16g/7; Uncatalogued Pringle Papers, Cory Library, South Africa. All references to letters and documents following are from this collection.
[9] These groups were not mutually exclusive; a number of Harriet Townsend's friends were out-workers and agents who through family connections moved between town and country.
[10] See Stanley 2015, 2016, which argue that the epistolary emphasis on 'doing the business' was a widely shared South African white settler characteristic.
[11] There are some gaps at the beginning and at the end of correspondences, points at which letters do not appear to have been kept.

face-to-face customers, the part played by out-workers and country friends, and the practices that contributed to her considerable economic success as well as to some difficulties.[12]

2.4 Harriet Townsend died well before her second husband and her business papers have survived largely because assimilated within the Dods Pringle papers. They show that over the eight-year period covered, she achieved considerable success in a business sphere, and did so involving a significant number of other women as part of her production and distribution networks. She was then by no means a woman alone in being involved in economic activity in frontier economic and commercial life, with this point reinforced by the perhaps surprising number of other businesses headed by women appearing in newspaper advertisements at this time (discussed later). The relationship of such businesses to the conventional gender order of polite white society of the time is complex, but their existence and the ample evidence of Harriet Townsend's business and the role of the women who worked for her suggests a subversion or transversal of 'separate spheres' ideas in practice, not just by them, but also by the male merchant contacts who advised, supported and aided such activities.

3 Separate spheres? 'The settler woman' versus a business woman at work

3.1 There are some important bodies of literature that sit at the back of consideration of Harriet Townsend's business activities in the Eastern Cape of the 1840s. The first is influential work on 'separate spheres' that has provided the governing framework for much research in British, European and other contexts, including South Africa. The key contribution is Davidoff and Hall's (1987) *Family Fortune*s and its overall argument that gendered 'separate spheres' and accompanying social, economic and political practices concerning women and men became increasingly binary and fixed in character by the mid-19th century although re/negotiations still occurred. The second concerns research on the 'middling sort', the lower middle class and artisanal part of the population rather than the more bourgeois families Davidoff and Hall focused on, which has shown that in practice separate spheres were often not very separate, with many such women engaging in supposedly 'male' activities in economic life. An influential contribution here has been Margaret Hunt's (1996) *The Middling Sort*, which with related work has shown the wide-

[12] More author publications drawing on the Pringle Papers are in the pipeline.

ranging character of women's contributions to economic life through to at least the end of the19th century. The third concerns South Africa specifically, regarding white women of the settler colonial period and after. While a number of important contributions have made here, particularly influential work is associated with Helen Bradford's (1996, 2000, 2008) critique of Cape historiography's non/treatment of gender matters, with accompanying reinterpretations of key aspects of the South African past.

3.2 The main lines of Bradford's 1996 critique are that, beyond a small rather ghettoised corpus of women's history, both gender relations and women are neglected topics in historical research; when women are studied, this tends to rely on uninterrogated ideas about women as helpmates in marriage and the family and fails to recognise the other activities that women performed; and women are rendered invisible by their presence being covered by supposedly general terms, but which are actually making a male reference. The result, she points out, is that "when scholars marginalise women, they simultaneously impoverish the history of both men and the region as a whole." (Bradford 1996: 357-8). And, as she relatedly comments, women of the past did not live "according to coarse academic representations drawing heavily on present-day gender stereotypes. This is evident from primary sources.... [and so] If women are omitted, or trivialised, or not examined with the same rigour automatically accorded men, then the price is frequent interpretations with limited purchase on the past" (369). 'Limited purchase' characterises how settler women have been perceived, as later discussion will show.

3.3 Perhaps surprisingly, Bradford's 1996 critique could in some respects still be made two decades on about the present situation. Women's and gender history, although to an extent still ghettoised, is certainly now larger and more influential than when she wrote. However, seeing women in blinkered ways that make invisible the realties is still prevalent, as is the use of supposedly covering 'general' terms that actually concern men's experiences. Work on settler women is an example.

3.4 Simon Dagut's (2000: 555) useful discussion of the categories of gender and women's history, published four years after Bradford's critique, is upbeat in commenting that, "It is now part of historians' common sense that it is vitally important to integrate the experiences, attitudes and actions of women into their narratives and analyses". This is perhaps as positive as it is because his focus is specifically on some key contributions from women's and gender

history, which includes Bradford (1996) and also Bozzoli (1983), Erlank (1995), Formes (1995), McKenzie (1996, 1997, 1998); Scully (1993, 1995), and Van Heyningen (1993). However, in spite of this there is little sign that an integration of gender matters has significant occurred in mainstream historiography. Dagut certainly recognises the issues and, while contributions from women's history have "created a much more rounded and subtle picture of their lives", he comments that "There is still a considerable amount to be done." (562). Nonetheless he locates women's experiences mainly within the home and takes gendered separate spheres as unexamined fact, including emphasising on home and family and that women "were chiefly responsible for the maintenance of settlers' homes" (Dagut 2000: 560).

3.5 Erlank's (1995) discussion of two settler women's involvement in economic life in the Eastern Cape in the 1830s and early 40s is also of relevance, including regarding its separate spheres framework in investigating the lives and economic activities of these women, Mary Anne Webb and Hannah Dennison.[13] Erlank comments about Hannah Dennison that, "Marriage and the family were at the centre of her world, and these topics feature repeatedly in her letters." (1995: 73), in general she was governed by "middle-class perceptions of appropriate gender behaviour", and that "These perceptions have been discussed at length in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's book… in which they map out the development of a specific middle-class ideology shaped in gender relations" (75). Erlank clearly recognises the importance of Dennison's involvement in economic life, for this is the focus of her discussion. However, she sees this through the lens of a governing British-originated separate spheres framework, which leads her to interpret references made by both Webb and Dennison as revealing "how important concerns of appropriate gender behaviour were to them. My analysis of the writing therefore takes part of its context from an understanding of middle-class ideology at this point, and the importance of gender relations and establishing behavioural models for class relations" (62).

3.6 An aspect of this regarding Mary Anne Webb is that her protestations about being in financial difficulties in spite of her husband having a salary is seen, not as 'real', but as exaggerating hardships to justify her running a boarding-school and other economic activities: "in line with contemporary views on the position of women in the early nineteenth-

[13] The latter may have been an acquaintance of Harriet Townsend, as a Dennison daughter-in-law – 'Mrs Dennison' married to a younger son, Charles Dennison – was one of her friends and agents.

century middle-class culture, Mary Anne seems to have found some uneasiness about her status as a working woman, and felt the need to justify this to her husband's family by claiming it was necessary in order to keep her family financially solvent" (68). However, as already commented (and will be returned to later), there were aspects of the prevailing economic circumstances in the Eastern Cape at this time which meant that even well-off people could be reliant on accumulating debt and without any significant reliable amount of cash money. It is possible that Mrs Webb's protestations were related to this, rather than hidden guilt about departing from assumed to be normative gender standards, for as the following discussion will show, some settler colonial women in her circle departed from these without discernible uneasiness.[14]

3.7 Considerable research has fuelled an important debate about the utility or otherwise of separate spheres ideas (for overviews of key points in the debate, see Vickery 1993; Klein 1995; Gleadale 2007; Steinback 2012; Shoemaker 2014). Even when separate spheres thinking was in an ascendancy in gender and women's history, it was apparent these ideas were misleading regarding most working-class women, while subsequently considerable work regarding women of the 'middling sort' has shown that the situation was more complex and less heavily gendered for many such women too (Amussen 1994; Barker 2006; Barry and Brooks 1994; Hunt 1996; Gamber 1997, 1998; Gordon and Nair 2003; Kerber 1988; Lemire 2005). The result has largely rejected the idea that gendered separate spheres should be conceived as binary and proposed a more complex and nuanced view. In the European context, work on the 'middling sort', and business-women within this grouping, has challenged erstwhile orthodoxies stemming from separate spheres thinking (if not its originators), pointing to ways that married women's property might be ring-fenced so as to escape husbandly control, the extensive range of 'middling' women's economic activities which transcended binary gender practices, and that women's activity was essential to economic growth rather than ancillary.

3.8 In addition, the accompanying extensive literature on women in business over this period is also useful in thinking about similarities and differences regarding the situation of white women of the 'middling sort' in South Africa as well as Europe (Earle 1989; Erikson 2007; Finn 2003; Green and Owens 2003; Honeyman 2007; Jepson 2009; Kay 2012; Lemire 2005;

[14] Harriet Townsend, for instance, wanted to be better at business, not give it up.

Muldrew 1998; Phillips 2006; Sharpe 2001; Yohn 2006; Zimmerman 2006). People like the Moores, Hocklys and Townsends came precisely from 'middling sort' stock in Britain, and female as well as male members of these families were economically active throughout the life course. This included not only all five Moore daughters (Elizabeth [later Hockly], Isabella, Ann, Fanny and Nancy) but also their mother Elizabeth Moore, and William Townsend's wife Mary Ann, John Townsend's wife Elizabeth, and their mother Sarah Townsend. Their activities included working in the shop, running family-owned lodging houses, managing with rented accommodation, preparing and sending out accounts. For Elizabeth Hockly nee Moore, after immigrating to South Africa continuing to be economic active was built into her way of life, as it was subsequently for her daughter Harriet Townsend.

3.9 In the late 1970s, South African and North American scholarship on frontiers and settler women were in a similar place regarding research on and analysis of women's roles. When frontier areas were being opened to settlers, women were seen to be largely absent; and once they were present, a sharply gendered separation of spheres was seen to exist with settler women largely confined to domestic life, in particular on farms in rural areas, with the stereotype of the bonneted farm-woman with many children predominant. Since then, there has been an upsurge of research on US and Canadian (and to a lesser extent Australian) frontier situations and a more diverse picture has emerged. This has provided a richer account of the range of settler women's involvements in frontier areas and demonstrated the over-simplification of earlier separate spheres thinking, which led to the realities of women's diverse range of activities in frontier life being made almost invisible or reduced to cardboard cut-out stereotypes. Women were in fact present in many economic roles even in the earlier period, while later they had independent presence as homesteaders and in other economic activities including as shopkeepers and in other business contexts (Hallgarth 1989; Hurtado 2001; Jeffrey 1998; Mar and Edmonds 2010; Patterson-Black 1976; Riley 1988; Russell 2001; Stoeltje 1975; Strobel 2002; Walsh 1995; Webb 1989; Yohn 2006). This work overall has shown that significant numbers of women were present at all stages, were involved in a wide range of activities, tended to be concentrated in particular areas around expanding opportunities, and that family networks and sponsorship connections were important in facilitating this.

Shuttleworth nd but 1994: ii

3.10 This can be contrasted with historiography regarding white settler and second generation settler women in South Africa. A literature search for the years 1995-2016 was carried out as part of this project.[15] It found perhaps surprisingly little research on women as settler colonists, although within this there has been some outstanding work, (eg. Bradford 1996, 2000, 2008; Dagut 1997; Erlank 1995; McKenzie 1997; Mitchell 2007, 2009, 2014; Parle 1995; Scully 1993), with as little research on settlers generally over this period too (for a notable exception, see Lester 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2012). Given the overall fairly low volume of work on women's and gender history compared with the total output of South African historiography, this research on women settlers is a minor strand within an already minor strand, indicating just residual interest in settler lives and changes in these. This is most likely due to a rejection of the older, celebratory approach to white settler history and concerns about being politically tainted by association, and also because of the development of new agendas in South African historiography. However, the result with regard to settler women is that a 'they were in farming households and had many children' view remains largely unchallenged.

3.11 The emphasis in South African historiography has been on its wars and conflicts, emergent racial order, politics and state apparatus, and black history concerning these, clearly all important matters (for overviews, see Hamilton, Mbenga and Ross 2010; Ross, Mager and Nasson 2011; see also Sparks 2013 and Ntwape 2016). The frontier has been a component of

[15] The journals focused on were *Kronos*, *Journal of African History*, *Journal of South African History*, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, *Southern African Historical Studies*; also *Settler Colonial Studies*, plus a general search using keywords.

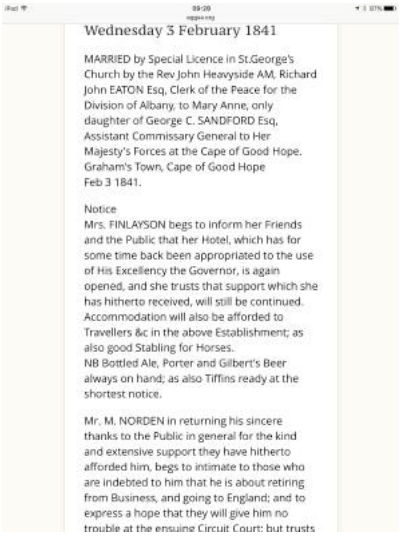
this (see Legassick 1972, 1980, 1989, 2010; see also Campbell 1954; Christopher 1982; Crais 1990, 1992; Galbraith 1963; Giliomee 1979; Guelke 1976, 1980, 1988; Lamar and Thompson 1981; Le Cordeur 1981; Lester 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1988c, 2012; Mostert 1992; Neumark 1957; Newton-King 1988, 2009; Omer-Cooper 1985; Penn 2005; Ross 1979; Shell 2005; Walker 1930). This work has over time gained its own central concerns and frames of reference and within this has tended to focus on the encounters and resistances occurring between white settlers and coloured and African groups (eg. Crais 1992; Keegan 1996; Lester 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2012; Newton-King 2009; Penn 2002, 2005; Ross 2013), rather than the settler condition of life or what Rifkin (2013) has termed ‘settler common sense’. Some outstanding work has been produced here. At the same time, with little influence by 'post-separate spheres' thinking, or indeed in responding to the criticisms Bradford made about blinkering away the realities and using generalisations that actually exclude women, the view that the lives of settler women were synonymous with farming and child-rearing remains largely unchallenged. Separate spheres thinking remains effectively intact, rather than there being detailed investigations of whether this was typical or atypical, if such things as the economic base of different areas of the country made a difference, and how this relates to women in towns as well as farming areas.

3.12 Rethinking the settler presence in colonial contexts more generally has produced much useful work, although it has tended to operate at a rather generalised level and to be male-centred, particularly regarding the more theoretically-oriented component of this around the idea of 'settler colonialism' (see Belich 2009; Schwarz 2011; on settler colonialism, see Wolfe 1999, 2006, 2013a, 2013b; Veracini 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015; Cavenagh 2011a, 2013; see also Altenbernd and Young 2014; Barker 2012; De Leeuw et al 2013; Elkins and Pedersen 2005; Lloyd et al 2013; Morgensen 2012; Rifkin 2013, 2014; Smith 2014; Snelgrove et al 2014). In addition, when South Africa comes into frame, while much excellent detailed work has appeared (eg. Cavenagh 2011b; Laidlaw and Lester 2015; Penn 1992, 2005; Ross 1983, 2013; Traipido 2011; Vernal 2012; Winer and Deetz 1990), some of the more theoretical discussion has been oriented around avoiding any sense of South African exceptionalism. At times this has had the unintended result of failing to see some distinctive aspects of the South African experience, because supposedly 'general' concepts have been treated as though descriptions of actually recalcitrant realities. However, 2020 and the bicentenary of the 1820 Settlers will hopefully encourage new work and new thinking on these matters.

3.13Looking broadly at what was happening in settler terms in the Eastern Cape, from the 1820s and 1830s onwards most white people, including most white women, increasingly lived in, or in proximity to, the burgeoning frontier towns of Grahamstown, Cradock, Bedford, Somerset East and Graaff-Reinet, all rapidly growing.[16] An examination of advertisements and news items in a number of prominent news-sheets and newspapers which were available in these towns (*Cape Frontier Times, Eastern Province Herald* [from 1845], *Grocott's Mail*, *Graham's Town Journal*, *South African Commercial Advertiser*), mentioned earlier, shows that white women were running lodging-houses, eating-houses, stableries and blacksmiths, boarding-schools and were also shopkeepers and milliners, just as their peers were in Britain.[17]

[16] Neumark (1957, pp.135-43 especially), using travellers' accounts, indicates that the development of Port Elizabeth harbour contributed to expansion of the frontier, with many goods imported from Cape Town. Growth of these small towns was stimulated by the establishment of coastal shipping and the development of trading centres and local markets for the products of the eastern and north-eastern frontier districts. Graaff Reinet was founded in the 1780s, and by 1800 consisted of only 12 families. By 1812 there were 72, including a blacksmiths, wagonmakers and several shops in houses as well as a butcher, a baker and a licensed seller of spirits. By 1823, coastal trade from Port Elizabeth was well established and it had become an important trading centre with over 120 licenses granted to keep shops and with between 300 and 400 houses. Similar development occurred in the growing towns. The most important over this period was Grahamstown, established in 1812. By the early 1820s it had become an important trading centre with groceries and other provisions sent by boat from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth and then to Grahamstown, with trade the other way including aloes, butter, soap, tobacco, hides etc. In 1821 there were 80 houses, and in 1823 there were around 300. By the late 1820s the population was about 3000, and by the 1840s around 5000. There was a similar pattern for Port Elizabeth. In 1820, there were only three houses. By 1823 it had grown rapidly and had many houses and stores and about 500 inhabitants. In the early 1830s Cradock had 40 to 50 houses and about 350 inhabitants, but then quickly grew as a trading centre for the surrounding farmers.

[17] It was not possible to take paper or digital copies in the archives in question; the screen-shots of items shown here have been taken as screen-dumps from the South African Newspapers online extracts collection of the Genealogical Association of South Africa.



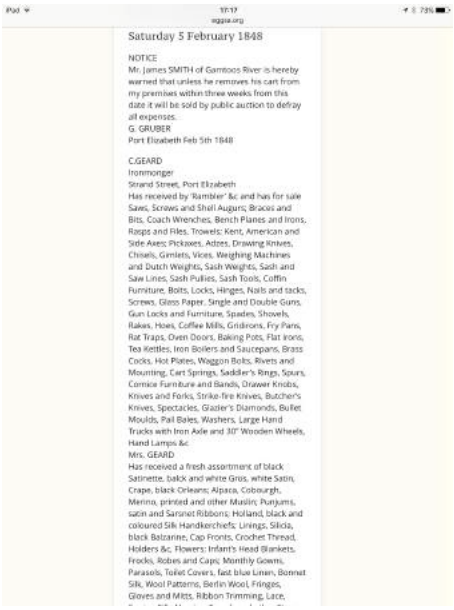
Wednesday 3 February 1841

MARRIED by Special Licence in St.George's Church by the Rev John Heavyside AM, Richard John EATON Esq, Clerk of the Peace for the Division of Albany, to Mary Anne, only daughter of George C. SANDFORD Esq, Assistant Commissary General to Her Majesty's Forces at the Cape of Good Hope.
Graham's Town, Cape of Good Hope
Feb 3 1841.

Notice
Mrs. FINLAYSON begs to inform her Friends and the Public that her Hotel, which has for some time back been appropriated to the use of His Excellency the Governor, is again opened, and she trusts that support which she has hitherto received, will still be continued. Accommodation will also be afforded to Travellers &c in the above Establishment; as also good Stabling for Horses.
NB Bottled Ale, Porter and Gilbert's Beer always on hand; as also Tiffins ready at the shortest notice.

Mr. M. NORDEN in returning his sincere thanks to the Public in general for the kind and extensive support they have hitherto afforded him, begs to intimate to those who are indebted to him that he is about retiring from Business, and going to England; and to express a hope that they will give him no trouble at the ensuing Circuit Court: but trusts

Graham's Town Journal, 3 February 1841



Saturday 5 February 1848

NOTICE
Mr. James SMITH of Gamtoos River is hereby warned that unless he removes his cart from my premises within three weeks from this date it will be sold by public auction to defray all expenses.
G. GRUBER
Port Elizabeth Feb 5th 1848

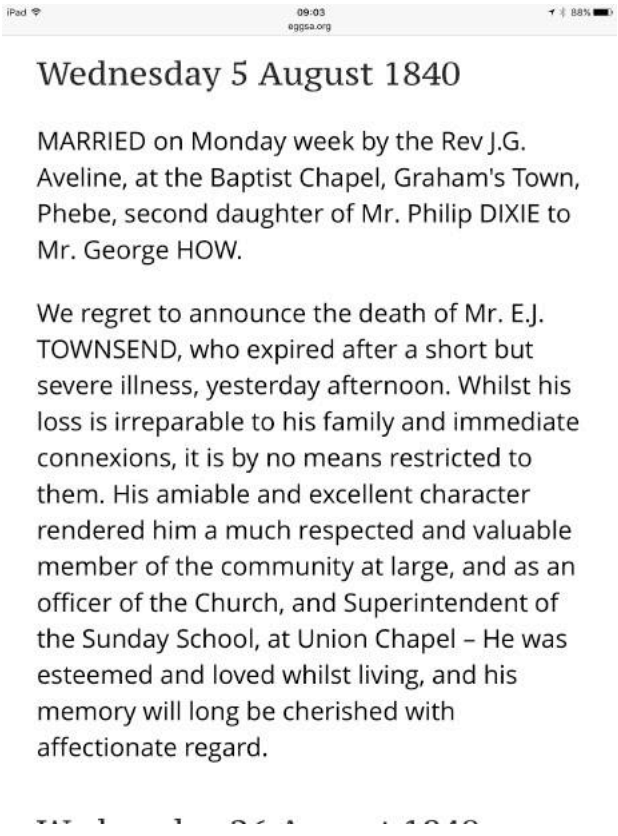
C.GEARD
Ironmonger
Strand Street, Port Elizabeth
Has received by 'Rambler' &c and has for sale Saws, Screws and Shell Augurs; Braces and Bits, Coach Wrenches, Bench Planes and Irons, Rasps and Files, Trowels; Kent, American and Side Axes; Pickaxes, Adzes, Drawing Knives, Chisels, Gimlets, Vices, Weighing Machines and Dutch Weights, Sash Weights, Sash and Saw Lines, Sash Pullies, Sash Tools, Coffin Furniture, Bolts, Locks, Hinges, Nails and tacks, Screws, Glass Paper, Single and Double Guns, Gun Locks and Furniture, Spades, Shovels, Rakes, Hoes, Coffee Mills, Gridirons, Fry Pans, Rat Traps, Oven Doors, Baking Pots, Flat Irons, Tea Kettles, Iron Boilers and Saucepans, Brass Cocks, Hot Plates, Waggon Bolts, Rivets and Mourning, Cart Springs, Saddler's Rings, Spurs, Cornice Furniture and Bands, Drawer Knobs, Knives and Forks, Strike-fire Knives, Butcher's Knives, Spectacles, Glazier's Diamonds, Bullet Moulds, Pail Bales, Washers, Large Hand Trucks with Iron Axle and 30" Wooden Wheels, Hand Lamps &c
Mrs. GEARD
Has received a fresh assortment of black Satinette, balck and white Gros, white Satin, Crape, black Orleans; Alpaca, Cobourgh, Merino, printed and other Muslin; Punjums, satin and Sarsnet Ribbons; Holland, black and coloured Silk Handkerchiefs; Linings, Silicia, black Balzarine, Cap Fronts, Crochet Thread, Holders &c; Flowers; Infant's Head Blankets, Frocks, Robes and Caps; Monthly Gowns, Parasols, Toilet Covers, fast blue Linen, Bonnet Silk, Wool Patterns, Berlin Wool, Fringes, Gloves and Mitts, Ribbon Trimming, Lace,

Eastern Province Herald, 5 February 1848

3.14 They included women alone, those with non-supporting husbands and families, those who were widowed, and also those who, like Elizabeth Hockly, had strong family-based economic interests and hands-on experience of business and commercial life. Hockly's

daughter Harriet Townsend not only became one of them, but an entrepreneur and business-woman on a significant scale, as discussion following shows.

3.15 The Townsend shop in Grahamstown was run by Edward and also (as his brother William's letters indicate) Harriet, and it specialised in selling jewellery, silverware and other high-end goods to the expanding population of white townsfolk and well-to-do farmers in the wider area as well as Grahamstown itself. Delivered by a special messenger, Edward Townsend was sent an urgent letter dated 21 July 1840 from one of the shop's agents, John Blore (who was also Edward's brother-in-law), about Edward having cashed a large promissory note, which had subsequently failed; it was followed by another letter from him on 4 August 1840.[18] Edward suddenly died on the afternoon of 4 August 1841.[19]



Wednesday 5 August 1840

MARRIED on Monday week by the Rev J.G. Aveline, at the Baptist Chapel, Graham's Town, Phebe, second daughter of Mr. Philip DIXIE to Mr. George HOW.

We regret to announce the death of Mr. E.J. TOWNSEND, who expired after a short but severe illness, yesterday afternoon. Whilst his loss is irreparable to his family and immediate connexions, it is by no means restricted to them. His amiable and excellent character rendered him a much respected and valuable member of the community at large, and as an officer of the Church, and Superintendent of the Sunday School, at Union Chapel – He was esteemed and loved whilst living, and his memory will long be cherished with affectionate regard.

Cape Frontier Times, 5 August 1840

[18] John Blore to Edward Townsend, 21 July 1840, 4 August 1840.

[19] Edward Townsend's health had been considered 'delicate'. There are no clues as to the cause of his death from newspaper notices or letters, so the shock might have triggered a heart attack or stroke, or possibly he might have killed himself.

3.16 Harriet Townsend was then aged twenty-three, with debts, small children, pregnant, with no means of livelihood other than the shop and connections built up through it, and her family networks. She received two recommendations as to what her future course of action should be once her baby was born.

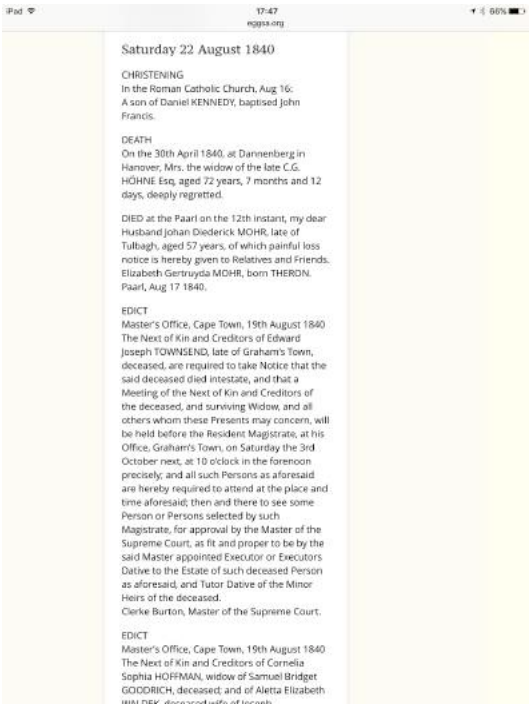
3.17 The first was that Harriet's mother Elizabeth Hockly and Edward's brother John Townsend proposed that she should live with and run a school with her mother in Graaff-Reinet, although Cradock was also mentioned as a possibility. This was a 'play it safe' suggestion concerned with giving her family protection and ensuring her respectability regarding women's proper place; it was a separate spheres kind of proposal. It is also perhaps slightly unexpected, given Elizabeth Hockly's own involvement in business ventures during her marriage as well as widowhood. However, her business activities were carried out first under the aegis of her husband, then through the conventional route of running a small school from her home, while later any critical public eye was avoided through her renting property by using agents on commission to conduct these arrangements for her. What comes across in letters at this time is her wish to protect and support her daughter and ensure her continued good name.[20]

3.18 The second very different recommendation was made by Edward's eldest brother William Townsend, acting in collaboration with the merchants and agents John Blore, John Maskell and William James Smith, all connected with the Townsends' business in Grahamstown. They proposed that Harriet should stay where she was because the shop had an established clientele and level of profit, expand the business, and they would provide her with advice and practical support in doing so.[21] This was an entrepreneurial 'taking a chance' proposal, and is in a way what might be expected from successful business-men, except that notably their letters do not raise considerations of ladyhood, respectability and so on, but instead emphasise Harriet's skills and competencies, her financial and family responsibilities, her existing advantages and the opportunities that existed. This is very similar to the way that a number of prominent business-women in the North American and European contexts developed their businesses, through being offered not only tutelage in good business practice

[20] eg. Elizabeth Hockly to Harriet Townsend, 18 August 1840; 13 September 1840; 18 October 1840. From hereon Harriet Townsend appears as HT in letter references.
[21] John Blore to HT, 4 December 1840, 1 January 1841; William Townsend to HT, 18 December 1840, 25 December 1840, 4 February 1841; John Blore and John Maskell to HT, 12 March 1841.

but also active sponsorship early in their careers by older successful business-men (for examples, see Barker 2006; Jepson 2009; Phillips 2006; Zimmerman 2006). This was a fairly typical route for young male entrepreneurs at the time, so the only surprising aspect is that these men, including in Harriet Townsend's case, seem to have made little distinction on the basis of gender, with their eye instead on entrepreneurial skills and possibilities.

3.19 The choices that Harriet Townsend in fact made differed from the recommendations of both her close family and the interested business parties sketched here, although including elements of both. When her husband died in early August 1840, she was left mainly with debts, plus business contacts, some direct experience of business after her marriage and also indirect experience of her mother's economic activities, in which as second eldest child she is likely to have played a part after her father's death in 1835, when she was 17 or 18. In the period following Edward's death up to the birth of her third child some four months later in December, the Estate was settled via a creditors' meeting.[22]



Saturday 22 August 1840

CHRISTENING
In the Roman Catholic Church, Aug 16:
A son of Daniel KENNEDY, baptised John Francis.

DEATH
On the 30th April 1840, at Dannenberg in Hanover, Mrs. the widow of the late C.G. HÖHNE Esq, aged 72 years, 7 months and 12 days, deeply regretted.

DIED at the Paarl on the 12th instant, my dear Husband Johan Diederick MOHR, late of Tulbagh, aged 57 years, of which painful loss notice is hereby given to Relatives and Friends.
Elizabeth Gertruyda MOHR, born THERON.
Paarl, Aug 17 1840.

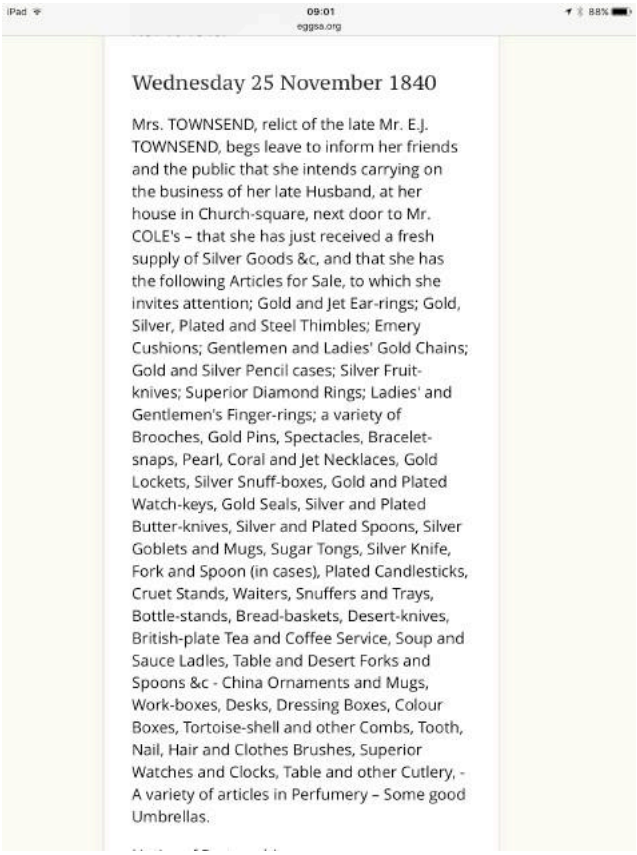
EDICT
Master's Office, Cape Town, 19th August 1840
The Next of Kin and Creditors of Edward Joseph TOWNSEND, late of Graham's Town, deceased, are required to take Notice that the said deceased died intestate, and that a Meeting of the Next of Kin and Creditors of the deceased, and surviving Widow, and all others whom these Presents may concern, will be held before the Resident Magistrate, at his Office, Graham's Town, on Saturday the 3rd October next, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon precisely; and all such Persons as aforesaid are hereby required to attend at the place and time aforesaid; then and there to see some Person or Persons selected by such Magistrate, for approval by the Master of the Supreme Court, as fit and proper to be by the said Master appointed Executor or Executors Dative to the Estate of such deceased Person as aforesaid, and Tutor Dative of the Minor Heirs of the deceased.
Clerke Burton, Master of the Supreme Court.

EDICT
Master's Office, Cape Town, 19th August 1840
The Next of Kin and Creditors of Cornelia Sophia HOFFMAN, widow of Samuel Bridget GOODRICH, deceased; and of Aletta Elizabeth

South African Commercial Advertiser, 22 August 1840

[22] This was legally required because he had died intestate and with business debts as well as family ones. See *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 22 August 1840; see also 30 September 1840; and *Cape Frontier Times,* 6 January 1841.

3.20 Following it, an arrangement was made that kept the shop open and its stock available for sale, while Harriet's younger sister Maria came to stay and help her. She set up business and advertised this in late November 1840 with a range of exceptionally fine goods. At this time, her younger brother Daniel also came to serve in the shop and carry out some related tasks for her.



Wednesday 25 November 1840

Mrs. TOWNSEND, relict of the late Mr. E.J. TOWNSEND, begs leave to inform her friends and the public that she intends carrying on the business of her late Husband, at her house in Church-square, next door to Mr. COLE's – that she has just received a fresh supply of Silver Goods &c, and that she has the following Articles for Sale, to which she invites attention; Gold and Jet Ear-rings; Gold, Silver, Plated and Steel Thimbles; Emery Cushions; Gentlemen and Ladies' Gold Chains; Gold and Silver Pencil cases; Silver Fruit-knives; Superior Diamond Rings; Ladies' and Gentlemen's Finger-rings; a variety of Brooches, Gold Pins, Spectacles, Bracelet-snaps, Pearl, Coral and Jet Necklaces, Gold Lockets, Silver Snuff-boxes, Gold and Plated Watch-keys, Gold Seals, Silver and Plated Butter-knives, Silver and Plated Spoons, Silver Goblets and Mugs, Sugar Tongs, Silver Knife, Fork and Spoon (in cases), Plated Candlesticks, Cruet Stands, Waiters, Snuffers and Trays, Bottle-stands, Bread-baskets, Desert-knives, British-plate Tea and Coffee Service, Soup and Sauce Ladles, Table and Desert Forks and Spoons &c - China Ornaments and Mugs, Work-boxes, Desks, Dressing Boxes, Colour Boxes, Tortoise-shell and other Combs, Tooth, Nail, Hair and Clothes Brushes, Superior Watches and Clocks, Table and other Cutlery, - A variety of articles in Perfumery – Some good Umbrellas.

Cape Frontier Times, 25 November 1840

3.21 During this interregnum period up to early 1841, Elizabeth Hockly added to the properties she owned in Cradock, in building a family house and also buying a property to use as a shop for Harriet's business. In April/May 1841, Harriet with her children moved to Cradock, resided with her mother and younger siblings, and transferred her business from Grahamstown to the Cradock shop.[23]

[23] The accounts and other books commence on 1 June 1841.

I3.22 n Cradock, Harriet Townsend in part lived the life of a respectful dutiful chapel-going widowed daughter, living in the shelter of her mother's home, placing her young son Daniel at a prominent boarding school for infants run by the unmarried and ultra respectable Pringle sisters, and becoming involved in Chapel activities. However, in part she also ran her shop and extended her business activities through various women of her acquaintance becoming out-workers for her, and she also targeted sales among 'country-friends' rather than relying on shop-front sales, with records providing information before and after the removal.[24] These two aspects mutually supported each other, for without respectability Harriet Townsend's business would not have taken off in the way that it did, and without the income derived from her business she could not have lived the comfortable respectable life that she did. The business assumed its form surprisingly quickly. Although its turnover increased markedly during the eight year period of its life, resulting shifts in the emphasis of her activities were accommodated within its broad structure, which was maintained up to when the records end in later 1848. Its organisational structure had a number of facets, as follows.

3.23 Firstly, the Cradock premises had a shop front and also a storage area, and was one of a growing number of commercial enterprises in the town in early 1841 when it opened. Its activities included cash sales and sales on credit, taking orders for future fulfilment, and also providing a place where ordered goods could be delivered, stored and later distributed. Later the business developed around supplying general material goods among local populations, with an associated increase in its shop-front activities, while initially it seems to have focused more on the fulfilment and distribution of distance orders. For both, the labour of the out-workers who were variously friends, acquaintances and customers of Harriet Townsend living in the Grahamstown, Cradock and Bedford areas was crucial.

3.24 The second aspect involved these out-workers in dressing the unadorned hats, dresses, shirts and other items Harriet Townsend ordered from her merchant contacts, and also in making particularly fine shirts, dresses and hats from scratch, with their activities including buttonholing, braiding, embroidery and a range of other skilled sewing and millinery work. These activities are glimpsed mainly in chance mentions, for their labour was 'invisible' in terms of what is recorded in the records, as payment seems to have been goods in kind rather

[24] Receipts 1837-1842, 1 Pringle 254; Cash book September 1840-July 1841, 2 Pringle 33; Day-sales September 1840-Aug 1841, 2 Pringle 34.

than involving monetary transactions. This arrangement enabled Mrs Townsend to provide high-end and middle-range goods, so to avoid direct competition with the local businesses that sold cheaper ones; it also increased her customer-base as well, by drawing in various of these women's relations, neighbours and friends.

3.25 The third part of the business involved the people referred to in letters as 'country friends', a loose network of men and women who were customers and sometimes also friends, and they were members of the local well-to-do farming gentry and their town equivalents. They were important to Harriet Townsend's growing business because they purchased the more expensive of the goods she made available, including silverware and jewellery; and they also added to the status and respectability of her activities because of their importance as the local gentry, many of whom were very wealthy. There were also overlaps between these groups, such as Mrs Townsend's friend Sarah Munro, who acted as out-worker *and* customer *and* agent, including taking ordered goods with her as she moved from farm to town visiting and also collecting new orders, which she later handed on when back in Cradock.

3.26 The fourth element of the business involved the merchants and agents in Grahamstown, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth from whom Harriet Townsend ordered stock, sought credit, and arranged transportation of the goods she ordered. These connected businessmen had been impressed by Harriet Townsend although not by her husband. These were William Townsend, William James Smith, John Blore and John Maskell. After Edward Townsend's death, they combined to form a kind of support group, offering Harriet advice and long-term practical assistance in running and managing her business activities.[25]

3.27 William Townsend was the eldest brother and head of the family business. Following an 1837/8 visit to South Africa, made because of concerns about its Grahamstown end, William wrote to Edward that he needed to apply himself and take the business more seriously, keep proper accounts and associated records, and make Harriet his corresponding clerk because she was skilled and diligent at business practices.[26] He also wrote in similar terms to Harriet herself.[27] Following Edward's death, William Townsend was involved in sorting out various of the financial problems that existed, and he also provided financial and

[25] William Townsend to HT, 25 December 1840; John Blore to HT, 1 January 1841.
[26] William Townsend to HT, 1 March 1838, 28 December 1838, 14 March 1838, 14 March 1839.
[27] William Townsend to HT, 30 December 1839.

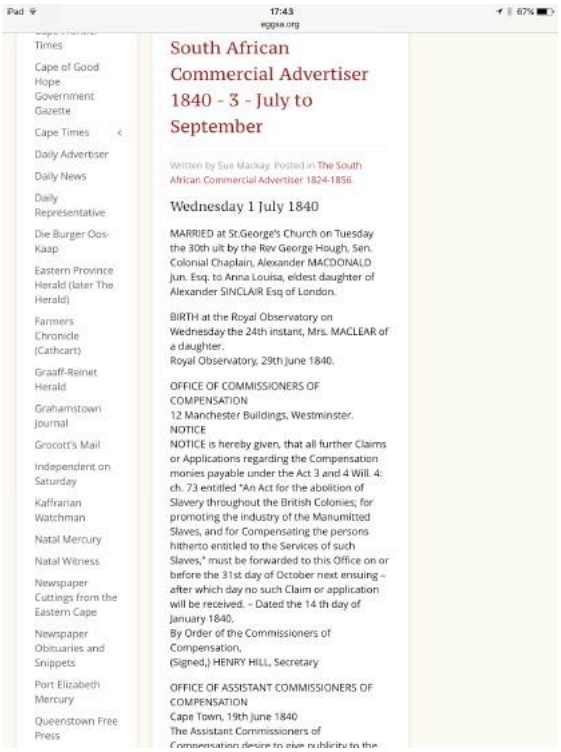
other advice to Harriet. However, in late 1840 or early 1841 William with his family emigrated from England to Canada, with Harriet's main advisors and supporters thereafter being Smith, Blore and Maskell.

3.28 William James Smith was a merchant based in Cape Town but earlier had business interests in Grahamstown. After moving to Cape Town, he became an importer as well as merchant and acted as Harriet Townsend's principal agent and supplier. He was also the son-in-law of John Blore. Blore was based in Cape Town but with business interests elsewhere too, and he had been an agent over a number of years for both the Hocklys and the Townsends living in Britain regarding their transactions in South Africa. In particular, however, he was married to the oldest Townsend sibling, Mary Elizabeth, and he had acted as an agent for some years for Elizabeth Hockly and had known Harriet Townsend since she was a child.[28] John Maskell, like Smith, was an agent and importer, in his case based in Port Elizabeth and with a business in Grahamstown;. He was also a long-term associate of John Blore, with both men stalwarts of the Cape Town Commercial Exchange. There are letters from all three in the collection, providing Harriet with advice, practical assistance, warnings and encouragements, as well as passing on and soliciting information about family and mutual friends. The large majority – over 200 – are from Smith.

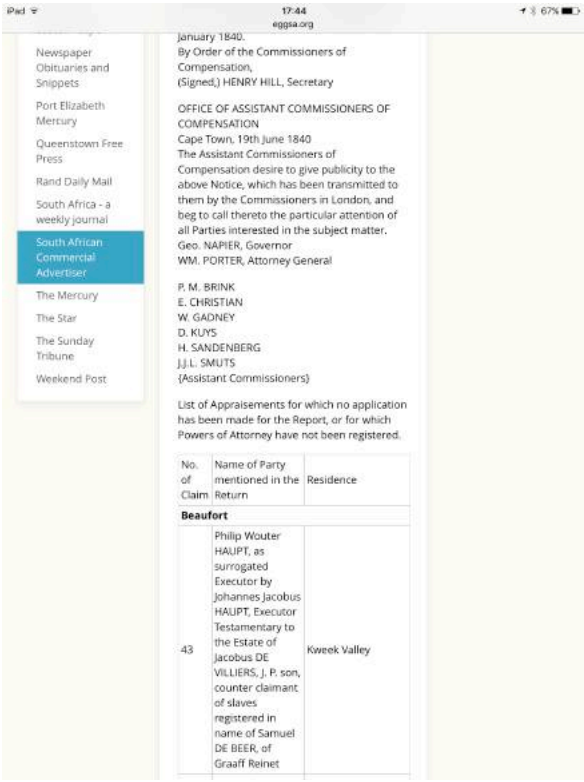
3.29 This is to focus on what the letters and other extant records contain. In addition, they have silences including a resounding one on 'race' matters. The events and letter-writings discussed here took place in South Africa in the 1840s and, even given contemporary attempts to segregate different ethnic groups from each other in the Eastern Cape, the silence resounds. In Grahamstown and Cradock, 'locations' were in existence by the 1830s. Refugees from conflicts elsewhere, including 'Mantatees' and 'Fingoes', were also present. In 1836 when living in Grahamstown, Elizabeth Hockly bought the indentures of at least two servants following the abolition of slavery.[29] The presence of indentured labourers (usually former slaves) was visible. Compensations regarding the end of slavery were being made in 1840. In addition, these small towns and the people living in them were situated in the shifting and contested frontier area between encroaching whites and embattled African peoples, and so both town and country settlers had an eye on possible conflicts, as well as

[28] One of Harriet Townsend's children, William Blore Townsend, was named for him and William Townsend.
[29] Elizabeth Hockly, 4 June 1836, 1P 698 and 700; and Elizabeth Hockly, nd 1836, 1P 304.

being desirous of employing labour. Also present were people in a number of in-between groups, including service workers including household servants and nursemaids and farm workers.



South African Commercial Advertiser, 1 July 1840



Newspaper Obituaries and Snippets
Port Elizabeth Mercury
Queenstown Free Press
Rand Daily Mail
South Africa - a weekly journal
South African Commercial Advertiser
The Mercury
The Star
The Sunday Tribune
Weekend Post

January 1840.
By Order of the Commissioners of Compensation,
(Signed,) HENRY HILL, Secretary

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS OF COMPENSATION
Cape Town, 19th June 1840
The Assistant Commissioners of Compensation desire to give publicity to the above Notice, which has been transmitted to them by the Commissioners in London, and beg to call thereto the particular attention of all Parties interested in the subject matter.
Geo. NAPIER, Governor
WM. PORTER, Attorney General

P. M. BRINK
E. CHRISTIAN
W. GADNEY
D. KUYS
H. SANDENBERG
J.J.L. SMUTS
(Assistant Commissioners)

List of Appraisements for which no application has been made for the Report, or for which Powers of Attorney have not been registered.

No. of Claim	Name of Party mentioned in the Return	Residence
Beaufort		
43	Philip Wouter HAUPT, as surrogated Executor by Johannes Jacobus HAUPT, Executor Testamentary to the Estate of Jacobus DE VILLIERS, J. P. son, counter claimant of slaves registered in name of Samuel DE BEER, of Graaff Reinet	Kweek Valley

South African Commercial Advertiser, 1 July 1840, continued

3.30 However, no signs of any of this appear in Smith's letters from Cape Town, although the Frontier War and outbreaks of violence make an appearance as a key factor in producing the economic and other circumstances that Harriet Townsend and her business had to respond to. Is this resounding silence a vanishing trick by a white South African of the day, of 'disappearing' those who did most of the work and whose presence and labour was essential to life as lived by the settler population?

3.31 Perhaps, although there are additional factors to take into account as well. Smith was based in Cape Town and would not have been fully cognisant of the details of Harriet Townsend's domestic or other arrangements. Also the letters to her from Smith et al and the associated records have a specific focus on business matters, and in an ancillary way with social connections in the form of the expressions of polite formalised friendship necessary to support and facilitate these business activities. They do not deal with ordinary life 'in the round', with such important matters as Harriet's children and their illnesses, her religious convictions, and the drawn-out death from tuberculosis of Smith's wife Georgiana, being confined as it were to largely silent parenthesis. Across the letters, there is no detail provided

of shop customers or country friends, nor of out-workers, nor comments about servants or the service workers who facilitated the dispatch and transportation of goods to Cradock. It is of course possible that such things were contained in the now missing presumed destroyed letters written by Mrs Townsend to Smith; but the likelihood is that they were not, for such matters were not part of the expected expressions of formalised friendship in business correspondences of the day.

3.32 Having outlined the context, the precipitating events, the people involved and some prevailing silences, discussion now moves to consider the letters and associated records and what these indicate about two questions of interest. The first concerns who and what constituted a successful entrepreneur for the business-men who offered advice and direction to Harriet Townsend, which included using a 'Manifold Writer' copying device to take file copies of business papers, keeping detailed accounts and other book-keeping records, paying promptly in cash or good proxy for the 'favors' or list of orders her agents had fulfilled for her, and ensuring that her 'country friends' and other customers paid their accounts on time. Harriet Townsend in fact went her own way, following some but not all of the advice given about good business practices. So what did their tutelage add up to, what was the 'successful business entrepreneur' as imparted to her, and why did she follow some aspects but depart from others? Also, how might this illuminate separate spheres debates?

3.33 The second question is concerned with when 'a letter' begins and ends in relation to any other writing it is attached to or part of. Typically, business letters in the Europe context these men had grown up in and Harriet and Edward had been schooled in could, and indeed were expected to, mix business and a polite formalised version of friendship, as noted above. Certainly this fits the more than 200 letters from Smith, which typically involve such mixes. But not all of them take this form, the mixes can be very different, and the ends of the spectrum – of ‘pure business’ and ‘pure friendship’ – can make appearances. So when are the communications to Harriet Townsend ‘just letters’, when do they take on elements of something else, and how and why do such things occur? Also, what does this indicate about letter-writing and what ‘the letter’ is composed by more generally?

4 The Manifold Writer: Tutelage and good business practice

4.1 The information, advice and material assistance offered to Harriet Townsend in the letters (and occasional visits) of William Smith, John Blore and John Maskell is on a range from basic aspects of keeping records and paying bills, to more complicated ideas about how to gauge the reliability or otherwise of customers. At the core of the exchanges between them and Mrs Townsend are repeated comments about the necessity of keeping reliably accurate books recording business transactions, and the closely related matters of regularly chasing accounts and collecting money from customers, and of paying off her own invoices and bills of exchange by making regular payments on these. It also includes explaining why agents charged commission on the transactions they expedited, the need for insurance payments regarding fire and theft, the existence of a time-lag between her ordering and only some weeks or months later receiving goods, and avoiding business dealings with people who were financially or in other ways suspect.[30] And their advice is typically given in the context of particular business activities in hand between her and them, rather than as an abstract set of instructions.

4.2 These advised practices were designed to produce a successful business enterprise that did not accumulate debt and did produce a large turnover and good profit. However, while Harriet Townsend quickly commenced keeping extensive records, she failed to routinely close accounts with customers, and also did not pay off her own debts and in particular those to Smith as her main agent. There were reasons for carrying out some aspects of the advice given but not others, embedded in the circumstances she was working in and which contributed to her business successes as well as failures. A brief snapshot of her business finances in April 1846 will help provide some context.

4.3 Although carrying a debt for reasons discussed later, the turnover of Mrs Townsend's business came to form a sizeable enterprise. When a stock-taking coupled with a review of liabilities and sums owed on accounts was carried out in late April 1846, stock in hand translated into 2015 values was around £105,000, money owed to her on orders was around £64,500, her liabilities were around £108,600, while profit in hand was around £59,500.[31]

[30] John Blore to HT, 3 December 1841; William James Smith to HT, 3 June 1842.
[31] Estimates of 1846 values have been gauged using the academic *Measuring Worth* website (measuringworth.com). This provides high quality reliable historical data on important economic

Her liabilities were mainly bills of exchange and this sum almost certainly underestimates those placed with Smith. Also the profit in hand should be seen as notional. In addition, there is no information about income, outlays or incoming sums in the 'non-business' part of her life.. So what about the advice given her regarding management of her business activities? In the discussion following, first those aspects of advice and assistance she acted on are discussed, then those she rejected or was unable to follow,

4.4 Keeping detailed records was important within the advice Harriet Townsend received. This concerned all the main aspects of her business activities, including shop-front cash sales in Cradock, orders that people made and received on account, the lists of orders - referred to as 'favors' – she sent to Smith in Cape Town, and the record later of what she received, and also what had not been available and so was omitted.[32] Something that also became important for Smith as part of his own business practices concerns his advice to use a 'Manifold Writer', a mechanical copying device, to enable producing copies of favors sent, orders received and items dispatched or omitted and so on.[33]

4.5 As established merchants, Smith, Blore and Maskell were aware of the competition that Harriet Townsend faced, initially from Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth, then increasingly from new outlets established in Cradock, which tended to compete by selling items as cheaply as possible, as with Mrs Elder and Miss Kew in the two advertisements below.

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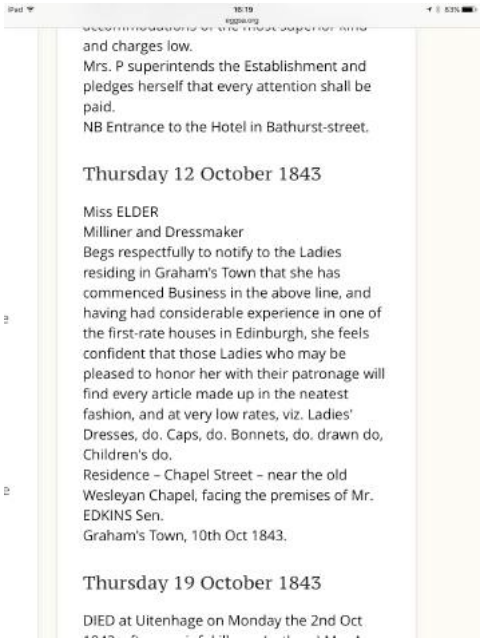
aggregates, with particular emphasis on nominal (current-price) measures, as well as real (constant-price) measures. It also provides carefully chosen comparators that explain the many issues involved in making value comparisons over time. The emphasis is on nominal measures and it states, "This is important because to comprehend a past transaction or asset, one must begin with the contemporary value of the item. To make this valuation meaningful, it must be measured against the value of the appropriate economic indicator in that year. To understand the valuation from another year's perspective, one must carry that measure forward against the changing value of the indicator." It provides six common indicators, classified into four types: prices, household consumption, income and economic output, derived from UK historical data. What is used here is an Income measure at the lowest end (a sum of £454 ranges at 2015 values from £39,590 up to £339,900) but following advice adjusted to allow for significantly lower costs in South Africa.

[32] William James Smith to HT, 23 April 1843, 6 December 1844.

[33] William James Smith to HT, 16 June 1842, 7 July 1843.



and charges low.
Mrs. P superintends the Establishment and pledges herself that every attention shall be paid.
NB Entrance to the Hotel in Bathurst-street.

Thursday 12 October 1843

Miss ELDER
Milliner and Dressmaker
Begs respectfully to notify to the Ladies residing in Graham's Town that she has commenced Business in the above line, and having had considerable experience in one of the first-rate houses in Edinburgh, she feels confident that those Ladies who may be pleased to honor her with their patronage will find every article made up in the neatest fashion, and at very low rates, viz. Ladies' Dresses, do. Caps, do. Bonnets, do. drawn do, Children's do.
Residence – Chapel Street – near the old Wesleyan Chapel, facing the premises of Mr. EDKINS Sen.
Graham's Town, 10th Oct 1843.

Thursday 19 October 1843

DIED at Uitenhage on Monday the 2nd Oct

Cape Frontier Times, 12 October 1843

MILLS Esq of a Daughter.

Tuesday 29 August 1848

Mrs HAINES takes this opportunity of informing her friends and the public of the removal of her business from Market square to the premises lately occupied by Mr. STANDEN, High-street.
Graham's Town, 25th Aug 1848

Tuesday 5 September 1848

Mrs. KEW
Begs to inform the Ladies and her customers in general that she has removed from New street to Hill street, opposite J. WHILEY, Confectioner, where she still keeps every choice selection of Goods of every description, and selling at very low prices.
Hill street, Graham's Town
September 5 1848

Soap and Candle Manufactory
Bathurst Street
J. HARLEY Sr
In returning his best thanks to his friends and the Public for past favors, begs to advise them that in addition to his Soap business he has

Cape Frontier Times, 5 September 1848

4.6 Their strong advice was not to emulate this, but to maintain her reputation for selling high-end goods including jewellery and silverware, to avoid selling things that were cheap,

and regularly to try out new lines of goods so as to lead rather than just follow local fashion.[34]

4.7 An important component was the relationship between stock control and record-keeping, specifically in order to maintain a stock of goods of the right kind at the right point in the year to appeal to customers. The advice here was to order stock well in advance, according to the season of the year and the kind of clothes and other items that people would accordingly want to purchase; and this also meant recognising the length of the communications and transportation cycle and the significant time-lag between Mrs Townsend sending favors by letter, and her receiving goods back when these often had to await the ships arriving that were importing them to Cape Town or transporting them to Port Elizabeth.[35] In addition, storage space was finite, and goods that did not sell over one fashion cycle were unlikely to sell at all, so the advice was given not to keep 'bad stock' but sell it off for cash at attractive prices that would encourage further purchases of goods at full price.[36] At the basis of the business were these transactions between customers and Harriet Townsend, which were located in the context of a volatile local economy and a market characterised by credit, the lack of money in the sense of cash liquidity, local banks and currencies that might collapse, with a system of paying accounts usually at quarterly or six monthly intervals adding to the difficulties. Advice about managing this included that, unlike what occurred around Edward Townsend's death, Harriet should not transact bills of exchange, nor should she accept promissory notes instead of cash payments, except from the known and trusted few whose probity and also whose capacity to pay was certain.[37]

4.8 All of the above were taken on by Harriet Townsend and became part of her business practices. However, other advice was given which she was either unwilling or unable to follow or to follow completely. Some advice about managing customers and payments in the prevailing economic climate, for instance, come under this heading. The culmination of the dealings between Harriet Townsend and her customers was that accounts should be regularly closed by money owed being collected and the transaction thereby finalised. This did not always happen and many letters lament the fact that accounts were not regularly chased. And while most of the letters on this come from her merchant advisors and especially Smith, some

[34] John Blore to HT, 4 December 1840; William James Smith to HT, 8 July 1842, 29 December 1843.
[35] William James Smith to HT, 16 April 1841, 11 January 1847.
[36] William James Smith to HT, 7 October 1842, 8 September 1843.
[37] William James Smith to HT, 29 July 1842, 14 October 1842, 31 May 1844.

are from customers themselves, concerned about outstanding bills.[38] Related advice was that she should differentiate between types of customers and respond differently to them. This was in particular around notions of financial standing and was to protect her against bills of exchange and promissory notes that were (intentionally or unintentionally) fraudulent or defaulted on, and also and more mundanely from people simply not paying their accounts on time.[39] In practice, however, it was less easy to distinguish between people than this presumes, as discussed later.

4.9 The volume of Harriet Townsend's business activities increased over time, with the reduced time she had to cover all of its activities seen by her advisors as the main reason for her neglecting the accounts. The advice here was that her maintaining the shop-front and dealing face-to-face with cash customers was essential, but that superintending and participating in the range of sewing and related out-working tasks was to the detriment of her chasing the payment of accounts.[40] What was recommended was for her to employ someone to help run the business, enabling a division of labour in which one person would take responsibility for the shop and accounts and ensure payments were made, and the other would orchestrate the sewing, millinery and other out-working. In fact she did then employ an assistant, although it is not clear how these sets of tasks were actually allocated between her and her employee (or who this was). But in spite of this, payments and accounts continued to be neglected, with knock-on effects in terms of cash flow, which negatively affected her ability to pay invoices from Smith for her orders and also the bills of exchange she transacted to cover the shortfalls. Over time, the letters from Smith increase in their frequency and also the emphasis given in encouraging, cajoling and haranguing her to pay at least something regularly off her bills and favors. Among other indications of his increasing desperation is the extent of underlining given to keywords in these letters, doing so sometimes once, sometimes twice, and sometimes with three underlinings.

4.10 Another piece of advice given to Harriet Townsend was that she should not buy stock

[38] William James Smith to HT, 3 March 1843, 10 November 1843, 22 November 1844, 13 July 1848; John Blore to HT, 1 January 1841, 19 August 1842; and see for instance Ann Pringle to HT, 27 May 1844.
[39] John Maskell to HT, 20 October 1842; William James Smith to HT, 24 August 1842, 2 December 1842, 16 December 1842, 8 December 1843.
[40] William James Smith to HT, 3 November 1843, 1 December 1843, 8 August 1844, 13 December 1844.

from local (specifically Grahamstown, Cradock) merchants and suppliers. This was because local debts would be more consequential in terms of claims made on her because of potential damage to her reputation, but also because Smith especially was making financial sacrifices to support her and so putting her business in other hands would be disloyal.[41] However, the records show that over time she bought significant amounts of stock from other traders, particularly in Grahamstown where she already had established contacts. The result was a continuing large although fluctuating debt to Smith, which was only in part paid after much persuasion and indeed nagging from him and then at points with just derisorily small payments, while her debts to the local merchants and storekeepers were in the main paid promptly at due quarter dates.[42]

4.11 The goal of the advice given by Smith, Blore and Maskell was that Harriet Townsend's business would succeed in enabling her to pay off the favors and bills of exchange she owed with regular payments, which would in the longer run enable her to pay off all debts and also to generate a good income.[43] The bottom-line to achieve this was, accept the advice and put the suggestions made into practice and things would improve, the debt would be paid off and the business then flourish.[44] And it was combined with, continue in these practices until the Frontier War ended and things became settled, for then business would pick up and be more ordinary.[45]

4.12 Part of Smith's message was that the routine chasing of accounts would ensure regular cash flows, and regular cash flows would enable the routine payment of bills and other amounts owed. Most of these amounts, indeed as far as he knew effectively all of them, were owed to Smith himself. He was Harriet's main agent in Cape Town and acted as a man of business for her more generally. As well as importing the goods she ordered and arranging for them to be transported to her, he also cashed bills, discounted promissory notes and carried out other financial services for her, including cutting his own commission so as to enable her to sell goods at a price that would undercut competitors in Cradock.[46] Without

[41] William James Smith to HT, 10 December 1841, 7 April 1843.
[42] These are 31 March, 30 June, 30 September, 31 December.
[43] William James Smith to HT, 14 January 1842, 13 April 1843, 27 October 1843, 28 June 1844.
[44] William James Smith to HT, 8 December 1842, 17 February 1843, 13 February 1845, 20 March 1846.
[45] William James Smith to HT, 8 March 1844, 29 March 1844, 29 June 1846, 28 September 1846.
[46] William James Smith to HT, 19 September 1845.

Smith's activities in these respects, the business could not have continued and grown in the way it did over the eight years it existed. An astute business-woman, Harriet Townsend is likely to have been well aware of this. Yet she repeatedly failed to pay amounts towards what was owed Smith, did not ensure regular closure of the accounts people had with her, supplied goods both to the customers who paid regularly and those who were tardy, and not only continued but extended her involvement with other merchants and shopkeepers rather than putting this business in Smith's hands.

4.13 All the indications are that Harriet Townsend did her best in the circumstances to achieve success with her expanding business and had productive, friendly and indeed affectionate relationships with Smith, Blore and Maskell. Consequently her failure to follow some key aspects of the advice given by such stalwart supporters, not to mention the non-payment of debts on Smith's invoices, needs explanation. The bottom line here is that there were good reasons for this, connected with features of the particular economic and social context she was living and working in. Differentiating between good and bad customers, people who did and who did not pay cash and did or did not pay their accounts, is indicative here. At this time, people could rapidly move between the categories of good and bad customers, for this was not a matter of character flaws but the changing circumstances of people's lives and their material ability or inability to make cash payments. In this context, information about whether people were good or bad customers could easily become out of date, as with Smith for instance mistakenly advising Mrs Townsend not to allow account purchases by the farming population.[47] This was based on an earlier financial instability among farmers, but was out of date regarding what had happened around the expansion of farming for a market and the buoyancy of payments for stock sales made through slagter's briefs, which then made local stock farmers among the most reliable of customers.

4.14 Connected with this, chasing payments regularly was difficult in circumstances in which everyone was more or less in the same financial boat, and attempts to solicit payments out of synch with the quarterly or six monthly account cycle could put off good customers as well as bad. Harriet Townsend was dealing with people who were members of tightly interconnected networks, so that offending or annoying particular customers could have wider reverberations for her business dealings and also her social standing. In addition,

[47] William James Smith to HT, 2 December 1842.

asking for account payments to be made in cash, something her advisors advocated, would have introduced a further difficulty. The lack of liquidity in reliable coinage and notes had affected everyone, with the result that dealing in promissory notes and bills of exchange, in effect forms of debt, had become almost normative and even the most financially secure might be unable to pay larger amounts using cash.[48]

4.15 While the advice to employ someone to assist with the main trajectories of work that Smith and the others saw as core to Harriet Townsend's business was adopted, the records suggest that the division of labour recommended was not and she continued routinely interacting with out-workers and country friends as well as shop customers, and chasing accounts remained somewhat neglected. But this too has to be understood in context, for interacting closely with the out-workers who made high-quality goods for her, and provisioning country friends and keeping them sweet, were as important to the business as the shop, although not activities that appeared on Smith's radar in considering the main tasks to be focused on. However, these were part and parcel of maintaining a large customer-base, and the country friends were sometimes also out-workers and distributors of packages of goods, so there were actually three trajectories of business activities that considerably overlapped, although the two that Smith focused on seemed clearly distinguished to him. Succinctly, Harriet Townsend needed to maintain a personal presence in all three to ensure the smooth working of the business and maintenance and if possible expansion of its customer-base.

4.16 Harriet Townsend lived in Cradock in ways that adhered to normative standards for respectable widowhood. But in addition she managed a group of out-workers who were making and finishing goods for her, dealt with orders made by post and distributed goods when her favors were fulfilled and goods arrived in Cradock, controlled stock levels, ordered goods and checked these off once they had been transported some weeks or even months later, and also ran a shop with lengthy opening hours. In this context, pursuing the payments of accounts is likely to have been seen as of lesser daily importance, or even as something which would in the fullness of time take care of itself. Certainly there are signs, including reminders from customers, that payment of accounts had not been requested. Continued smaller amounts of money flowed into the business through shop-front sales, although cash

[48] See Muldrew 1998; Finn 2003; Lemire 2005 for the routinisation of this in some European contexts.

payments were not the majority of its transactions, which involved credit and the payment of accounts on a quarterly or six monthly basis. The result was a cash-strapped business with delayed payments coming in, and which was also and at the same time expanding year on year, requiring the ordering of goods from Smith at increasingly higher levels. Given the absence of significant amounts of cash through more regular closures of accounts, these debts were managed through Harriet Townsend issuing her own or re-floating promissory notes and bills of exchange from others, and also the non-payment of sums due to Smith or her making only small payments.

4.17 Mrs Townsend also managed her business and its finances in another way, and this also had the effect of adding to her local standing. Against the advice from the hard-pressed Smith and also Blore and Maskell, she ordered goods from local businesses particularly in Grahamstown, and did so at increasing levels from approximately 1843 on. The main business she dealt with was Shepperson & Co but also included others. An important feature of her local business relations concerned the amounts she owed on these orders: payment was made regularly, and the level of debt involved did not get out of hand in the way it did with Smith. Thus while there are letters from these local merchants presenting their accounts, and occasional reminders, there is none of the frantic letter-writing that Smith engaged in sometimes several times a week in order to obtain a payment on what she owed him, for in the economic context of the time his business was teetering on the edge of collapse for want of cash.[49] Buying from local merchants and using some of them as agents appears part of Harriet Townsend maintaining 'credit' in a social as well as economic sense, for her regular payment of these debts added to her standing both as a business-woman and regarding her probity more generally. Clearly it was also important financially, for these activities occurred on a different time-cycle and financial scale as well as a different place from her dealings with Smith, and so among other things it formed an important aspect of how she managed her debts, which is to say how she managed her finances and her business.

4.18 What becomes visible through considering these factors is the impact of the economic and social situation that Harriet Townsend's business was operating in. She did not regularly pay off her debt to Smith, and indeed over time it increased, because of the factors discussed here, and in particular because in an important sense the size of the debt was a marker of the

[49] It ended as an independent enterprise in July 1847 when Smith became a junior partner in L.H. Twentyman & Co, although he still acted as Mrs Townsend's agent with Twentyman's.

success of the business. In a context defined by credit and debt, and where payments were usually delayed on a quarterly or six monthly basis, the only escape would have been to increase the size of the business so as to employ more people to carry out specialist tasks, particularly regarding the accounts and record-keeping side. But this would have undercut the basis of her success, which marked her off as different in kind from her competitors through the kind of high-class goods she provided, through the level of face-to-face engagement and service that accompanied this, and through her being demonstrably one of the respectable and well-to-do elite rather than simply someone in business who serviced such people's wants and needs.

4.19 Harriet Townsend lived in her family home with her children under the protection of her mother Elizabeth Hockly, a respected propertied member of Cradock society. Her marriage to Edward Townsend had been to someone who was active in Chapel circles, acted as a Sunday school teacher and had wanted to become a missionary. Her mother was also active in Chapel circles, while from 1840 to when the records cease in later 1848 Harriet promptly paid rent for a chapel pew for herself and her eldest daughter and, like her mother, donated sums to support the maintenance of the chapel's clergyman. Her son Daniel was from a young age a pupil at the boarding school run by the eminently respectable Pringle sisters, while her older sister Elizabeth was married to Daniel Mahoney, who worked as a manager for the Pringle estate. She was on friendly relations with many of the well-to-do elite in the towns of Cradock, Bedford, Somerset and Grahamstown and also the gentry in surrounding country areas. These accoutrements of status and respectability were crucial in the promotion and maintenance of her business activities as of a high order and not 'ordinary business', which would have placed her at a lower position in the local social order and more on a par with her out-workers.

4.20 As this suggests, Harriet Townsend's life and activities as a respectable widowed lady and as a successful business-woman traversed supposed separate spheres, with these two aspects of her activities supporting and reinforcing each other. She was in visible practice a respectable member of the well-to-do elite and equally visibly a successful business-woman with many links with merchants and tradespeople in Bedford, Cradock, Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. She was it seems well aware of respectability issues and also her competence. For instance, a letter from John Blore to her indicates that when he had commented about her doing something 'inappropriate', she had replied in no uncertain terms

that she was the best judge of the respectability or otherwise of her conduct, and he had backed down.[50]

4.21 It is notable that in the letters and other records that remain, there is little that could be easily put under the heading of gendered or separate spheres thinking about business practice in Smith's tutelage, or indeed that of Maskell and also Blore apart from the above letter (and anyway Blore protested that this was a misunderstanding by her). Rather the reverse, for on the few occasions that Smith's letters contain comments to the effect that Harriet Townsend had written to him concerning her worries about not being sufficiently business-like, his responses are clear and stress her competence. Insofar as gender comes into the picture for Smith in his business dealings with her, this is in his emphasis that she was doing as well as possible in the circumstances and actually better than most men. An example that shows the range of his concerns is as follows:[51]

> **… I acknowledge with thanks your remittance of £56 = (£26 in your letter, & £30 from Mr Maskell) which is passed to your credit. –…I am not to send you any of the goods you lately orderd = = …**
> **I am sorry that you are thinking of "giving up business" - you are now well known & have your good connections - all the time you have been in business the Frontier has been in a troubled state, - but, amidst it all, you have done well, & obtained a living for yourself & family, altho' you have certainly been obliged to work hard, but I trust your labours have not gone unrewarded... from what I can see, I should say you have a good business, & <u>are in the way of doing well</u>; & I very much doubt whether you could earn as much with your needle ... all you <u>now</u> earn in that way is <u>extra</u> and would enable you to give your dear children a <u>good education</u>, - but if you give up what I consider to be the "Staff", that is, your <u>shop business</u>, you may not be able to do this: – besides, it seems a pity to give up a connection that you have forwarded by so much labour, & might even <u>naturally</u> the making unreadable the fruits of it. …**
> **...what I want you to do, is, get <u>proper assistance</u>, either in one Branch or the other, of your business - either get a person to do the laborious part of the Millinery, Dress making etc, or if you prefer doing that yourself, get someone who can keep the Books & attend to the shop...**
> **I beg leave to suggest you should get a person that can do the Millinery part... it would enable you to go more calmly about your other affairs, & to be more at your accounts...**

[50] John Blore to HT, 23 February 1843.

[51] The conventions in respect of this and the other transcriptions of letters following are as follows. The use of … signifies material in the original not transcribed and so omitted; otherwise the text is provided just as it is in the original, including such things as Capitals, ampersands (&) and contemporary spellings; there is no 'sic' if mistakes are made; ^word^ indicates an insertion in the original, cross-through indicates a deletion and underlines are again as in the original. A bold font is used to show where ordinary ink has been used to write something; and an ordinary font indicates a manifolded copy.

… You will find that in addition to being paid your domestic expenses for the past 3 Years, that you have still something considerable in hands, for whatever purpose you may choose to apportion it…
…. I wish I had time to pay you a visit, and & put your Books in order, to show you how you really do stand…
I would advise you at the end of the year... to take an a/c of all the stock you have on hand that day… I think you had better not press the Cradock people to buy of you, I fear they are all in a bad way...[52]

4.22 This letter is at some pains to stress the overall successes Harriet Townsend has achieved. It also has a strong tutelage element, in recommending that she should focus on particular aspects of the business, and proposing that if it were possible Smith would go through her books to reach an accurate view of how well she was doing, perhaps an indication that on a visit he might have seen examples and realised they were sometimes rather scrappy. The letter also recommends an annual stock-taking, and provides advice about 'Cradock people' and that they are 'in a bad way' in an economic sense. Its main purpose appears to be to reassure Harriet Townsend that she had made a good livelihood for herself and her family in difficult economic circumstances, and that she could do still better if she had assistance with the out-working and dress-making aspects of the business, and especially if she focused on the shop and collected the accounts owed to her.

4.23 Smith's letters overall do not constitute a gender text about business in the sense that content treats her as 'a woman', apart from the occasional comment that she was better at business than most men. Of course in a sense the existence of his tutelage and the related interest taken by Blore and Maskell might be seen in such terms. But this would be to ignore the fact that relations of tutelage and sponsorship were common between men who were established entrepreneurs and those who were newcomers in business over this time-period.

4.24 The range of business practices Smith urged upon Mrs Townsend were those he considered the best ones for clearing past debt and ensuring profitability and success. However, by and large these were general precepts and lacked an up-to-date knowledge of the specific local context of the Eastern Cape generally and the Cradock and Bedford areas specifically and what this necessitated. The result was that some of these pointers worked, but others did not or else were inappropriate as courses of action in the prevailing

[52] William James Smith to HT, 1 Dec 1843, FM16t/32, Folder 16t, 7566-7569.

circumstances, as with his outdated advice about farmers and their finances noted earlier. This is an important factor in explaining why Harriet Townsend did not fully put into practice some of the suggestions for good business practice that Smith and her other advisors urged on her, and why she failed to do so regarding others that, on the surface at least, would have enabled her to pay off her debts and achieve greater business and financial success. That is, it was just in abstract that the suggestions made would all have had beneficial effects; in practice, some of them would have undercut the grounds on which the successes that she achieved were based and made relationships with her customers more difficult.

4.25 Regarding the many extant letters from William James Smith to Harriet Townsend, their content is both very focused on business matters and also has a wider remit, depending on how the notion of 'business' is seen. In the terms of the day, they mix business in the narrow specific sense of the word with the expressions of formalised friendship that were necessary to maintain the social connections which successful business relations then were predicated upon. In their own terms, then, the terms of the day, they are highly performative and business focused. Their whole point is 'the business' seen in the wider terms then current, with social connection essential in facilitating this. This was a small social world composed of a number of overlapping networks, and Smith's letters show the existence of a strong figurational aspect as this term has been discussed by Norbert Elias (1978: 128-33), of continuing connection over time by people constituting a set of sometimes looser and sometimes stronger bonds formed for a particular purpose, these people's shared engagements to different degrees and for different reasons with the business activities engaged in by Harriet Townsend.

4.26 Smith's letters, then, are business letters par excellence in the terms of the day, and they are performative in the sense of having been written and exchanged in order to get the business done. In being such, they throw interesting light on notions of separate spheres. They indicate that such separations could be multiply traversed in ways which did not appear to bring with them feelings of guilt or apprehension about gender matters, but rather the wish to do well by Harriet Townsend, and by extrapolation the other women involved in her endeavours. This is not to imply that gender did not exist or did not matter; rather that its terms and practices were negotiated according to the local context, the individual circumstances of the people concerned, the economic situation they were living and surviving in, and also the prevailing bonds between these people. In addition, clearly there was more

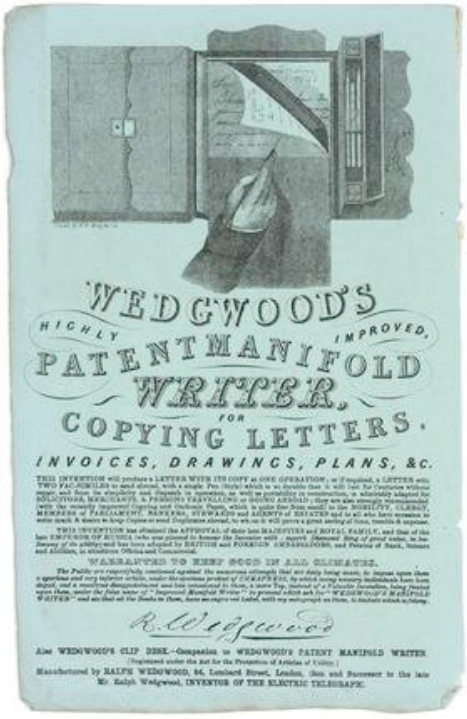
happening here than just Harriet Townsend and her particular circumstances, for a significant number of other women were associated with her activities, and her male merchant advisors gave full support to these.

5 When is a letter? The Manifold Writer and letter-writing

> **P.S. "I think you should write your letters in a 'Manifold Writer' - as I have now done - you then get a copy at the same time... I think you ought to keep copies of your letters to know what you order - what money you remit etc. – …**[53]

5.1 Thus far, the focus has been on using the letters by William James Smith and to a lesser extent John Blore and John Maskell as a resource, in looking at their content regarding the advice conveyed to Harriet Townsend. In passing, the contemporary prevalence of a kind of letter-writing which combined business with polite formalised expressions of friendship was noted, as was the use in a business context of a newly available mechanical device for producing copies of letters known as the Manifold Writer, shown below. The Manifold Writer used a process in which several copies of a letter were simultaneously made, by sheets of coloring paper being folded into sheets of plain paper upon which the marks made by a stylus or a typewriter on a top sheet were transferred, thereby writing several copies of a document at once by use of carbon paper or something similar. An 'improved' Manifold Writer became available in early 1842, and Smith started using it soon after.

[53] William James Smith to HT, 3 May 1843, 16t/16.



WEDGWOOD'S
HIGHLY IMPROVED,
PATENT MANIFOLD
WRITER,
FOR
COPYING LETTERS,
INVOICES, DRAWINGS, PLANS, &c.

THIS INVENTION will produce a LETTER WITH ITS COPY at ONE OPERATION; or if required, a LETTER with TWO FAC-SIMILES at equal distance, with a single Pen: Stroke which is so durable that it will last for Centuries without [illegible] and from its simplicity and dispatch in operation, as well as portability in construction, is admirably adapted for SOLICITORS, MERCHANTS, PURSERS, PILOTS, &c. SECOND AVENUE: they are also strongly recommended [illegible] MEMBERS of PARLIAMENT, BANKERS, STEWARDS and AGENTS of ESTATES and to all who have occasion to write much & desire to keep Copies or avoid Duplicates abroad, to which it will prove a great saving of time, trouble & expense.

THIS INVENTION has obtained the APPROVAL of their late MAJESTIES and ROYAL FAMILY, and that of the late EMPEROR OF RUSSIA (who was pleased to honour the Inventor with a superb Diamond Ring of great value, in be-[illegible] of its utility) and has been adopted by BRITISH and FOREIGN AMBASSADORS, and Persons of Rank, Science and Abilities, in all[illegible] Offices and Commercial.

WARRANTED TO KEEP GOOD IN ALL CLIMATES.

The Public are respectfully cautioned against the numerous attempts that are daily being made, to impose upon them a spurious and very inferior article, under the specious pretext of IMPROVED, by which many unwary individuals have been duped, and a most base disappointment and loss occasioned to them, a mere Tag, instead of a Valuable Invention, being fastened upon them, under the false name of "Improved Manifold Writer" in general which ask for "WEDGWOOD'S MANIFOLD WRITER" and see that all the Books in them, have an engine cut Label, with my name upon on them, to protect which a Stamp [illegible]

R. Wedgwood

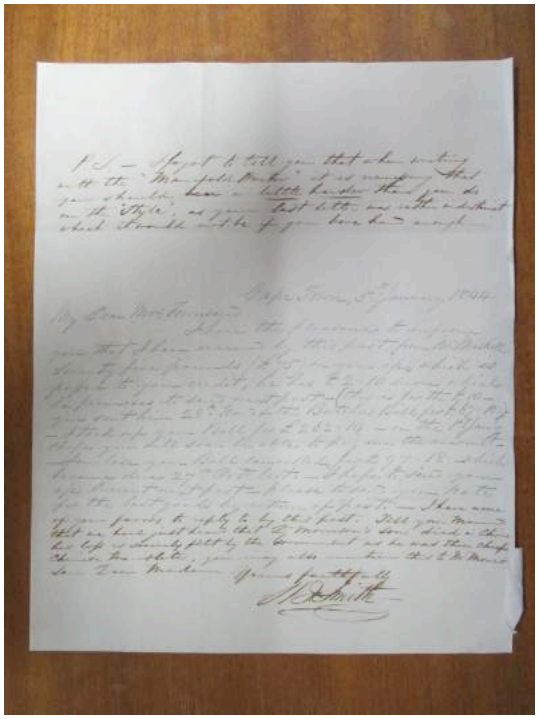
Also WEDGWOOD'S CLIP DESK.—Companion to WEDGWOOD'S PATENT MANIFOLD WRITER
[illegible] under the Act for the Protection of Articles of Utility.]
Manufactured by RALPH WEDGWOOD, 84, Leonard Street, London, Son and Successor to the late Mr. Ralph Wedgwood, INVENTOR OF THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

5.2 In what follows, the mixed business/formalised friendship character of Smith's letters and the use of a Manifold Writer in writing them will be explored in relation to a number of the letters he wrote to Harriet Townsend, some of which have been referred to in the discussion earlier. This is to shift attention onto the letters as a topic in their own right, examining what kind of an entity they are *as letters*, including the extent to which they can be seen as letters or whether they might at times shade into something else.

5.3 Smith's letters show he was very aware of the formalised niceties regarding letter-writing practices and what was appropriate in a straightforwardly business frame, what was appropriate in a context of personal relationships, and what was appropriate in the hinterland between and its more formalised expressions of friendship. His adoption of the Manifold Writer and how he used it in his letter-writing makes the distinction between reporting on favors and presenting invoices and transacting other business matters, and interpersonal communications on matters outside of business narrowly defined, clearly visible on the page. This is because his letters to Harriet Townsend from mid-1843 on are typically 'manifold copied' regarding their business content, but written on in darker ink regarding their interpersonal communications, which were thereby omitted from the business record kept in his office papers.[54] What is raised by this practice concerns when a piece of writing is 'just a

[54] Although this is sometimes reversed.

letter' and when it shades into something else, such as an invoice, an advertisement and so on, and what this implies for understandings of epistolarity.



P.S.– I forgot to tell you that when writing with the "Manifold Writer" it is necessary that you should bear a little harder than you do on the "style", as your last letter was rather indistinct which it would not be if you bore hard enough.

Cape Town
5 January 1844
My Dear Mrs Townsend
I have the pleasure to inform you that I have received by this post, from Mr Maskell seventy five pounds (£75) on your a/c, which is payed to your credit, he has £2.10 more which he promised to send next post… took up your bill for £262:14 - ... I enclose your Bill cancelled for £97 which became due 27th Oct last. – I hope to send your a/t next post – please to send your Note for the last goods by return of post. –

I have none of your favors to reply to by this point. Tell your Mamma that we have just heard that Dr Morrison's son died in China his loss is seriously felt by the Commandant as he was their chief chinese translator, you may also mentioned this to Mr Monro[55]

I am Dear Madam
Yours faithfully
WJ Smith[56]

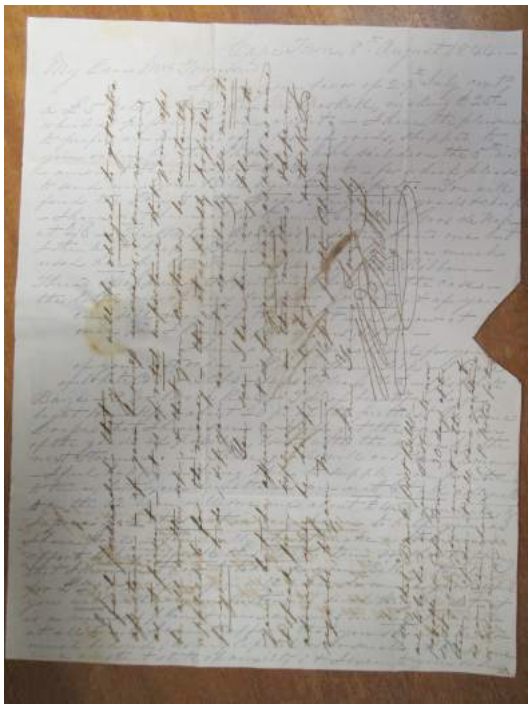
[55] This is probably Sarah Monro's husband, the chemist G.A. Monro.
[56] William James Smith to HT, 5 January 1844, FM1, 16a/1, 7082-7082.

5.4 Smith's letter of 5 January 1844, provided above, was written using his Manifold Writer; its contents also indicate that Harriet Townsend had started using one in her communications with him. Its middle section, in a paler ink of a manifold copying kind, is a business letter formally addressed to her and concerned entirely with financial matters. The top section, headed "P.S.", and the bottom section commencing "I have none of your favors", deal with formalised friendship matters of how she should use the Manifold Writer, and news about the death of Dr Morrison's son which could be passed on. The manifolded copy in the middle is throughout focused on business in the narrow sense and money specifically. The result is in part concerned with business and in part with formalised friendship, with these aspects both visibly distinct and also coexisting on the same page in an interspersed way. They have letterness characteristics (personal address, communication across separations of time and distance, signature) distributed across them, and together they constitute the letter as a whole. That is, they are two parts of an entirety, 'the letter of 5 January 1844', and not two different letters.

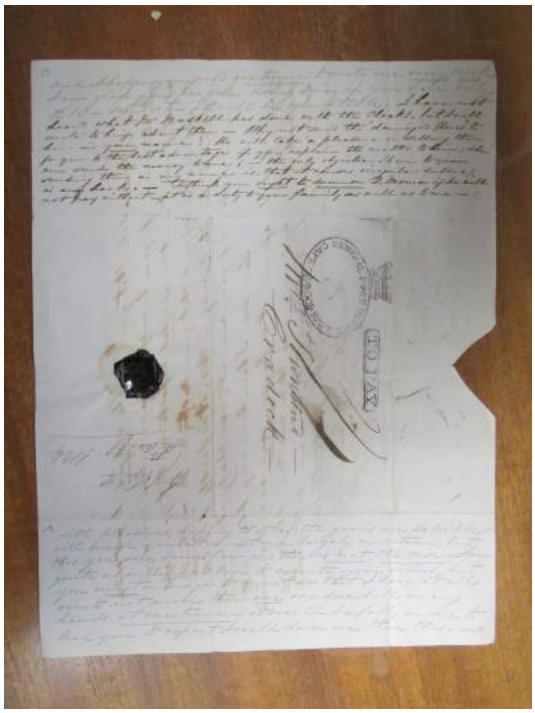
5.5 A second example of how Smith deployed the Manifold Writer as part of his letter-writing practices is provided in a document sent to Harriet Townsend, dated 8 August 1844.

> **…I feel persuaded that you will be <u>obliged</u> to get extra assistance - if your business increases, or even remains as at present - it is of vital importance that your a/cs be all written up, & that your customers be <u>constantly</u> applied to for the money - this, it is hardly possible for you to do, & if you cannot, somebody else <u>must</u>.**
> **You see I have been very plain with you, but be assured it is for <u>your good</u>, as well as mine & I speak from experience in these matters & hope my advice may be beneficial to you.**[57]

[57] William James Smith to HT, 8 August 1844, FM1, 16A/21, 7105-7106.



5.6 The formalised friendship aspects of this passage from Smith's 8 August 1844 letter is focused on him providing tutelage and is expressed in a way which emphasises the 'must do' aspects of what he is suggesting. He writes that he is being quite 'plain', but it is for her good, and that he is writing as he does because of his own past experience, with the implication that he did not receive but would have made use of such advice.



… if you only have £10 – send it – it will be acceptable.
I have not heard what Mr Maskell has done with the cloaks, but I will write to him about them – Why not send the "damaged gloves" to him in <u>your</u> name? He will take pleasure in selling them for you to the best advantage if you explain the matter to him, & he can send the money to me; – the only objection I have to your sending them in my name is, that it creates irregular entries in my books. – & think you <u>ought</u> to <u>summon</u> D. Monro[58] if he will not pay without – it is a duty to your family as well as to me –[59]

5.7 The other side of the letter continues in its manifolded copy element in stressing money and the urgent need for her to send him some. However, its formalised friendship aspect is concerned with the damage, presumably in transportation, that had happened to some gloves, but more particularly it encourages her to communicate directly with John Maskell, who would attempt to sell them for her in his shop. It also raises the importance of 'the books' in how Smith is proposing to deal with the matter of the gloves, either because this was actually so, or because he is encouraging her not to have such 'irregular entries' in her own books.

5.8 The letter has a v-shape of paper clipped from its edge, which was Harriet Townsend's device for indicating she had replied to or otherwise dealt with the content of a letter received. It is likely this concerned the specific business content regarding money and orders, or contacting Maskell direct, although it could have been the advice aspect, and there is now

[58] David Monro was a relation of Sarah Monro.
[59] William James Smith to HT, 8 August 1844, FM1, 16A/21, 7105-7106.

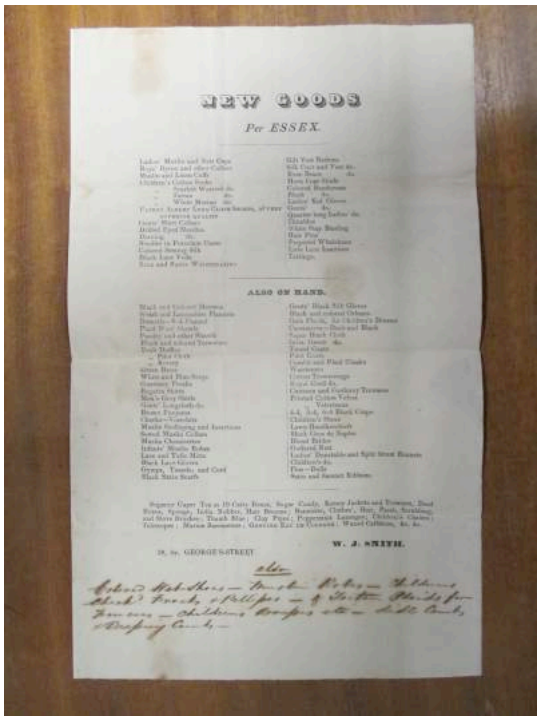
no way of telling.

5.9 This August 1844 letter is also more complicated than the first example in its mixtures of manifold copy and ordinary ink writing, which cross and re-cross and at points over-write each other. As a consequence it is difficult for a present-day reader to read. It is, however, still ‘a letter’ rather than two different letters, for its opening address is of a 'proper letter' kind, while its signature and sign-off are manifold copied, with other mixtures of text being written between these. It is best seen as a letter sent between people who are familiar with each other's writing-styles and variations in these and who will therefore understand why sometimes things are written in one way and sometimes in another.

5.10 The above two examples are in many ways typical of Smith's letter-writing when using the Manifold Writer. There are also frequent variations or departures. A third example, dated 4 April 1845, for instance, is also a mixed combination of business and formalised friendship communication, but of a different sort that is in part not ‘a letter’ at all.

5.11 This is a one half of a folded double sheet showing a printed list of goods that were imported on a vessel called 'Essex' and were being sold by Smith plus an ‘on hand’ list. At its foot is a note written on in ink and implicitly addressed specifically to Harriet Townsend, which adds an additional list of goods available to her. The top part of the sheet is clearly an advertisement directed at a public audience. The list handwritten in note form at the bottom, however, has a letterness aspect in being intended specifically for Mrs Townsend, although because of the style in which it is presented this remains implicit. It is shown below.[60]

[60] William James Smith to HT, 4 April 1845, FM2, 32/11, Folder 32, 7900-79.



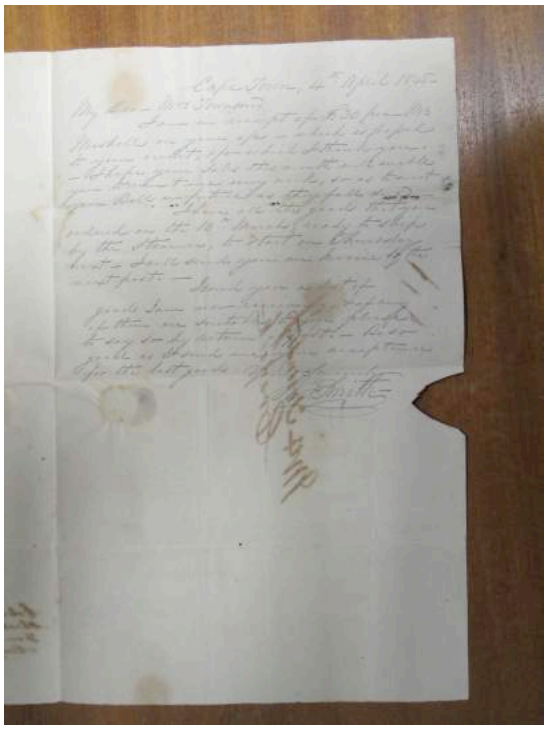
NEW GOODS

Per ESSEX.

ALSO ON HAND.

W. J. SMYTH.

5.12 The other half of the folded sheet, shown below, is a business letter to Harriet Townsend from Smith, with this the manifolded copy that has been sent to her.

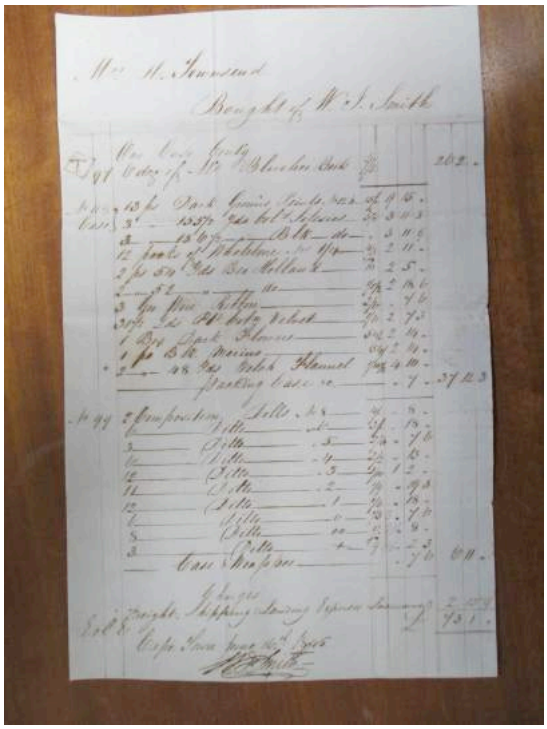


Cape Town, 4th April 1845
My dear Mrs Townsend
I am in receipt of £30 from Mr Maskell on your a/c - which is passed to your credit, & for which I thank you. – I hope your sales this month will enable you to remit me every week, so as to meet your Bills in future as they fall due –
I have all the goods that you ordered on the 10th March, ready to ship by the steamer, to start on Thursday next – I will send you an invoice by the next post. –
I send you a list of goods I am now receiving, & if any of them are suitable to you please say so by return of post. – Be so good as to send me your acceptance for the last goods.
Yours sincerely
WJ Smith[61]

5.13 The printed advertisement on the first sheet discussed above is lent a small degree of 'letterness' only by the handwritten note at the bottom implicitly addressed personally to Harriet Townsend. Its purpose was to solicit 'favors', orders of goods, from her. The second sheet is 'all letter', but it deals only with specifically business matters and in particular regarding money, invoices and payments from her, and unlike most of his letters it contains no expression of formalised friendship matters. And adding to the 'what is it?' complications here, visible through the paper is Mrs Townsend's name and address on its other side, showing that it had been folded and with its 'envelope' being formed by a fold of the paper. Overall, however, this is not anything other than a letter and its accompaniments, or a list and its covering letter, although considerable complexities are manifested by the variety of means that Smith has used to do the business in writing her.

5.14 Another variant is provided by a fourth example, shown below. This is dated 15 March 1847 and was written in the period immediately after Smith had joined the Twentyman & Co business as a junior partner after his own business failed. It represents a marked, although transitory, change of practice in how he communicated with her.

[61] William James Smith to HT, 4 April 1845, FM2, 32/11, Folder 32, 7900-79.

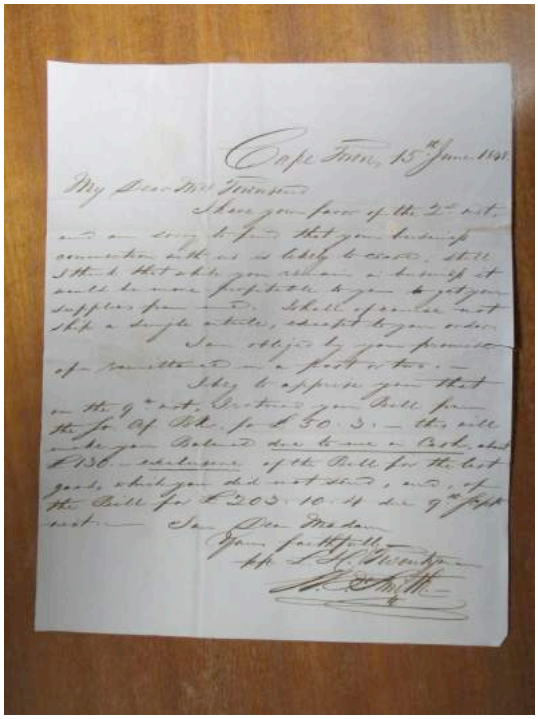


Mrs H. Townsend
Bought of W.J. Smith
One case of…. [LIST]
Charges… [LIST]
--
£ 73 1 ..
Cape Town June 16th 1845
WJ Smith[62]

5.15 This is not a manifolded copy but handwritten. It is also not a letter as such, although it starts with direct address to Harriet Townsend and finishes with Smith's signature. It concerns an order fulfilled, with itemised goods and prices provided, and it constitutes an invoice that has been written and presented in some residual letter-like ways. This communication from Smith is both formal and stylised, with its letterness aspects reduced to the bare minimum so that, apart from the gestures in its opening address and sign-off, it is all business. He was being very cautious in reducing his communications with Harriet Townsend to their specifically business elements at this time. He was presumably feeling his way as to what would be acceptable or otherwise in his new position as part of a firm, rather than the owner of one and so not responsible to anyone other than himself and his customers.

[62] William James Smith to HT, 15 March 1847, FM2 32/51, 7916.

5.16 The fifth and last example for discussion is dated 15 June 1848 and is Smith's ink written letter to Harriet Townsend of that date, shown below.



Cape Town 15th June 1848
My dear Mrs Townsend
I have your favor of the 21st inst, and am sorry to find that your business connection with us is likely to cease; still I think that while you remain in business it would be more profitable to you to get your supplies from me. I shall of course not ship a single article, except to your order.
I am obligd by your promise of a remittance in a post or two. –
I beg to apprise you that on the 9th inst I returned your Bill from the So. Af. Bnk for £50.3:- – this will make you Behind due to me in Cash, about £130 – exclusive of the Bill for the last goods, which you did not send, and, of the Bill for £200.10.4 due 9th Sept next. –
I am Dear Madam
Yours faithfully
pp L.H. Twentyman
WJ Smith[63]

5.17 This is 'all letter', although it deals with business matters and in particular that "your business connection with us is likely to cease". It ties up ends with regards to their business

[63] William James Smith to Harriet Townsend, 15 June 1848, FM 2, 32/63, Folder 32, 7947-7948,

transactions and specifically the financial aspects regarding remittances, Bills and balances for the payment of goods that are due. It was written when he had heard from a third party, not from her, that she was going to re-marry. Perhaps Smith thought this was common knowledge from which he had been excluded, although he had been an important person in her business life for some years and also had a good formalised friendship relationship with her. Perhaps, as he did not yet know who she was marrying, reputedly the wealthiest man in the Eastern Cape, there were also concerns about the possibility of her defaulting on her sizeable debt.[64]

5.18 This is all letter, all epistolary communication. It is also unlike Smith's other letters in being exaggeratedly polite, carefully written, entirely to the business point rather than mixed. It is in addition notable in being signed "pp L.H. Twentyman", rather than from Smith in his own right, giving it a very formal standing. Thus although 'all letter', it is removed and less communicative in a friendship sense than Smith's ordinary mixed business exchanges with Harriet Townsend and comes across as a distanced and 'pure business' communication concerning debts.

5.19 Smith's use of the Manifold Writer makes visible some complexities in the way letters are written and exchanged that are likely to be widely present in the general run of letter-writing too, but which are usually more difficult to discern because they do not take a visible form. What these visible kinds of writing do is to express doing and action on the one hand, and feeling, social connection and formalised friendship on the other, and to do so n ways that also mix them. Overall these communications, both those discussed here and the many more that exist, each constitute 'a letter' and its different elements, rather than being the co-presence of entirely different genres or forms of writing. These different elements make use of the existence of different forms of writing, but do this by embedding them within an epistolary frame as part of fulfilling the different purposes of the writer within the letter as a whole.

5.20 The visibility of the business and the formalised friendship aspects are the signs of how the complex and important connections between these are made in Smith's written communications and the range of possible and permitted variations in doing so. Examples at

[64] The total of £330.10.4 translated into adjusted 2015 values is £43,290.

both ends of the spectrum of 'pure business' and 'pure formalised friendship' do exist in the collection, but these are rare, with the June 1848 example of a 'pure business' letter just discussed indicating that such things were likely to be written in atypical circumstances.

5.21 In addition, it is clear that these letters from Smith are primarily business communications, but written in a context in which the epistolary performance of formalised friendship was necessary to the maintenance and success of business relationships. In a basic sense, it was such relationships which made the business go round, and rather than being an optional extra or an adornment, this was a fundamental aspect of the exchanges between Smith and Townsend. And as well as being focused, these letters are also performative. They are part and parcel of the material world of things and transactions, in which the people concerned were quite literally going about their business and needed to ensure that particular courses of action flowed from their epistolary communications. These were designed to ensure this, and indeed they could embody action and performativity, as with orders and invoices.

5.22 So what does Smith's use of the Manifold Writer in these exchanges suggest about ‘the letter’ as such? It shows, in the literal sense of the word, how complicated the contents of letters can be in mixing different aspects of content in mutually enhancing ways. It demonstrates just how embedded as part of the material world, and how essential to the conduct of social and economic life, letter-writing can be. It also pushes home its relational and dialogical aspects and the emergent character of these features as they develop over the course of extended periods of letter-writing and the changing purposes of the letter-writers concerned. However, while the sheer visibility of these different kinds of writing is notable in Smith’s letters, any move to see this as two different kinds of letter, or as a letter and a something else, should be resisted. 'It', the letter, is these mixed epistolary communications and they provide a powerful example of the flexible character of epistolarity.

6 Beyond separate spheres? The settler woman, her merchant advisors, a Manifold Writer, letters

6.1 Harriet Townsend was a white settler woman living and working in a frontier area of the Eastern Cape, but not quite as the literature portrays such, with her business activities and

considerable economic success suggesting that she had more in common with middling sort British and North American women entrepreneurs and business-women, and less with the usual depiction of settler women and their lives. She achieved considerable business successes, particularly so considering the troubled times in which her business operated, when the failure rather than survival of a small business was more usual. She also had significant support, tutelage and sponsorship from a number of well-established merchants, who had family connections with her and her mother, who recognised her business abilities while her husband was still alive as well as after her widowhood, and who clearly thought her abilities sufficient to actively encouraged her business ventures.

6.2 Jepson's (2009) discussion of female entrepreneurship proposes that four key strategies underpinned how the twelve business-women whose careers she considers achieved success in the business sphere, with their experiences running from the 18th through to the early 20th centuries. These strategies involved adherence to most of the rules of separate spheres and social conventionality, embedding 'masculine' activities within ostensibly feminine practices, while foregrounding displays of feminine conduct, and also being skilled at both female and male forms of discourse. Things largely shared by these business-women included earlier practice at dealing with activities normally the province of men, supportive relationships with men who gave them opportunities, being in other respects than their business activities conservative or conformist, and seeing their entrepreneurial activities as the fulfillment of their female and feminine duty. It is this combination of factors that Jepson sees enabling them to solidify their status as respectable women and manage any tensions occurring around their business activities in the marketplace by presenting their business endeavors around never making their 'masculine' competence obvious.

6.3 Not surprisingly, Jepson concludes that while some female entrepreneurs found a balance, others experienced continuing contradictions, with for her the key differentiating factor being their ability or inability to maintain dual identities and engage in efficient code switching. She also suggests that the business setbacks and obstacles which some of them experienced resulted from their inability to manage a balance between public/business and private/domestic spheres, rather than being economic in character. This is because these problems involved the failure to adopt a specific course of action, instead shifting back and forth between domestic and business ways of behaving. Yohn (2006) refers to something similar in her suggestion that such women achieved success by 'passing' as in effect

masculine in their entrepreneurial activities, but that they also re-gendered money-making by locating it within a discourse which made it not only respectable but as though a matter of duty for the female capitalists whose careers she investigates.

6.4 Smith's letters indicate both some similarities and also interesting differences regarding Harriet Townsend and her business activities. Certainly there is clear evidence that she adhered to many of the rules of gendered respectability and conventionality, in living with her mother, being involved in religious circles, and having established connections with the local town elite and country gentry. But at the same time, there is also equally clear evidence of her involvement in commercial and business activities over a lengthy period of time and in which many of these same people would have encountered her in the different context of a shop and trade and would also have had to negotiate their credit and debt with her. These were not lived out in separate spheres, but would have been met by her and them face-to-face and on a regular basis, in her shop, in making payments and placing orders, in Chapel, in dealing with her son's schooling, at social events, and so on.

6.5 Similarly, insofar as Smith's letters touch on this, it would seem that many of the supposedly 'masculine' activities that Mrs Townsend engaged in would have been embedded within 'feminine practices'. However, seeing this in separate spheres terms works only if such activities are seen as 'really' gendered. But once this assumption is suspended and they are treated as simply 'things people do', what comes across is that Harriet Townsend, like many of the women who were also involved in her business activities, lived a complicated life, and her life was lived as a whole, rather than as composed by spheres or parts. Overall, it would seem that Harriet Townsend lived in ways that were not so much 'beyond' separate spheres, as they were instead transversal and responsive to the necessities and the opportunities that she met with and given the resources and abilities that she had.

6.6 However, it was economic factors and political circumstances, not personal or 'code switching' ones, that devilled Harriet Townsend's business and the commercial practices she engaged in. The prevailing economic climate was in large measure a product of the succession of the Frontier Wars occurring and the impact of this on all aspects of life in the Eastern Cape. This is significantly different from the explanatory scenario sketched by Jepson, which sees the business failures of various of the business-women she discusses as the product of gendered inequalities. In the case of Mrs Townsend, it was much more a case

of the war and the economy. It was these that made running a small business an extremely difficult and precarious matter, and Mr Smith was clearly correct in commending the successes she achieved against the odds. It is also possible to envisage her business career continuing but for the *kind* of marriage she entered into with Dods Pringle, one of wealthiest men in the area, rather than just that she re-married. He was a rich farmer with a sizeable estate in the Baviaans River, while her business practice depended in large measure on her location in Cradock and the shop-front and delivery/storage premises she operated there. If they were to marry, it was clearly going to be on the terms that she lived with him on his farm, and this in turn had implications for any business ventures she might wish to continue with.

6.7 After Harriet Townsend and Dods Pringle's marriage in later 1848, she did in fact continue with some of her business activities, including engaging out-workers and supplying country friends. But insofar as the much sparser records from the later period indicate, this was in a more informal way, involved a much reduced level of activity, and mainly concerned millinery. There are a few epistolary glimpses of this, such as an 1854 letter from her brother Daniel asking that the dresses his wife Jane (the sister of Sarah Monro nee Barker) had commissioned should be made quickly,[65] a Hugh & Flemming set of 1853 receipts for purchases of large quantities of goods,[66] ditto for 1855 from Tucker's,[67] and some similar items. However, there is no detailed correspondence, no favors replied to by merchants, no accounts or order books and so on. It is likely, then, that the financial necessity to run a business had been removed, while after her re-marriage a succession of seven more children brought increased family demands on her time, so the fact that some aspects of it continued albeit in a small way is perhaps an indication of its appeal to her.[68]

6.8 The beliefs, feelings and principles that motivated William James Smith, John Blore and John Maskell are no longer accessible except in the hints and glimpses contained in their letters. The contents of these letters provided Harriet Townsend with know-how, tutelage and practical support, and the strong impression is conveyed that they supported her in the ways

[65] DT to HT, 22 February 1854.
[66] Hugh & Flemming to HT, January 1854.
[67] Tucker's to HT, January 1856.
[68] It would have also provided her with some independent income, as would the Moore Estate annuity she inherited a share of following Elizabeth Hockly's death in 1862.

they did for two main reasons. The first was the existing business, familial and social connections that existed between them and Harriet Townsend and also her mother Elizabeth Hockly, a bond that pre-dated her marriage.[69] The second was that they were impressed by her competence, had witnessed Edward's failings including resistance to their support, and wanted her to gain a good living for herself and her children, rather than experience a decline in social standing through adopting the more usual strategy for widows of sewing or school-keeping. Harriet Townsend was receptive to these overtures because she knew how to be, because of her family experience; and probably also because she wanted to be, given that her involvement in the Grahamstown business predated her first husband's death. She was also receptive to them because she had to be, as a widow with young children who needed to make a livelihood and a life for herself.

6.9 The tutelage provided by Smith, Blore and Maskell was not conveyed in specifically gendered terms, and also its occurrence was part of contemporary business practices and marked the relationship between older and more successful business-men and those who were newcomers. In this sense, they were simply making available to Harriet Townsend what they would have done for a man in her position – and indeed had tried to do for the feckless Edward. Tutelage existed because how else would newcomers find out what was necessary and possible; and while this involved patronage from experts, it was not patronising, but rather part of normal practice. At time, it was how it was done. As noted earlier, the main thing out of the ordinary here is that such patronage was extended willingly and whole-heartedly to the young Harriet Townsend. In addition, while the amount of advice-giving and tutelage in their letters is extensive, there is little sense of an agenda driven by matters of gender and separate spheres thinking. Instead the focus is on 'doing the business', on making orders, getting the best price for goods, chasing accounts, what will and will not sell, who are good customers, why discounting bills should be avoided, and so on. And this is added to by the recognition of Mrs Townsend's business competences and the expression of this at times when she doubted her abilities and whether she was good enough to run a successful business.

6.10 While of course the content of letters and the representational world inscribed is them is by no means coterminous with life as lived outside of the epistolary realm, this

[69] As well as family connections, it is possible they were also part of Methodist Chapel networks.

representational order still counts, and how people rendered their lives and those of others in it matters. In addition, individualising the economic and business relationships between Harriet Townsend and Messrs Smith, Blore and Maskell should be avoided, not only because of the economic involvements of her mother and all the other women in both her mother's family and also that of the Townsends, but also because of the extensive network of out-workers who were associated with her business. And at least some of these, the Dennisons, already have a presence in the scholarly literature as 'middling sort' settler women who were involved in business, commercial and other economic activities (Erlank 1995).

6.11 The particular letter-writing practices engaged in by William James Smith are fascinating. His use of a Manifold Writer to inscribe some parts of his epistolary exchanges with Harriet Townsend, which were then kept in his office papers, but with other parts of the same documents being handwritten in ink and in a sense 'for her eyes only', makes visible and available an aspect of letter-writing rarely commented on. This is that 'business' and getting things done, and 'friendship' and expressing social connection, are intertwined and mutually-supporting. And as well as characterising business relationships and business letter-writing of the time, there is wider applicability to this point. That is, the general run of letter-writing ordinarily includes both aspects, in expressing and forwarding the continuance of social connection, and also being about something, things that have been done or things that need to be done. Smith's particular use of the Manifold Writer brings this to analytical attention by making it visible on the pages of his letters to Harriet Townsend. While it may not be so immediately visible in other letters, it is nonetheless likely to be dimension of many and perhaps most. It adds to the analytical armoury of epistolary scholarship.

6.12 Three points in final conclusion. Settler women need to be envisaged, among other possibilities, with a Manifold Writer and an abacus and in a town, not just with a bonnet and a Bible and on a farm. 'Separate spheres' should be treated as at the extreme end of a range that also includes more complicated life experiences for women as much as men. And letters with their considerable complexities open up such matters for consideration.

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