

# THE SEWING GIRL'S TALE

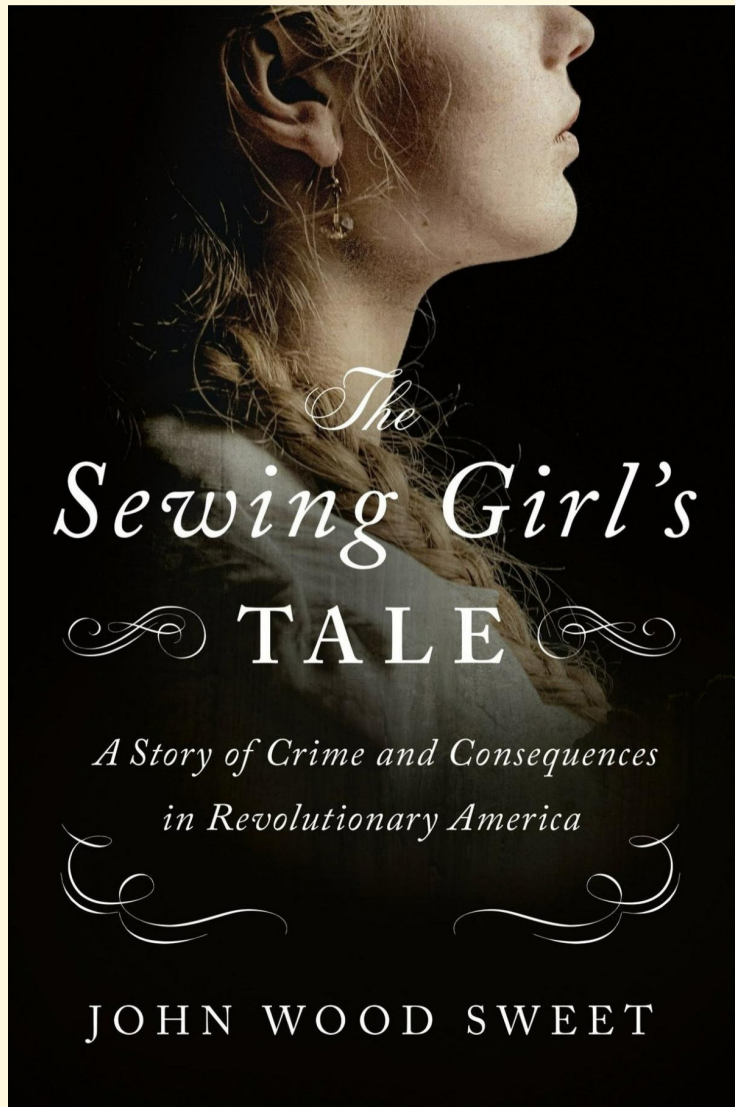
A Story of Crime and Consequences  
in Revolutionary America

On a moonless night in the summer of 1793 a crime in the back room of a New York brothel transformed Lanah Sawyer's life. It was the kind of crime that even victims usually kept secret. Instead, the seventeen-year-old seamstress did what virtually no one else dared to do: she charged a gentleman with rape. The trial rocked the city and nearly cost Lanah her life. And that was just the start.

Based on extraordinary historical detective work, Lanah Sawyer's story takes us from a chance encounter in the street into the squalor of the city's sexual underworld, the sanctuaries of the elite, and the despair of its debtors' prison—a world where reality was always threatened by hope and deceit. It reveals how much has changed over the past two centuries—and how much has not.



John Wood Sweet is a professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the author of *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North*.



**Thursday, October 6th**  
**5:00 PM**  
**International Affairs Building,**  
**Room 406**