

Women in the Revolutionary Era

War, Politics, and
Republican Motherhood

Announcements

- Oral history/Performance Art Project
 - Two Orientation Opportunities
 - Fri., Jan. 14, 1:30-2:30 in 168 Dulles
 - Thur., Jan. 20, 12-1 in 168 Dulles
- Courses Website:
<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/wu287/courses.html>

Readings and Discussions for Next Week

- Paper Questions
 - Essays due on Monday, Jan. 24, in Jackie Della-Rosa's office hours at Main Library, Rm. 210
- Readings and Discussion for Next Week
 - Tuesday: pp. 3-203 (intro and ch. 1-5)
 - Thursday: pp. 204-352 (ch. 6-10 and epilogue)
- Chapter Assignments
 - Groups 1 and 6 responsible for Ch. 1, August 1787 (on Tuesday) and Ch. 6, January 1796 (on Thursday)
 - Groups 2 and 7 responsible for Ch. 2, September 1788 (on Tuesday), and 7, February 1801 (on Thursday)
 - Groups 3 and 8 responsible for Ch. 3 (October 1789) and Ch. 8, March 1804 (on Thursday)
 - Groups 4 and 9 responsible for Ch. 4 (November 1792) and Ch. 9, April 1806 (on Thursday)
 - Groups 5 and 10 responsible for Ch. 5 (December 1793) and Ch. 10, May 1809 (on Thursday)

New England Colonies

- Economic vs. Religious motivations
- Family migration and Community creation
- A Good Housewife
 - Hierarchy?
 - Mutuality?
 - "Nearest to equality" among "all the Orders which are unequals."
- Marriage
 - Patriarchal decision?
 - 1/10 premarital pregnancy
- Motherhood
 - 9/10 infants survive 1st year
 - ¾ survive to adulthood



Religion

- Reinforce gender hierarchy or opportunity for female empowerment?
- Anne Hutchinson (1636)
 - Grace vs. works
 - women as religious leaders
- Halfway Covenant (1662)
- Salem Witchcraft Trials (1691-1692)
 - 95% accusations in New England
 - 20 executed (34 total)
 - 82% of accused were women
 - Gendered expectations of witchcraft (53% vs. 29% conviction rate; 15 to 2 execution rate)
 - 2/3 over 40 years old
 - Accusers
 - 90% adults; 10% young girls between 16-25
 - 60% men
- Great Awakening 1730s -1760s
- By mid-18th century, women 75% of congregations



Middle Colonies

- Ethnic and religious diversity
- Opportunities for women's empowerment?
- Quakers and religious nonconformity
 - "Why should women meet apart? We think for a very good reason...women whose bashfulness will not permit them to say or do much, as to church affairs before men, when by themselves, may exercise their gift of wisdom and understanding, in a direct care of their own sex." William Penn, 1692
- Roman-Dutch Law in New Netherlands
 - Women could run a business, sue, inherit equally, make a will
- Economic Development
 - Class status and gender roles
 - Merchant wives and servants/slaves
 - Single women and widows
 - Proximity to urban areas and trade networks
- Urban slavery



War as way of life?

- French and Indian War (1754-1763)
- Proclamation of 1763
 - British colonial population doubled every 25 years
- Increased taxation
 - Mercantilism



Politicizing the Domestic Sphere

- Nonimportation and nonconsumption
 - “As I am (as we say) a daughter of liberty, I chuse to wear as much of our own manufactory as possible.” Anna Green Winslow, 1771
 - “Today the daughter would show her opposition to the English Parliament by spinning in a public spinning bee held at the minister’s home....Proper women knew their place, and it was not in front of crowds. She would have preferred the quiet of her family’s sitting room to the glare of the sun at the minister’s house. But father said these public displays were important for teaching people their duty, and she had agreed to come for his sake.”
- Political discussion and debate
 - “Nothing else is talked of. The Dutch talk of the stomp ack, the Negroes of the tamp. In short, everybody has something to say.” Sara Franklin, 1765 after the passage of the Stamp Act

“A Society of Patriotic Ladies” (1775)



Taking Sides

- 2/5 pro-Independence
 - Emancipation for slaves
 - Backcountry vs. gentry
 - Native Americans
- 1/5 Loyalists
 - Quakers and pacifism
- 2/5 neutral
 - Quakers and pacifism
- Women whose political opinions differed from their husbands
 - Dower rights



Women and War (1775-1783)

- Fighting the War
 - Soldiers
 - Molly Pitcher – annuity from government
 - Deborah Sampson - pension for husband
 - Spies
- Supporting the War
 - Camp followers (20,000)
 - Provisioning troops
 - Raising funds for the war
 - Esther Reed and the Ladies Association – first intercolonial women’s org. in N.A.
 - Assuming family and business responsibilities
- Victims of War
 - Occupied areas and refugees
 - Disease
 - Killing of civilians
 - Rape



A New Touch on the Times...By a Daughter of Liberty, 1779

Women and Slavery in the Republic

- Gradual abolition of slavery in Northern and Middle Colonies
 - “The idea of slavery is inconsistent with our own conduct and constitution.”
 - Freedom for children of slaves (18-28)
- Marriage, family, community (especially in urban settings)
 - 1/20 businesswomen, most in domestic service
- U.S. Constitution
 - 3/5 clause
 - allowed continuation of slave trade until 1808
 - Invention of the Cotton Gin 1790
 - Intensification of explicitly racist argument in favor of slavery

“But me, I went because I had enough of master. He was so bad there wasn’t living with him. Got myself a job right off. Washing, that’s all. Lived with my sister and her friends and there were about ten or twelve of us in that little house. But we were free, that’s all... “I still work all the time, sometimes washing, sometimes cleaning, sometimes picking rags. My babies go with me and my older girl she helps. We’re getting by, and we’ve got a better place to live, just with my sister and her family. Except we’re always taking in new folks, from the country, who have no place else to go. Especially women. Set them up. Get them started. I watch out for the women... “Another thing I want to say. We have a church now. The African Zon Church, we call it. We all put our cents in and after awhile we got enough to buy a little land. Had to. Whites don’t want us in their churches, and especially don’t want us burying our dead in their churchyards...Yes, we’re doing better, really. Except the white folks still have lots of hate in them. Us free people have to be careful all the time. It’s no good, still, between us blacks and the whites.” Elizabeth Freeman, Massachusetts

Eligibility for citizenship

- “Remember the Ladies”
 - “Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could.”
 - Abigail Adams to John Adams, 1776
- Representation, “virtue,” and independence
 - New Jersey constitution (1776-1807)
 - Franchise to “all free inhabitants”
 - “Our constitution gives this right to maids or widows black or white.”
 - Single women, worth 50 pounds, over 21
 - Property qualifications disqualified ¼-1/2 of all adult white men

Republican Motherhood

- “Much depends...upon the early education of youth, and the first principles which are instilled take the deepest root....If we mean to have heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, we should have learned women.”
- Declining birthrate
- “Matrimonial Republican”
 - “I object to the word ‘obey’ in the marriage service because it is a general word, without limitations or definition....The obedience between man and wife, I conceive, is, or ought to be mutual.” 1792

“You say that you shall regret so long an absence; not more certainly than I do, but a strong desire to possess more useful knowledge than I at present do, I can dispense with the pleasure a little longer of beholding my friends.”

Eliza Southgate to her mother, 1797

“The sources of knowledge are gradually opening to our sex....But supposing now that we possess’d all the talents of the orator, in the highest perfection; where shall we find a theatre for the display of them? The Church, the Bar, and the Senate are shut against us. Who shut them? Man; despotic man, first made us incapable of the duty, and then forbid us the exercise. Let us by suitable education, qualify ourselves for those high departments – they will open before us.”

Priscilla Mason, salutatory address to Philadelphia Young Ladies’ Academy in 1793

Women’s education

- Female academies (1780s)
- Female seminaries (1800s)



Westtown Boarding School (1799)

Pressures of assimilation and/or exclusion for Native Americans

- Treaty of Paris (1783)
 - U.S. full control of western lands and of relations with Native Americans
- Family arrangements
 - Extended to nuclear
 - Male-headed households
 - Divorce and Sexuality
- Economic roles
 - Farming
 - Housework
 - Ownership of Property
- Political Roles
 - Who speaks on behalf of Native Americans?
 - Who is perceived as representative?
- Cherokee constitution of 1828
 - Right to vote and to hold office in the General Council restricted to “free male citizens
- Increasing differentiation between women/men – private/public

