

A Case of Confinement – home birth stories, blue metal bed

Tamar Stone

A Case of Confinement

(home birth, antique blue metal bed) © 2005

Spec Sheet

Hand and machine stitched bed coverings. Machine embroidered text.

Blue metal doll bed: 10 1/2" (W) x 19" (L) x 10 1/2" at headboard (H)

Pillow Case: (*vintage green striped cotton/polyester bed sheet*) 8" (W) x 4" (L)

Pillow: (*cotton ticking, hand stuffed with vintage feathers*): 7 1/4" (W) x 3 1/2" (L)

Blanket: (*vintage off-white/tan striped wool*) 20" (W) x 23" (L)

Top Sheet: (*vintage green striped cotton/polyester bed sheet*) 18 1/2" (W) x 25 1/2" (L)

Bottom sheet: (*vintage green cotton/polyester bed sheet*) 18" (W) x 25" (L)

Mattress "cover": (*brown paper bag*) 10" (W) x 15 1/4" (L)

Mattress: (*antique flour bag cover with cotton ticking inside, hand stuffed with vintage feathers*)
10" (W) x 18 1/2" (L) x 1 1/4" (H)

Pillowcase front:

*As the time draws near
I fear and tremble...*

Pillowcase back:

*I have suffered much....
God help me.*

Peris Sibley Andrews
to her diary, 1847

Pillow front:

**A Case of
Confinement**

Pillow back

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Blanket top side

A patient, after the waters are discharged,
requires a little management.

It is not just to stay with her
at the time, yet is necessary,
if we leave her,
we leave her in confidence.

Therefore we may give her the idea
of making provision for whatever
may happen in our absence.

We may pass our finger up the vagina
or opening of the walls, and
make a moderate degree of pressure,
for a few seconds, or any part of it
so that she may just feel it,
after which we may say to her,
“there ma’am, I have done something
that will be of great use to your labor.”

Blanket back side

This she trusts to, and if, when
she sends for us, we get there
in time, it is well: if later than we
should be, we easily satisfy her.
“Yes! You know I told you I did
something which would be of great
use to you labor!”

If the placenta is not yet come away
“Oh, I am quite in time for the
after-birth, and that, you know is of
the greatest consequence of the labor!”

And if the whole has come away –
“We are glad that the after-birth
is all come away in consequence of what
we did before we last left, and
the labor terminated just as
we intended it should.”

An Improved System of Midwifery,
Wooster Beach c. 1850’s

Top sheet top side

Dear L,
I am at length the happy mother of a daughter.
I never felt such sacredness in carrying
a child as I have in the case of this one.
She is the largest, and most vigorous baby
I have ever had, weighing twelve pounds.
And yet my labour was short and easy.
I laid down about fifteen minutes, and
alone with my nurse and one
female friend brought forth this big girl
I sat up immediately, changed my clothes...
and, after a few hours' repose, sat up again
For what refined, delicate, genteel, civilized
woman would get well in so indecently short time?
Dear me, how much cruel bondage of mind and suffering a
body of poor woman will escape
when she takes the liberty of being her own
physician of both body and soul!....
A Happy Mother.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Seneca Falls, October 22, 1852
Letter to Lucretia Mott

Bottom sheet top side

My husband is of a passionate nature
and I am not strong...I want to tell you
how I suffered while pregnant...
I got so I couldn't look at anything to eat
... putting it to my mouth, I would vomit.
They fed me on egg nog, forced it into me.
Husband and his family mad with fury
that he has such hard luck with me,
didn't feel sorry for me but for him
as he had to pay doctor bills, which of course,
didn't do me any good as they all would say
I'd have to suffer it out.
I had an awful time giving birth to my child,
no strength, they had to just tear it out.
I was torn and had to have seven stitches.
My baby girl died... after all that suffering...
The doctor was surprised for I ate hardly
anything but a little fruit and egg nog.

anonymous letter, *Motherhood in Bondage*,
Margaret Sanger, 1956

Top sheet back side

I am forty-five years old, have a
blind husband and one little daughter
of nine and as I have earned
our living for nearly 15 years
with constant mental distress
as to my physical condition
I feel I must have something
to prevent further trouble
if is possible.
Have nearly died at childbirth
several times always being
badly torn from use of
instruments in every case
and then not always saving
my babes, so I am too old
now to take any further chance,
so I hope you will be willing to
send me the desired information.

anonymous letter, *Motherhood in Bondage*,
Margaret Sanger, 1956

Bottom sheet back side

If anyone ever needed to know
about Birth Control, I do.
I've been married almost 8 years,
I have 4 living children and one dead.
I went through with an abortion and
... the doctors thought I would die,
but somehow with the help of God
and good care I passed through.
But they say I can't possibly risk
becoming pregnant again.
They said too much uric acid was the cause.
I was swollen all over beyond description
and had to remain in bed the biggest part of
the 7 months and then the foetus was dead...
the doctors couldn't agree on my case...they all
said they never knew or read of a case like mine.
My husband is numbered among the best
and had done all he could for me,
except we are both "ignorant.

anonymous letter, *Motherhood in Bondage*,
Margaret Sanger, 1956

Brown paper *top side*

You had to
get the room ready
with enough things.
A nice piece of blanket,
3 or 4 nice sheets...

You had your
brown paper on top
of the mattress,
then your blanket,
then your sheet –
right till the end
of your confinement...

Brown paper *back side*

...then you'd take
them out,
burn the afterbirth
in the grate
and someone
would make the midwife
a nice cup of tea
after she done
her job.

Edie M, *on childbirth in Ireland, c. 1920's*

Mattress *top side*

I am now in bed from a
three months miscarriage,
which is the second
one in 11 months.

The doctors tell me
I am not capable
of bearing any more
children.

I am the mother of 5 now.

When I am pregnant
I loose my mind entirely
for a long time and have to stay
in bed three or four months
before the baby comes.

anonymous letter, *Motherhood in Bondage*,
Margaret Sanger, 1956

Mattress *back side*

I heard there that
Mrs. Clayton's Child
departed this life yesterday
and that she was thot Expireing...

Shee departed this Life
around 1pm.

I asisted to Lay her out.
Her infant Laid in her arms.
The first such instance
I ever saw
and the first woman
that dies in Child bed
whicn I delivered.

Martha Ballard, *her diary August 20, 1787*