

Women in the Antebellum period:

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Document composed in L^AT_EX

December 4, 2024

Abstract

1 Introduction

After the American Revolution, women expected policies to shift towards women. Some believed in holding offices, others believed in basic ownership of property, and challenging the republican motherhood. Selective groups of women banded together and attempted to reform.

1.1 Background

1.2 claim

Selective groups of women used their political influence, economic freedom and cultural reform to notion women's ability in American Society for better or for worse.

2 Non-Political Politics: Reforms by female Civil Servants.

3 The Conditions of Women Workers.

Some women received slight economic freedom from low-paying occupations such as textile mills, domestic servitude, and harlotry; Many women during this time period endured these hellish environments for a marginal change in the economic systems of rights, others fantasized about the beauty of republican Motherhood. Worker's conditions for women were poor, textile mills proved to have a high fatality rate, which encouraged some women to band together and change their conditions. However, Women lacked the Economic freedom of creating laws or unionizing. An example of this could be seen with the Lowell girls and the First Female union that reformed the conditions despite having little economic freedom. Women working in brothels were subject to aggressive clients and could contract diseases. Working as prostitutes engaging in harlotry proved to both have lack of financial compensation as well as safety. Women working in these conditions barely had enough to cover expenses for themselves; due to the commonality of unprotected sex, prostitutes would have to nourish a child. These added expenses prompted women continue working under these poor conditions, relief received for prostitutes which provided a significant leap towards better conditions for these selective groups of women.

3.1 Lowell Girls

Usually, the Lowell Girls were unmarried because they missed family or had poor family finances. Many strive to marriage as their conditions improve from this hellish textile mill to a mother caring for 2 children. Due to the design of factories and shifts, women were women would have to put up with these difficult conditions, and their pay would allow them to purchase items. Children and women would put in endless hours for a

meager profit. Usually, these meager marginal advantages were insufficient to make up for the hazardous working conditions. For instance, ladies would normally cut the sticks in match manufacturers, while kids would dip in red phosphorous.(Stansell, 1982, p. 117). A mill in *Lowell, Massachusetts* were the first to unionize and fight for the rights and wages of these workers. A mill in *Lowell, Massachusetts* were the first to unionize and fight for the rights and wages of these workers. The Lowell Mill Girls banded together, due to the expression originating from *Lowell Offering*, the Lowell Mill Girls were able to draw the conclusion that they were trapped in a cycle of consumerism and production. The *Lowell Offering* would commonly have discourse regarding republican daughter-/motherhood which commonly discussed jobs and ideas beyond the horrid factory jobs and lowly wages. (Kanzler, 2005) This contributed to the desire for greater conditions and more access to literature such as the *Lowell Offering*. This challenge of freedom for young women regarding traditional gender roles of republican motherhood to the society of Early United States. Other mill girls followed the virtues of *The Cult of Domesticity* which valued Purity over wealth; this provided a belief for some Lowell Girls which could link back to the *Lowell Offering* on commodity items.

3.2 Brothel Workers and Domestic Servants

Due to urbanization, young women seeking economic liberties lived in cities in which they served as domestic servants. Women who were typically working as domestic servants were exploited by their masters sexually. Although some hired Western European immigrants and provided for them, (West, 1992) the treatment of domestic servants was typically poor. Many aristocrats hire the persons with the best physical appearances. This is because these aristocrats disregard the laws and religious ethics and rather engage in sexual activities with their domestic servants. Many servants birthed children in this process, which proved poor working conditions. Because of this sexual exploitation, many women turned to sex as a form of income. Although prostitution was illegal in New York and other states, it was loosely enforced, which did not deter brothels and prostitution. Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections were common with these women who sold their bodies. The abundance of these men seeking to engage in sexual intercourse while drunk could lead to violent outbursts in which women were typically killed. This can be seen with the case of *Helen Jewett*, in which her head was gashed and fire was set to her bed. The police concluded the case after 2 hours, and this news became nationwide. This is linked to the influx of teenage boys in the city leading to a higher demand for prostitutes. But because of the lack of development in the teenage mind, outbursts of anger due to loyalty can be witnessed with this case. (Cohen, 1990) This prompted many well-off female patrons to start up asylums to protect these young adults from further attacks and sexual exploitation. (Chambers, 2006) The suffering of women prompted a radical change that provided a safe haven for prostitutes who are always living on the edge of death from "pleasure." This unhealthy obsession was how many women depended on it as a viable source of income, despite the harshness and dangers of this line of work. Because of this, many wealthy women thought that it was correct to build asylums to benefit their own people. This significantly increased independence in the industry, as there is now a safe place in which women would not be sexually exploited and horribly murdered.

4 Culturally Challenging: Sex&Gender, Ethics, and Religion

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