

Revolutionary Mothers

Women in the Struggle for America's Independence.

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Chapter 1.

“The easy task of obeying”

The women's place in colonial society was one of helpmeet to her husband. A woman had no rights. Her husband was totally responsible for her well being and behavior. A woman was not considered capable of being educated apart from very rudimentary things associated with being a wife and mother.

“Few educated men ... were ready to concede that women, as much as men, had the capacity for rigorous formal education or political decision making.”

The role of the colonial woman was determined by her social status, religion and wealth. But even the wealthiest of women had very few rights. They did not have the right to vote, or hold any form of public office. They could not act as a guardian, or represent their own interests legally. She could not own, buy or sell property. Women were expected to marry by 20, widows were expected to remarry early. A woman's rights were suspended while she was married. Her husband inherited any property a woman may own upon her marriage. A great example of this was when Washington married Martha, a very wealthy widow. All her wealth was given to George when they married, except her slaves, which he could not free or sell while she was alive.

The few exceptions were; single women who were given some rights so that she was not dependent on the state and widowed women were given responsibility for decisions concerning 1/3 of her husband's estate for the same reason. (A man had to provide for his wife in death as well as in life.)

Puritan women were especially expected to be subservient to their men, (fathers, brothers, and especially husbands.) they were expected to show decorum and modesty. She grew her hair long but it was not ever seen in public. If a woman ever committed adultery, she was often whipped in public and had to wear a scarlet "A" on her dress. (see the book "Scarlet letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Even in time of hardship or when men went to war when women were in total charge of providing for and defending her family and estate, she was considered doing her duty as a helpmeet for her husband

Today, even Utah has an unaltered law that holds a man culpable for his wife's illegal actions.

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www.landofthebrave.info/colonial-women.htm