

# Revolutionary mothers: women in the struggle for american independence book review...

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



Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for American Independence is a book written by Carol Berkin. This book provided a multi-faceted view of women who influenced, and were influenced by the American Revolution. This is a book about women struggles during the American Revolution. The author's purpose of writing this book is to spell out clearly how women participated in the American Revolution. Initially, the names that always appear when one asks of the women who participated in the Revolutions are Molly Pitcher, and Betsy Ross. However, Carol Berkin puts it straight that they were not the first and only women, who participated in this revolution. Berkin gives out names, and discusses more authentic and lesser-known people who played out vital roles in the American Revolution and their duties. She wants the people's contribution to be known, and that the reader to understand that, many women actively participated in the American Revolution.

The group of women Berkin talks about is Esther Reed, Catharine Greene, Martha Washington, and Molly Brant. The author explains how these great women participated in the American Revolution, and their contributions to its success. Berkin explains every woman's contribution to the revolution.

According to Berkin (56), Esther Reed organized a fund-raising among the women in Philadelphia, and this fund drive highly helped in supporting the Continental Army. This was a major contribution in the American Revolution that has been ignored but now Berkin's purpose of writing the book is to let it be known. In addition, Berkin talks of Molly Brant who performed skillfully in diplomatic negotiations during the American Revolution. Others were Martha Washington and Catharine Greene who supported their husbands fully during

the darkest days by being by their sides. Another woman who Berkin talks about in her book is Frederika von Riedesel, who was a wife to a Hessian general. Frederika was present during the battle of Saratoga together with her children, and endured the harsh and captivating journey by her husband's side. Therefore, all Berkin's wanted was that her book to expose how these great women contributed in the American Revolution even though their names do not appear in books of history.

The thesis of Berkin's book is women's contribution in the American Revolution. She explains the active roles of women during this time and clearly shows that, women played a vital role throughout the American Revolution. She wants the audience to understand that women played significant roles in this war even though many of them remain unnoticed. In addition, Berkin clearly states that many women were active participants in the American Revolution, and that they never stayed at home as it has been assumed. Berkin says that women were not "passive observers but rather partners with their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons" during the American Revolution (Berkin 95). Berkin takes us through the moments prior to, all through and after the war just trying to show the role of women in the Revolution.

Carol Berkin begins her book with a survey of the subservient positions that were occupied by women before the American Revolution, and ends it with how women's position changed for the better after the revolution. Berkin ends her book with how women role in the American Revolution changed their position in the society, and how it altered post-war male perceptions on them. The author organizes her book from how women were treated in the

society before the Revolution, their active participation in the Revolution, and their protests against the English policy by fighting for their own rights. She makes use of primary sources, quoting a number of documents in her chapters in order to make her thesis clear to the readers. Berkin's organization of her book is very helpful. The chapters go together to form her book because, she starts with how the women lived before the Revolution, the views of the war, the women activists, how they were active on the war front, names the women who followed their husbands to the war, the generals wives and how they stood with their husbands. In addition, through the chapters, Berkin talks of how loyalist women were sent into exile, slave women, those women who served as spies and couriers, and even those who satisfied the men in battle sexually. The author devotes a chapter to these groups and explains them in detail. This makes the organization of her book, and chapters very good and interesting. The book organization fits with its thesis because; the author explains women's position before, and after the revolution. The last chapters of the book talk of the post-war era, and the women's position after the war.

Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for American Independence is a historical book. In addition, Berkin is a historian author who employs the feminist theory to explain how women participated in the American Revolution. This book talks of the history of women prior to, for the period of, and subsequent to the American Revolution. It gives a well rounded view of women in the Revolutionary War, and how they actively participate in the fight for their rights, and America's independence.

Berkin builds the historiography of her book's subject matter using her own

fresh readings of published sources to build her thesis. Her book is divided into ten chapters filled with quotes, and illustrations with evidence. She groups her footnotes, and bibliography for each chapter at the end of the book. She notes that primary sources are important to her because in her acknowledgement, she says that her research scavenged for primary documents, and articles at the New York Public Library, and a variety of local annals. Through the primary sources, the author is able to get information of women prior to, during, and following the American Revolution thus they help her in developing her thesis of the book. Moreover, she supports her arguments with substantial primary sources showing the reader the clues the women left behind. Some of the primary sources she uses are songs, popular verses, and the use of recipes to clearly state her arguments. An example song is the "Buttermilk Hill" (Berkin 31), which tells of the sadness the women left behind during the war felt. In addition, she uses secondary sources, and documents to make the book lively and rich. Through the use of quotes, and anecdotes from primary sources, the author makes her book very interesting, believable to the readers and to support her thesis.

In conclusion, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for American Independence* by Carol Berkin is a book about women struggle and active role in the American Revolution. The author explores the topic extensively and highlights the significance and the role of women in the struggle for Americans independence. The countless women who participated are mentioned by Berkin and the specific roles they played. Berkin's book is informative, convincing, and the best book to read when one is looking for a book on women's role in the American Revolution.

## **Works Cited**

Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006. Print.