

This 1840, in new
jersey. after her

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



This investigation will evaluate the role of women in the civil war. It is important to recognize the contributions women made to the civil war because without the support of women of the time, the outcome and events of the war could have differed greatly. The scope of this investigation focuses on the years of the war from 1861-1865 and focuses on the roles women played not only on the homefront, but on the battlefield. Women played a very influential role in the American civil war.

This can be seen through women's work as munitions workers, nurses on the battlefield, and their support from the homefront. One method that will be used during this investigation is an analysis of the letters written by Cornelia Hancock, which details what it was like to be a nurse in the civil war. This source will be used to demonstrate the instrumental role women played in saving injured soldiers on the battlefield. Another method that will be used during this investigation is Josie Underwood's Civil War Diary, who gives a detailed account of the civil war from the perspective of a union sympathizer living in the South. This method will be used to The first source to be investigated is the letters of Cornelia Hancock.

Hancock was born on February 8, 1840, in New Jersey. After her brothers and cousins went to fight in the Union army, Hancock decided to do her part and volunteered to be a nurse for the Union. During her time as a nurse, she wrote letters to her family back home.

The purpose of Hancock's letters was to inform her relatives of her experience working and Union Nurse. These letter contain detailed accounts of the events that occurred at the battle of Gettysburg, and she details her

emotions and describes in detail what the battlefield looked like after the battle. This is a very valuable primary source because it provides a detailed account of the role of a civil war nurse and the events that occurred at the battle from the perspective of a Union nurse. While these letters are a very useful primary source, they are limited but the fact that they could potentially be very biased. Because Hancock was a nurse of the Union, her version of events could potentially differ from the version of events from a confederate nurse. This could give the historian a biased account of the Battle of Gettysburg instead of an impartial account. The second source that will be analyzed is the diary of Josie Underwood.

Josie Underwood was a well-educated member of a prominent political family. Her family were staunch Unionist supporters living in Bowling Green, Kentucky; an area predominantly populated by confederates. Her diary gives a detailed account of the early years of the war, as well as her experience when her town was occupied by confederate soldiers.

This primary source document is valuable because it gives a detailed account of the early stages of the war and what it was like for a town to be occupied by soldiers, from the perspective of a unionist living in a confederate area. This source is, however, limited by the fact that it only gives the viewpoint of a Unionist. Because of this the reader is not able to see how the early years of the war and the occupation could have been perceived by a confederate supporter. Part B: With the majority of men fighting in the civil war, women had to take on the roles that would usually be performed by men. This paper will answer the question, " what role did

women play in the civil war?" It is very important to understand the roles that women played in the civil war. This is because most people are very familiar with the roles men played as soldiers and leaders during the civil war. However, many people are unaware of the hugely significant roles that women played during the course of the civil war.

The scope of this investigation will focus of the years of the war between 1861-1865. Women played a very significant role in the civil war. This can be seen through women's work as munitions workers, nurses on the battlefield, and support from the home front. This paper will also align with the orthodox view of historiography which states that slavery was the main cause of the civil war. The civil war occurred between the years of 1862-1865. Abraham Lincoln was the president of the United States of America during this tumultuous time.

The war was caused because several southern states seceded from the union in fear that slavery would be made illegal. These states then formed their own " new country" called the Confederate States of America. A man by the name of Jefferson Davis was president of the confederacy during its short time being independent from the United States. The United States made several attempts to get the confederacy back into the Union, but after every attempt failed, the only option left was war. It was initially thought that the war would be easily won by the Union as they had major advantages over the confederacy.

These advantages include: large amounts of advanced weaponry and ammunition, a stable economy and trade system which allowed the Union to

supply their troops with every necessity, a far larger army, well trained soldiers, and a much more extensive railroad system. However, after the Union lost the first battles, their confidence was drained. Union generals were less confident in the strength of their soldiers and they were wary of taking risks. While the Union did ultimately emerge victorious, the war ended up lasting 4 years and caused the death of approximately 620, 000 people. While men were off fighting the war, the women they left behind did not wait idly for their husbands to return home.

Because most men had gone to fight in the war, women were required to take on the roles of men in order to support the war effort. One of the jobs women took over for men is they worked as munitions workers; making guns and other weaponry and ammunition. “ The tremendous demand for munitions created employment opportunities for women.”(Silber). Most women did not work while their husbands were at home. However, once their husbands were gone to war, they had to find ways of supporting themselves and their families until the men returned home.

Because of the war, there was an extremely high demand for weapons and ammunition. Without barely any men to work this job the women stepped up and filled it. Working as munitions workers gave women a way to make money to support their families and support the war from home. The war changed the role of women greatly in society as they went from housewives to making weapons and greatly supporting the war effort. Even if only temporarily, the war brought into question the roles of women in everyday life and what women can be capable of if given the opportunity. Additionally,

“ Southern women also worked in munitions plants, where a number of them lost their lives.

” (Zeinert). Working with explosives is extremely dangerous and requires a lot of skill and courage. Because most women of the time did not work, especially with weaponry, they were very inexperienced with how to handle the explosives. This lack of experience led to many deaths among the women who made the weapons to support the war effort.

Especially in the confederacy where there was no established trading system with other countries such as Great Britain, it was vital that women make weapons and ammunition for the soldiers. Without the bravery of the women, the confederacy would have quickly run out of weapons and ammunition. Because of this, women played a huge role in the early success of the confederacy, and their ability to hold off the Union for so long. Aside from making weapons to support the war effort, there were other ways women contributed to the war on the homefront. Women who did not work making weapons and ammunition found other ways to support the war effort from home.

Because men were not home to take care of the farms, women took on that role to preserve their way of life and keep the economy from shutting down. “ Agricultural output remained high and employment in agriculture constant, suggesting that with men gone, women assumed more of the responsibility of running farms.” (Giesberg). While their husbands were away fighting the war, the women took on the responsibility of running the farms. This allowed them to continue to produce food. The continuous output of food allowed the

economy to remain stable so more resources could be put into support the war. Women's ability to maintain their property was able to open societies eyes to the capabilities of women of the time, as well as challenged gender roles. " Societies made virtual factories of homes, schools, and churches by sending food, clothing, and medical supplies to the front.

" (Schultz). Women on the homefront put everything they had into supporting the war. Women showed strength and leadership as they were able to make factories out of any space they had.

They were able to send out a variety of resources to support the troops fighting in the war. The initiative the women of the time showed by being able to make something out of virtually nothing challenged society's view of women. Women, at least temporarily, were not seen as domestic housewives, but as leaders that played a major role in the civil war. Along with support the war effort from the homefront, many women supported the war on the battlefield.

Nurses on the battlefield played a vital role in the civil war. While women on the homefront were courageous in their efforts to support the war effort, it was the nurses on the battlefield that showed the most pure and memorable from of bravery. " Ten thousand groups mobilized in the first year of the war alone.

" (Schultz). In the first year of the civil war there was major support show by the women. Most women of the time were housewives and hadn't experience working, let alone treating the sick and wounded on the

battlefield. The fact that ten thousand groups of women nurses mobilized in the first year of the war alone, shows the lengths women were willing to go to to support the war and the risk they were willing to accept to do so. Without the overwhelming support of the women of the time and their surprising acceptance of the risk of death played an enormous role in the civil war.

“ I am very tired tonight; have been on the field all day.” (Hancock). The strength and tenacity of women of the time was never thought to be all that high.

But the nurses of the civil war proved that all to be wrong. They would work tirelessly on the battlefield in order to save as many lives as humanly possible. Women were not forced to join the war effort and become nurses, but their own desire and determination drove them to it. This not only proved to have a massive impact on the success of the armies but it also was somewhat able to change societies views on the capabilities of women. It can be said that history exaggerates the impact that women really had on the success of both armies.

However, it is hard to visualize the success of either army without the help of women that took on leadership positions at home, made weapons and ammunition to be sent to the troops, and the women that were on the battlefield healing the sick and injured.