



Women's Liberation 1830-1850

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The Factory Girl's Song

The Factory Girl's song is an example of women seeking **liberation in their place of work**. The song is a call to strike for **better working conditions**, including **increased wages**. The 12th stanza especially voices their need for better pay.

Then since they've cut my wages down
To nine shillings per week,
If I cannot better wages make,
Some other place I'll seek.

Factory Girl's Song, 12th Stanza

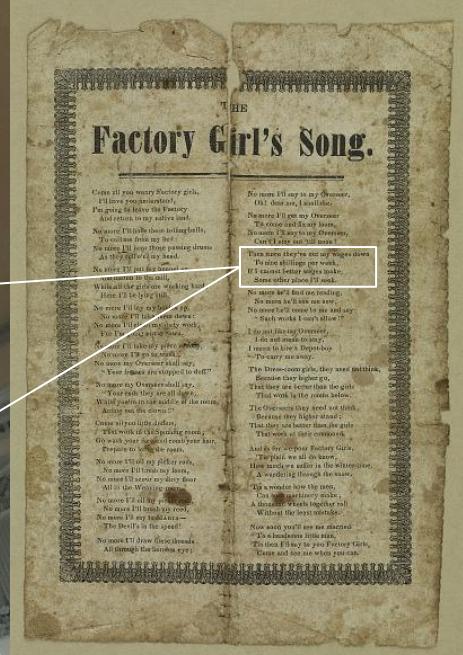


Figure 1, The Factory Girl's Song

Fig. 1, The Factory Girl's Song, *The Factory Girl's Song*, c. 1840, Paper, 9 1/2 in × 5 3/4 in (24.13 cm × 14.605 cm), The National Museum of American History, Behring Center, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/nmah_1445159.

The American Women's Declaration of Independence

The Seneca Falls convention kickstarted a new era of women fighting for their rights. They fought to **vote, own land, and divorce**. The convention also emphasized the importance of **education** for women. The event was featured in newspapers **across the nation**, such as the New York Herald.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION.—This convention assembled at Seneca Falls, on the 19th inst. The meeting on the first day was only accessible to females, who drew up and signed a "Declaration of Sentiments," which reads as follows:—When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men and women are created equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—that

Figure 2, "Woman's Rights Convention," The New York Herald

Fig. 2, "Woman's Rights Convention," The New York Herald, "Woman's Rights Convention," The New York Herald, July 30, 1848, July 30, 1848, in Balkansky, Arlene, "American Women's Declaration of Independence: Newspaper Coverage, 1848 | Headlines & Heroes." Webpage, The Library of Congress, July 11, 2019, <https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2019/07/american-womens-declaration-newspaper-coverage-1848>.

The Bloomer Costume

Popularized by Amelia Bloomer, this trouser-skirt became a way of **liberation in women's fashion**. Bloomers allowed for more ease of movement, physical freedom, and spread a **spirit of reform** throughout the country. The praise for bloomers was short-lived and critics of the women's rights movement sought to stop "**Bloomerism.**"



Fig. 3, The Bloomer Costume, Currier, Nathaniel, *The Bloomer Costume*, 1851, Hand-Colored Lithograph, 9.75 in x 13.5 in (24.8 cm x 34.3 cm), D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, <https://springfieldmuseums.org/collections/item/the-bloomer-costume-nathaniel-currier/>.

Figure 3, The Bloomer Costume

Conclusion: Connections of the Past

In the **Antebellum** period, more factories were being built, which allowed **more women to work**. Women inside and outside of the home started turning away from the **outdated ideal of a "Republican mother,"** and became "**Mothers**" of **the women's rights movement.** They started pushing for equal rights and opportunities. Working women fought for **equal pay** and **better working conditions.** Both working women and those without jobs joined in the **fight for the right** to vote. **Women's fashion** in this time **reflected the ideas of freedom** for women, and introduced split skirts and **bloomers**. From the 1830s to the Civil War in 1860, **women, immigrants, and enslaved people** alike fought for freedom, which was what the "**American Dream**" truly was.

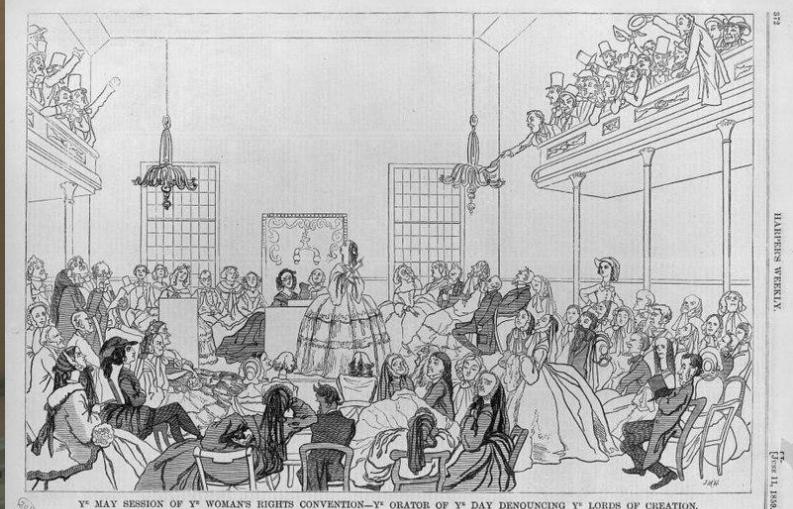


Figure 3, May Session of Woman's Rights Convention

Fig. 3, May Session of Woman's Rights Convention, Harper's Weekly, *The May Session of the Woman's Rights Convention-The Orator of the Day Denouncing the Lords of Creation*, 11 June 1859, Wood Engraving, 12 in × 16 in. (30.48 cm × 40.64 cm), Harper Weekly, v. 3, no. 128, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c35681/>.

Works Cited

Currier, Nathaniel. *The Bloomer Costume*. 1851. Hand-Colored Lithograph. 9.75 in × 13.5 in (24.8 cm × 34.3 cm). D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts.

<https://springfieldmuseums.org/collections/item/the-bloomer-costume-nathaniel-currier/>.

The Factory Girl's Song. ca. 1840. Paper. 9 1/2 in × 5 3/4 in (24.13 cm × 14.605 cm). National Museum of American History. https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/nmah_1445159.

Harper's Weekly. *The May Session of the Woman's Rights Convention-The Orator of the Day Denouncing the Lords of Creation*. 11 June 1859. Wood Engraving. 12 in × 16 in. (30.48 cm × 40.64 cm). Harper Weekly, v. 3, no. 128. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c35681/>.

The New York Herald. "Woman's Rights Convention." July 30, 1848, included in Balkansky, Arlene. "American Women's Declaration of Independence: Newspaper Coverage, 1848 | Headlines & Heroes." Webpage. The Library of Congress, July 11, 2019.
<https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2019/07/american-womens-declaration-newspaper-coverage-1848/>.