

# The role of women during and after the american revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



According to Harriet Beecher Stowe, an American abolitionist Women are the architect of the society. Women played a key role in the construction of American society. However, the Declaration of Independence of the United States excludes many people. The document declares that all men are created equal but it did not mention women. While women played an important role in American society and this role will change during and after the revolution.

The American Revolution was the result from political will of the 13th colonies to be independent against the British crown. Some of these roles were traditional like nursing while other were quite scandalous for this time such as soldier. Generally, the influence of women increases in society thanks to many events such as the boycott of British goods and their new role. At this time, men thought they were superior to women, but enlightened thinkers rejected this idea and thought that a republic could succeed only if its citizens were educated. The persons who educated children were women. They teach them the value of the republic.

Since the 20th century, these women were called Republican Motherhood. Education of women leads to the emergence of middle-class women. And in 1848, the Seneca Falls Declaration on the rights of women contrast the Thomas Jefferson's words by saying: All men and women are created equal..." This new era showed the birth of movements where women get involved such as the Temperance movement, the abolitionist movement, and the first feminist movement. During and after the revolution, what was the role of women in American society?

Women played a different role in the society during the American Revolution some of them were traditional and others scandalous for this time. Women were considered inferior to men they had only one role which was to manage the households and attend to the domestic tasks. At that time, women have no social, legal and political rights. They cannot vote or hold a public office. When they became married all their property became the property of their husband. The husbands had right over his wife and children. If women earned a salary, this salary belongs to their husbands.

Also, most women had no education because men thought that they could represent a danger if they were too educated. Men had different fears about the education of women. They were afraid that they change in their behavior. According to Jan E. Lewis who reflected in *A companion to America, Women's History*, the different fears of men were: would they neglect their responsibilities to others? Would they lose their femininity? Would they become selfish, antisocial?. In contrast, the fact of overeducating men never created the same sort of fears. Women played an important role in the society in the political resistance movement against the different taxes such as the sugar act, the stamp act and Townsend duty act.

They participated in the boycott of British goods like clothes and the tea in a varied way. The Daughter of Liberty, was like the Son of Liberty, a group created against British taxation. Sarah Bradlee Fulton was a leader of the Daughter of Liberty and known as the Mother of the Boston Tea Party because she gave the idea of disguising men in native American so, avoid them to be recognized by the authorities. Also, they went door to door to

involve more women in the British boycott. Inspired by the Boston Tea Party, Penelope Baker led women to sign an agreement against the consumption of British tea and other British goods. This event was called the Eden Tea Party. In another way, women were part of the boycott with the Homespun movement.

In addition, to stop buying British goods, women became engaged in the Homespun movement which consisted of the boycott of British clothes with Patriots' women who made clothes at home. Thanks to this movement, the colonies became fewer dependents of the British textile. Later this movement served the continental army during the revolution. Then during the revolution women had different key roles. For instance, Abigail Adams was known as the wife of the second president of the United States John Adams and for the quote remember the ladies that she addressed to her husband in a private letter who was a member of the Continental Congress.

In this letter, she asked more rights for women while her husband and the member of the Congress wrote a new code of laws. But she was also, a brilliant businesswoman who managed the finance of the family in an excellent way while John Adams was in the Continental Congress. When she came to Europe with her husband, she came back with many goods such as clothes and she sold back in America and made a lot of money. According to the journalist and author Cokie Roberts who wrote several books on a woman of the early days of the United States. He said that she was good in math.

We know that because even though women, married women, were not allowed to own property at that time, she bought and sold property all the time. And she made a very handy income which supported the family for long periods of time when her husband was away and not making any money. During this period, many women followed their husband during the war, we called them the camp followers. These wives, mothers, and daughter served as cooks, maids, and nurses during the war.

They were poor and cannot subsist without the salary of their husband or father. In front, the difficulty of this task, their paid were increased from two dollars to eight dollars to attract more and more women. Some women served as soldiers or spies during the war. According to the National Women's History Museum website, the spies were women who cook and maids in the British army and listened to the officers about military strategy and delivery of supply. Rare were women who became soldiers, but those who fight throughout the war were women who disguised as men and created a false identity to enroll in the army. Some of them became famous such as Mary Ludwig well-known as Molly Pitcher who helps to reload a cannon of the artillery, during the battle of Monmouth, after her husband was injured.

At the end of the American Revolution, the question of the education of women has surfaced because men want to instill the notion of patriotism and the value of the republic to the children. At that time, who were the caretakers of children? It was women, so women obtained access to school to learned and teach to the children. These women had called today the

Republican Motherhood.

The active role of the Republican Motherhood was to support the value of the republic. The term Republican Motherhood appear with the work *The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective* wrote in 1976 by the historian Linda Kerber. In this work, she defined the Republican Mother duties as raising sons and disciplining husbands to be virtuous citizens of the republic.

In other words, they should educate children and their husband to became good republican citizens. The education of women became more accessible with schools created such as the Ladies Academy where they had the opportunities studied basic academic subjects as mathematics, geography, and history in addition to ornamental arts. For instance, Catherine Beecher, was an educated woman, who came to the Litchfield Female Academy founded by Sarah Pierce, she became a professor and founded her own schools in Hartford. Women became regarded as intellectual beings who played a political role in the future construction of the nation. Thought the time, women became more involved in this role and began to be the protectors of virtues and morality.

They became reformers and they engaged in an organization with a social and public focus such as orphan and charity associations. Also, they came involved in a movement like the temperance movement and later in the abolitionist movement and the first feminist movement. Moreover, others small change occurs during this period, in some state, women get small

improvement with their legal status such as the legalization of divorce, the right to vote.

The legalization happens because the marriage was view as a contract where women were agreeing to accepted it so, they could also be able to remove from it. It was an exception, but the state of New Jersey allowed women to vote since 1776. As reported by the website The American Revolution, all inhabitants of this colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds and have resided within the county for twelve months could vote. Generally, the American revolution did not result in real change in the term of legal and political women's status

Through the time women got more involved in society and want to protect their role as wife and mothers. This willingness result in the implication of women in a different movement like the temperance movement and the abolitionist movement which lead to the first women right's movement.

In order to protect the domestic sphere, women found it necessary to become active in the public sphere. They became engaged in different movements such as the Temperance movement and the Abolitionism movement. The Temperance movement was against the consumption of alcohol. The word temperance means moderation but at that time it meant abstinence. Men consumed too much alcohol and this cause problem in the society. The government tries to solve this issue by taking different measure by limited the quantity of alcohol in the saloon with the Gallon Act passed in 1838 in Massachusetts.

Women get involved in this movement because this issue attains the domestic sphere with men who came back at the house completely drunk and act brutally with their wife and children. According to the book, *Separate Paths: Suffragists and the Women's Temperance Crusade*, women contributed between one-third and one-half of the temperance movement's mass support (Jack S. Blocker, Jr 460) in the 1820s. At the end the nineteenth century, as stated in the book *The Story of American Freedom*, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) with 150, 000 members by 1892 (Eric Fonder 110) represented large implication of women. The slogan Home Protection attracted women to get involved in the organization.

Also, women were engaged in the abolitionist movement. This movement was for the abolition of slavery. Women played a crucial role in the anti-slavery society. The fact that women took part in the movement was considered outrageous for men because men thought that the proper place for women was in the domestic sphere and not on the public sphere. One important woman was Lucia Mott who founded the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833.

For white women, it was the opportunity to be more present on the public sphere and for black women, they could talk about their experience and elicit empathy for slaves. To support the movement, women wrote imaginative literature or such as Phillis Wheatley who wrote her own poems about her life being slaves and this poem was very influential. Sarah Parker Remond was an Abolitionist and made a different speech in favor of the end of the slavery. The speech delivers by such women show the place and the



importance of women in the society. Women involved in the Abolitionism movement became leaders in the women's rights movement. They asked equal rights, expanded in education, employment, and political rights.

These women were supported by Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison who support the women's right to vote. These men were famous because they were the figures of the Abolitionism movement during the nineteenth century. The manifestation of the birth of the women rights movement was the Declaration of Sentiment written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott modeled on the Declaration of Independence. In this declaration, the revendication for women rights is clearly expressed with for instance this sentence "All men and women are created equal".

This Declaration of Sentiment was ratified throughout the Seneca Falls Declaration in 1848.

To conclude, the role of women in society evolves in many ways. Before the American revolution, they had no rights. Their only role was the households and the domestic sphere. During the revolution and the war, women played a behind the scenes work that leads the war to the success. At the end of the war, women get more involved in society by teaching their children the value of the republic and by supporting their husband to participate in the political life of the country.

Today, these women are called the Republican Motherhood. To allow women to teach to their children they should be educated. At that time, the access to school for women starts to become easier. Then, to protect the domestic

sphere women get involved in different movements such as the Temperance movement and the Abolitionism movement. Later this movement leads to the first women right's movement with the Seneca Fall Declaration in 1848. These movement allowed women to became more active on the public sphere and claimed more rights in the future.