

The women in the colonial america history essay



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A women life in Colonial America was very difficult and exhausting. Women played big role in survival of their family. Everyone in the family had to pitch in to produce the necessities of life but, women had big role to play, in other words had most of the work to handle to help survive. They were responsible for making most of the household necessities, taking care of the family members, cooking...etc. On top of these chores they were also responsible of taking care of the needs of their children; motherhood. Women participated in the jobs that were generally associated with females. Labor was very valuable in colonial American, most of the women were able to demonstrate their work by pursuing positions as merchants, nurses...etc. In this essay I will explain what women had to go through in their daily life in colonial times. This was their everyday normal chores that they had to do. You will also find out that these jobs they did were not just to make good income but, just to survive and take care of their family. I will also touch on some point on what rights women had in this time. What they were allowed to do and what not.

Body

During the colonial times, the 18th century, women role and work was intensely difficult and society was self-centered. In poor families, women's full time job was to do home keeping. Poor housewives had to cook meals, sew clothes, doctor their family, take care of their animals, maintaining fire, take care of the kitchen garden and of course do all the cleaning. They also worked hard to make household goods like candles, hats...etc. to use and sell for make an income. Middle class and wealthy women also shared these chores but they did very less because they had servants to help them.

Survival:

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The survival of the family was depended on the contribution of the family members. Male or female everyone had to do their assigned job, no one was left, and even children who are old enough to work were responsible for some work. Women were expected to obstruct their husbands and be faithful to them. In colonial America women's lives were very different and difficult compared to what it is now in the present. " Women were considered to be the " weaker vessel" not as strong physically or mentally as men and less emotionally stable." Their life was depended on the status, wealth, race, religion and the society or colony they are from. Some women were hat makers, silversmith and merchants and also practiced other few trades; some took over trades what their husband practiced. " Although women in colonial America could by no means be considered to have been held " equal" to men"

They lived generally on margins, in some case if their husband get injured or died, their children or the wife is likely to take husbands place forcefully to earn income. Sometimes they even had to do work that paid worse. Living life on margins was not very pleasing. Imagine a widow who has seven to nine children, taking care of them and doing all the house chores alone. This means to cook, she would have to go to the forest to get the wood, cut it and carry it alone; carry buckets of water from wells or lakes to her house and then cook. Same situation when it comes to washing clothes and farming to raise the food. Also in colonial times they did not had any butcher shops, which mean to cook, women had to kill the animal, scrape off the hair, remove the innards, wash it, put it on fire and then after its done cooking,

then it was the time to eat. Everyone, men and women they all had to do these jobs just to live and survive.

Both men and women had great social pressure on them to get married. Young girls were generally married by the early age of thirteen or fourteen and if any women didn't get married by the age of twenty five, it was very embarrassing in their society. Marriage was mostly for economic benefits than romantic situations. Widows were also forced to get married as soon as possible. Even in some states, laws were proposed that would force widows to marry within seven years after their husband has died. Widows were often married within a year as the soonest. Women were considered legally dead once they were married under common law. After marriage, Women legally became belongings of their husbands. Married women had no control of their income, possessions, property, and also they were not allowed to vote or even able to become a witness in court. Their husbands, therefore, were responsible for all actions of their wife including her discipline. Widows were more fortunate than married women. They had control over their property, but could only collect up to one third of her dead husband's property. A widow was also allowed to vote in some areas, but often widows knew about this fact and sometimes choose not to vote. Legally, Husbands were allowed to hit their wives. If a woman leaves or flees away from her husband, she was conceded as a thief because she stole the clothes she was wearing and herself. If a husband murdered his wife, he would be hung to death and if a husband was murdered by his wife, she was burned alive.

Motherhood:

The most important part of a women life in colonial period was motherhood. Motherhood constructed women's lives in to such a huge strength that it was greatly valued. They had way more children than modern women have these days. Women in colonial period had eight to nine children in their life. A women adult life, at least between the ages of 20 and 40, was characterized by motherhood. This would limit her life in significant ways but also enriched it many other ways. Most women, most of the time, were either pregnant or nursing or sometimes doing both. The fact about the women life in this period was that they had less control over them self. Lot less women practiced trades and merchant, probably motherhood was one of their main reasons why.

Wealthy and Poor:

Wealthier mothers had even more children than average women because they didn't really had to do lot of chores because, they had servant who did most the work. Servant did the work like Washing diapers, clothes and other laundry, making fire and cooking meals for the family. Even, a family teacher was hired to educate their children. They specially hire servants to take care of their children; this is one of the reasons why wealthy women had more children than middle class or poor women.

The women who had life that toughest were at the lower end, the white servants and black slaves. These enslaved women had even more tougher times. Slave women much likely had to work in the fields than other white servants. Most of the outside field/farming labor was considered to be men work, except in the case of slave. However this was considered an

inappropriate work for white women. These slaves had fewer children because they could not effort to feed all of them and undoubtedly had to work hard. They were also bounded by these legal rules. They were not allowed to legally marry anyone, unless allowed by their master and also they didn't have any rights on their children. If the master wanted to sell the children or husband of his or her slave, they were allowed. Many families were broken apart in these situations and, these kinds of sales were less common in eighteenth century but more in nineteenth century. Once a child had been sold or sent away they might not ever be heard from again.

Conclusion

The American Revolution had a great impact on women. The revolutionary war brought women in to many causes. Women have also played small role in the revolutionary war. They sew uniforms and other clothing for the soldiers. They also wrote small article in the newspaper about the war. After the war, many opportunities arose to higher class women. They would often be taught to read, write, and learn mathematics, as well as other subjects like foreign languages, drama and music, art, and also dancing. Other women often times were educated in reading and writing and even picked up on Greek, Latin, and math. During the war, Women knew how to protect them self. They knew how to threaten or kill someone in defense. Very few owned guns at that time but, women were familiar with the use of knives axes and other household and gardening tools for defense. With all the violence of the war and war between the French, English, Americans, Native Americans, men and women similarly had to learn to use some kind of defense protection. During this same era education was spreading. People

had more knowledge about the birth control. Women were having fewer children than they were having before. Their work boundaries were increasing and many were choosing professions over traditional trades. As an overall state of colonial period, People did have tough lives to live especially, women. I thank god that I wasn't one of them. People were probably used to this kind of lifestyle but, it still had huge problems compared to our current lifestyle. Even though colonial period was very difficult on women but, it prepared them for the coming era.

Work Citation Page:

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