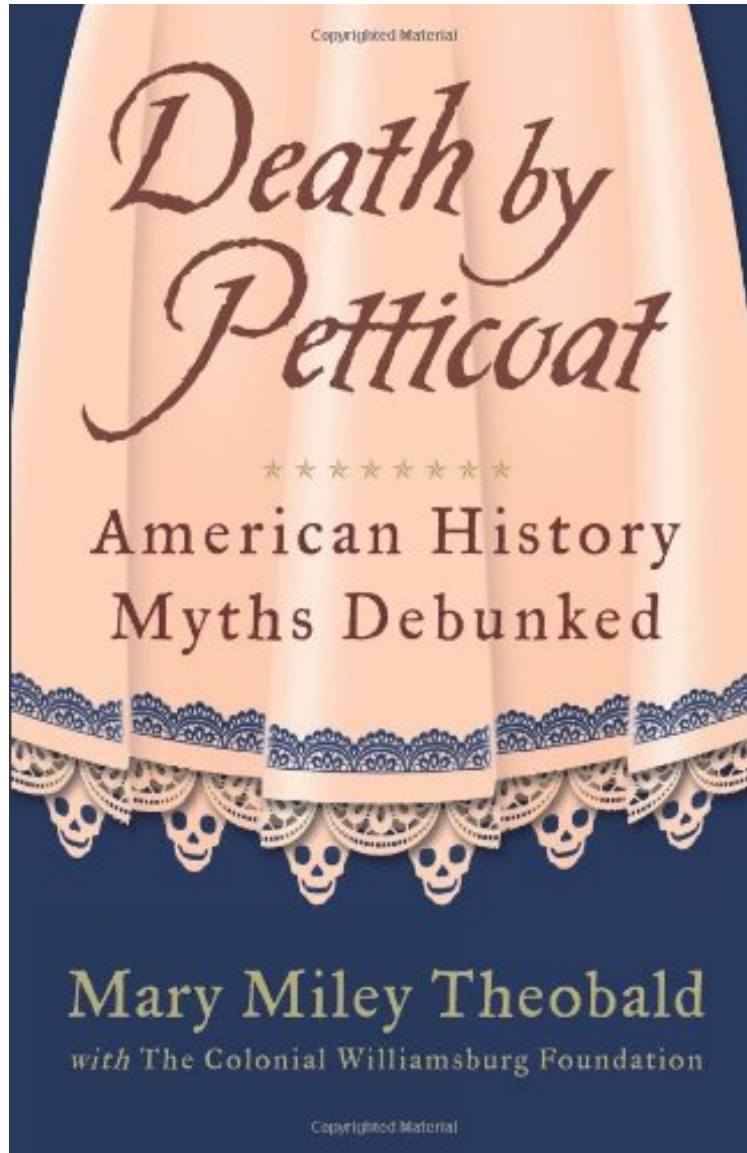


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## Death by Petticoat: American History Myths Debunked

Mary Miley Theobald, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Mary Miley  
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**Mary Miley Theobald, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Mary Miley : Death by Petticoat: American History Myths Debunked** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Death by Petticoat: American History Myths Debunked:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Tea bricks at historic house led me to Death by Petticoat By Daisiemae I enjoyed reading Death by Petticoat immensely. Much to my chagrin, I found several history myths that I had repeated myself over the years. Last year, I did a presentation at a Colonial Christmas event held at a historic home

in New Jersey. As part of the presentation, I was asked to display tea bricks and explain that they were easier to transport in that form and that they were often used as currency in the colonies. I was a bit suspicious of that, and I did a little research on the internet. That's how I found *Death by Petticoat*. Last week I visited two well known historic buildings in New Jersey, and I heard two history myths. A docent at one museum told visitors how fire screens prevented wax makeup from melting. While at the other museum, a member of my own party told us all that portrait artists painted generic bodies and put the heads on later. I laughed myself silly to think I heard two of these myths in one day. Especially since I had previously been guilty of repeating the fire screen myth myself when I was a docent at yet another historic home in New Jersey. A few days later, I pulled the book out and shared it with some fellow Civil War reenactors. They were astounded at how many of the myths they knew and had repeated to others. Of particular interest was the myth about syphilis patients wearing tinted glasses and the myth of General Lee offering his sword to General Grant, who magnanimously refused to accept it. As a lover of history, as a frequent docent, as a living historian and Civil War reenactor, I am deeply interested in giving accurate portrayals of our nation's history. Our history is fascinating and compelling. We do not need to embellish it with inaccurate stories. This book helps to knock out all those bogus stories (somewhat akin to urban legends on the internet) that are so frequent in history circles. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *Death of Myths* By Avid Reader Alas, cold, hard facts have intruded and destroyed some "truths" that I assumed were logical or charming! So artists did not charge extra for painting hands, and gentlemen were portrayed with hands thrust into their jackets because it conformed to a formal style? Nails were not valuable? Mirrors were at ground level merely to provide additional illumination? Reality is too harsh - I can't go on, I feel overcome with the burden of accepting all of this information! Where is my fainting couch? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Death by Petticoat* By Maria Y. Jeffreys I Read *Gone With The Wind* in my early teens. My father once had a second job running what was called in the south a "picture show." Dad would take us every Saturday. At that age I fell in love with the Civil War history. Really believed everything that was in that movie. Was disappointed to find out differently as I grew older. My granddaughter is a home schooled 17 year old tour guide in Alabama. At a recent visit to Tennessee we visited a Civil War home. The closet tax came up and she questioned the tour guide who suggested she read this book. It is a very interesting book which clears up a lot of untruthful information about the 1700 through the 1800's. Life then was certainly not easy. I really appreciated the knowledge that is given in this book. Thank you. Bonnie Jeffreys

From famous legends to embellished truths to outright fabrications, *Death by Petticoat* debunks myths from American history in witty, entertaining narratives that shed light on the real truth about the past. Every day stories from American history that are not true are repeated in museums and classrooms across the country. Some are outright fabrications; others contain a kernel of truth that has been embellished over the years. Collaborating with The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Mary Miley Theobald has uncovered the truth behind many widely repeated myth-understandings in our history in *Death by Petticoat* including: \* Hat makers really were driven mad. They were poisoned by the mercury used in making hats from furs. Their symptoms included hallucinations, tremors, and twitching, which looked like insanity to people of the 17th and 18th centuries--and the phrase "mad as a hatter" came about. \* The idea that portrait painters gave discounts if their subjects posed with one hand inside the vest (so they didn't have to paint fingers and leading to the saying that something "costs an arm and a leg") is strictly myth. It isn't likely that Napoleon, King George III, or George Washington were concerned about getting a discount from their portrait painters. Pregnant women secluded themselves indoors, uneven stairs were made to trip up burglars, people bathed once a year, women had tiny waists, apprenticeships lasted seven years--*Death by Petticoat* reveals the truth about these hysterical historical myth-understandings.

About the Author Mary Miley Theobald has taught history, works at a historical foundation, writes and blogs about historical myths, and pens historical fiction books. In short, she likes history. She is the author of seven nonfiction books as well as several historical fiction novels. Online: [historymyths.wordpress.com](http://historymyths.wordpress.com)