

Jacksonian era



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Women and their role in the 19th century America's Understanding the role of women in the 19th century is important to being able to acknowledge the journey women have taken from virtual serfdom to freedom and independence today. Each approach and highlight of the era from the cult of domesticity, wage differences, female labor reform association and the Lowell system is important to this knowledge. Women have struggled for their equality in America and the 19th century was a pivotal point in this history. The cult of domesticity was the role of a woman as defined by societal pressure in pre-industrial society. The men went to work and the women generally were the care takers of the home and family. This societal approach evolved into a misogynistic approach that has carried over in some small social groupings to this day. Initially the idea was not meant to see the women as unfit for other roles or as less than men. It simply meant that because they bore the children and were the nursemaids naturally they were assumed to be better in that role, and as a result the idea became tradition which made it difficult to break when technology changed and made physical labor a part of industry and not the entire industry. Wage differences for women and men when working were generally drastic with very few exceptions to this. As a result of the poor conditions and rate of pay several successful labor unions for women were formed. One in 1863 was called the Collar Laundry Union; as a result of going on strike they won an increase in wages. Another was called the Daughters of St. Crispin and was formed in 1869; it was a group of women shoestitchers and was recognized as the first national women's union. (Lewis 1) The advent of women's unions helped shed light on the deplorable conditions and low pay suffered. The Lowell System was a brilliant system implemented by the mill owners in Lowell

Massachusetts. The idea was originally developed by Francis Cabot Lowell it included boardinghouses specifically for women employees ran by “morally proper” older women. In the mills themselves the girls were treated respectfully and the supervisors were described as “moral” and upright. (Woloch 90) While this system was beneficial to the advancement of treatment of women it did not necessarily advance the idea that women were equals, they were after all still supervised generally by men. Susan B Anthony and other advocates for the equal treatment of women are the ones who truly made changes to show that women could be equal to men in all areas of life. Her first involvement was her approach to alcoholism and its contributions to the abuse of women and children. However, in 1872 after her massive advancements in this area from an educational standpoint she began to pursue civil and political rights that all men regardless of race now had in this nation. “From then on she campaigned endlessly for a federal woman suffrage amendment through the National Woman Suffrage Association (1869-90) and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (1890-1906) and by lecturing throughout the country.” (Anonymous 1) She was arrested, ostracized and eventually iconized as one of the “mothers” of the women’s freedom movement which eventually resulted in the right to vote and equal civil rights. In conclusion the fight for better working conditions and equal pay had evolved into a fight for civil and political rights for women. Equality was the end result of this fight and while there are still societal challenges faced, legally the ability to overcome those challenges is available. The 19th century was a century of change for many facets of life in the United States and the world, the women’s fight for equality was one of the largest. Anonymous, . “Susan B. Anthony, Work and <https://assignbuster.com/jacksonian-era/>

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