Republican Motherhood and the Early Road to Women’s Rights: 1765 to 1848

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Chapter 1: Republican Motherhood

The role that women play in the household and in the interaction they had with the government has been a constant development, and a reflection of the times in which these women lived. In the Colonial era, women served as the family caretaker. She was uneducated because it was not necessary for her to be educated. The Enlightenment proved to be of benefit to many women of the higher classes of Europe, but those of the lower classes were kept ignorant as to the developments and necessities of proper citizens, along with the rights that every citizen was entitled to. It was not until there was a revival of the Enlightenment ideas during the American Founding that education of women spread from the upper classes to the middle class. Women of the American republic were seen to have a duty to their country, and they exhibited these duties prior to, through, and after the American Revolution. Although they were not granted the unalienable rights that their husbands and brothers were during the American founding, the women of the republic were given the charge to educate the sons of the founding era on the rights of men and the duties of citizenship including proper participation. Their daughters were to be educated on the necessity to continue with the education of the duties of women of the republic and how to successfully meet these demands placed upon them. These duties would later be termed “Republican Motherhood\(^1\)

Even before the thirteen colonies declared Independence from Great Britain, women were indirectly playing an active political role. Great Britain spent a large part of the mid-18\(^{th}\) Century battling France and the Native Americans over control of the colonial lands. After waging war for many years, Great Britain had acquired a significantly large debt, with limited ways to pay. Parliament passed a series of acts which taxed the colonists in order to generate funds to pay

\(^1\) “Republican Motherhood” was a term that was first used by Linda Kerber in her book women of the Republic as published in 1980. “Republican Motherhood” was not a term that was used in the 18\(^{th}\) century, but is rather a rather new named theory.
back the outstanding debt. In the period between colonization and the French and Indian War, Great Britain had begun to loosen its control over the colonies creating an autonomic feeling from Great Britain². The new taxes and acts passed by Parliament which limited westward migration outraged the colonists, and provoked many to rebel³. Although they were viewed to be unable to think or act politically, many women, deliberately or not, were forced to make political decisions.

They had to stand with or against their menfolk, boycott British goods or continue to buy them, generously send goods to the front to supply Patriot soldiers or refuse to participate in the war effort, and decide whether to stay in America and see the conflict to its end or to flee to Canada, the Caribbean, or Europe⁴.

Revolution era women faced difficult and challenging political decisions and their decisions would be reflective of not only their sentiments but also the sentiments of their families⁵. Many of the British goods that were being taxed were items that were used on a regular basis, including tea, paper, and sugar. Women had to decide if they would sacrifice many of these common goods to support the Revolutionary cause or purchase them anyway which would cause them to face the scrutiny from Pro-Revolutionary neighbors. Women were challenged physically and intellectually to commit their political loyalty to a cause and then they were constantly and repeatedly challenged to prove dependability from other members of the allegiances⁶. Young women who had given their allegiance to the Patriot cause “refused to court, or even dance with, men who had not declared their anti-English sentiments”⁷. Other women such as Mercy Otis

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² Riley, Glenda. Resistance, Revolution, and Early Nationhood, 1763 to 1812. in Inventing the American Woman, Wheeling:Harlan Davidson, Inc.. 2007. (53)
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., p.54.
⁵ Several pieces make reference to divorce rates suggesting that conflicting pro-Patriot or Pro-Loyalist sentiments were the cause of many Revolutionary divorces. This also raised the question as to if a woman had a right to divorce her husband because of conflicting sentiments.
⁶ Kerber, Linda pg.9
⁷ Riley, Glenda pg. 54
Warren and Abigail Adams participated in personal correspondence discussing the political atmosphere with friends and family\textsuperscript{8}.

When the American Revolution was declared, the women living in America knew that they would be challenged physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Sacrifices would have to be made that would not be easy, and they would be forced to witness a war in their own backyards. Many dangers existed with the presence of foreign troops, including decreased food supply, the increased chance of contracting small pox and other diseases, and the threat of assault and rape\textsuperscript{9}. A New Jersey man noted “many virtuous women have suffered in this manner [rape]” and most victims “kept it Secret for fear of making their lives miserable”\textsuperscript{10}. There was a constant fear of what was lurking around. Not only were women forced to protect themselves, they were also protecting their families in the absence of their husbands who had gone to fight for the Revolution. The women were in strong support for a quick war; they knew the sooner the war would conclude, the sooner safety and order would be returned to them and their families.

Pre-Revolution social norms greatly applauded ambition, energy, and originality in men; however, these qualities were to be greatly distrusted in women which forced women of the Revolution to appear as apolitical beings as was socially acceptable while still participating to the furthest extent that was available to them\textsuperscript{11}. There were some women who worked to support the Revolution in an extended manner while maintaining their traditional roles. Mercy Otis Warren noted “that women might accept their “appointed subordination” for the sake of “Order in Families,” but never due to any inferiority on women’s part”\textsuperscript{12}. The women of the Revolution

\textsuperscript{8} Riley 54. This correspondence later became public and is the source for a lot of information regarding the thoughts and feelings of women during the Revolution and American Founding.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.58.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 59.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 60.
felt that it was their necessary place and duty to serve in the family, however, they had a role to serve and they would do that to the best of their capability. This sentiment would prove to be one of the leading foundations of the practice of “Republican Motherhood.”

Women were less than idle in the political sphere during the Revolution. Women’s associations were formed to sew clothing, prepare medical supplies, and get food ready to send to the front line Patriot men. Female Patriots held fundraisers and provided much needed food, money, and other supplies. They were responsible for the planning, development, and delivery of items gathered and performed astonishing feats including the Philadelphia Ladies Association which raised $7,500 and donated 2,005 shirts. Aside from the tasks that would be naturally associated with women during the Revolution, there were other women who performed more strenuous and engaging tasks such as assembling arms, transforming business’ for wartime production, and acted as spies. The Patriots were reliant upon the acts of women to succeed in their fight against the British. Women played a pivotal role and greatly contributed to the cause through ways beyond the battlefield by supplying the items that were necessary for life, such as food, and for safety, such as arms.

Following the America Revolution, there was a question as to the roles that men and women would play in the new republic. The men of the Revolution had left their homes, families, and business in order to fight for independence from the British. It was the women that kept the home together while the men were away. This permitted them to experience an independence that they had never before experienced. Choosing their political ties and loyalties was also a role of the women of the Revolution and was one of the first opportunities that many of these women had to exercise political thought, and for many, despite its demands, it was an

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13 Riley, Glenda pg. 62
14 Ibid., p. 62
15 Ibid., p. 63
invigorating experience. Their husbands were in the fields of Revolutionary America battling the British over the dispute of human rights, and for many women, there was a large question as to how their husband’s success would affect their rights and their lives.

The Revolution proved successful, and a new country was to be formed in which its citizens played active roles through the consent of the governed. Many questions surrounded the American Founding including the topics of slavery, personal freedoms, and women’s citizenship. On March 31, 1776 Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John, “I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.” At the time of Abigail’s letter, John Adams was serving in the First Continental Congress which would later produce the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence declared that “all men are created equal and are endowed, by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Jefferson noted that men were created equal; however, he failed to initially acknowledge that this statement had any bearing on the existence of unalienable rights for women. Following the Revolution, many women also held hope for an identification of their rights during the development of both the Articles of Confederation and The Constitution, however, neither document explicitly acknowledged or made mention of the rights of women or any role they may play as a citizen of the United States of America.

The men of the founding era were not ready for women to play an active role in the new American government. Thomas Jefferson believed “women should remain in the privacy of home, while men set out to fight the daily battles in the public and political arenas.” Many men

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18 Riley, Glenda pg. 80
held the view that women were not physically capable of being able to participate in politics. Thomas Jefferson is quoted saying “the tender breasts of ladies were not formed for political convulsion.”¹⁹ Jefferson, who was one of the most vocal men of the American Revolution regarding the rights which were endowed to men by their Creator, denied the ability of women to participate in government. Nearly thirteen years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, women were again denied the right to participate in government when the Constitution was ratified in 1789. The Constitution does not include rights or protections for women.²⁰ Progress was made with the Constitution which had never before been included; gender neutral terms were used throughout the document rather than directly referencing men. It is also important to note that women were included in the count of population to determine representation for the legislative branch.²¹ Although they would have no voice regarding who would be elected to represent them in Congress, women had been included in the population of the state which would determine the number of representatives which would serve in the United States Congress.

Women were forced to look for other realms in which they could enact their political minds, but would not disturb their husbands and men around them. For many women of the middle and upper class, this realm was the in the sphere of the home.²² During the founding era, the home became the woman’s domain. According to Jean Bethke Elshtain, the family appeared to have somehow remained outside of the social-contract theory, and “if any institution

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¹⁹ Riley, Glenda pg. 80. I found this quote interesting. I thought it was important to include this quote from Jefferson to really display how the men of the era felt that women were physically incapable of participating in government. They viewed the build of women as a weakness and unable to withstand the challenges of participating in government.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

²¹ Ibid., p. 80

²² Ibid., p. 77
continued to bear some relationship to nature and to necessity, it was the family.\textsuperscript{23} During the American founding, there was a strong change in demographics among American women.

American women were waiting longer to get married, and with that the average size of families was declining.\textsuperscript{24} Because the average age of women getting married was rising, the amount of years that these women could bear children became limited. Thus causing, family sizes to decline. Women having children during the founding era faced many difficulties during childbirth, and although many women found contentment and satisfaction from having children, they were not scared of the consequences that may come from such a process including the possibility of their own death or the death of their child. “In completed families—that is, those in which the union was not broken by the death of one of the partners before the wife’s childbearing years were finished—white women could expect to bear five to seven live children.”\textsuperscript{25} It is important to note here that the emphasis shall be placed on “live children.” Women could expect to have several miscarriages, stillbirths, and deaths of infants during their childbearing years. Most women experienced anywhere from five to ten pregnancies of which approximately three to eight could expect to live.\textsuperscript{26} “Abigail Smith Adams, to take a prominent example, had four living children, a stillbirth, and a baby who died in infancy.”\textsuperscript{27}

The period after the Revolution led to many medical revolutions in the women’s health sector. Women began experimenting with birth-control devices in an effort to make their childbearing years something of which they could control rather than leaving it up to nature.\textsuperscript{28}

“The increasing use of contraception in the last two decades of the century, then can be seen as a

\textsuperscript{24} Riley 78
\textsuperscript{26} Norton, Mary Beth pg. 72
\textsuperscript{27} Norton, Mary Beth pg. 72
\textsuperscript{28} Riley, Glenda pg. 79
reflection of women’s improved status within marriage.” In 1763, Dr. William Shippen initiated medical training including courses in midwifery at the only hospital in America at that time, the Pennsylvania Hospital. Prior to this midwifery had been a practice studied and done by women through experience. Because it became a field that was offered through official medical training by courses, this opened the opportunity to men to be medically trained. As an effect of having men being trained in the field, developments such as instruments for delivery assistance, anesthesia, and the Cesarean section become commonly used.

Although these tools increased the success rate for live births and eased the process for women, young women faced the criticism and demands of their older generations when starting their own family. Abigail Adams “lamented her daughter Nabby’s repeated pregnancies, declared that her sister Elizabeth was “foolish” to start a “second crop” of children at the age of forty, and welcomed the news of a young relative’s miscarriage in 1800, believing that “it is a sad slavery to have children as fast as she has.” Children were revered during the Founding era, but it was a commitment that was not to be entered into lightly. Pregnancy was not welcomed for many reasons. The first reason is the risk to the health of the mother which has been previously discussed. Abigail’s sister, Elizabeth, was especially posed to risk due to her increased age and lack of medical assistance. Having children too young, too old, and repeatedly only increased the risk of dangers to mothers. “All white colonists appear to have been acquainted with women who died as a result of childbearing.” The risk was common and large. Deaths caused by childbearing became a common place of colonial life. It was a part of the form of life that they

29 Norton, Mary Beth p. 232.
30 Riley, Glenda p. 79.
31 Riley, Glenda p. 79.
32 Norton, Mary Beth p. 73-75.
33 Norton, Mary Beth p. 75.
experienced and happened regularly; however, because of the commonality, families feared they face an imminent loss of someone close to them either during or shortly following childbirth.

Childbearing was one of the principle duties of women of the Founding era; however, they continued their duty beyond the birth of their children to the rearing of their children should the child be blessed to live a full life. “Although American women were confined to the domestic realm, they occupied a lofty position…for women, owing to their domestic dominance, were vital to the workings of democracy.”

Tocqueville wrote: “No free communities ever existed without morals, and…morals are the work of women.” Because of the influence that they hold within the home “all that influences the condition of women, their habits, and their opinions has great political interest in my eyes.” Women had found their role in the republic of America and although that role had been confined to the home, they had unofficially been a distinct and vital role in the development and continuation of America. It became the responsibility of the women to instill the morals and character within their children, which would govern the future direction of the country.

A woman of the republic develops out of the education that she herself received from her mother. Her mother is the principle educator and developer as to how she will think, how she will act, and how she herself will be as a mother.

Long before the young American woman has attained the age of puberty, one begins to free her little by little from maternal tutelage; before she has entirely left childhood she already thinks for herself, speaks freely, and acts alone; the great picture of the world is constantly exposed before her; far from seeking to conceal the view of it from her, they uncover more and more of it to her regard every day and teach her to consider it with a firm and tranquil eye. Thus the vices and perils that society presents are not slow to be revealed to her; she sees them clearly judges them without illusion, and faces them without fear; for se is full of

34 Elshtain, Jean Bethke p. 159
35 Elshtain, Jean Bethke p. 159. Elshtain quotes Tocqueville’s Democracy in America (II, 198).
confidence in her strength, and her confidence seems to be shared by all those who surround her.\textsuperscript{37}

Mothers of the republic have trained their daughters, and as they grow, the mother releases the daughter from her safe control in order to allow them to view the world for what it is. Daughters have been taught how to think and act independently. Daughters have been educated in how to handle the vices of the world in order to prepare them to teach their children morals and avoid the vices of the world. The American mother does not create a disillusioned world for her daughter, but rather, she presents the world as it is and successfully prepares her to face the challenges of life and living in a world full of evil. Daughters stand alone with confidence and strength; prepared to handle life situations and think independently from anyone around them. It almost appears that the mothers of the republic have prepared their daughters for personal independence, should that opportunity be presented to them. Daughters of the republic have then been given the ability to be self-reliant and free thinking should they need to be; however, that is not what is expected of them. Throughout their lives, daughters of the republic would face challenges which would shake the foundations of what they believed and how they thought. Mothers of the republic instructed and prepared their daughters to face these challenges and gave them the strength and structure to avoid being shaken from their fundamental values and virtues.

Even within marriage, “the American woman never entirely ceases to be mistress of herself; she enjoys all permitted pleasures without abandoning herself to any of them, and her reason does not drop the reins although it often seems to let them dangle.”\textsuperscript{38} The American woman is equipped with reason as her guide. She is able to govern herself and think independently through this reason. The American woman participates in ventures, of which she

\textsuperscript{37} Tocqueville, Alexis de p. 563.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 564.
desires, but never permits vices to take control of her thinking. She allows herself to be challenged and form her own conclusions without being influenced by the evils of life.

Women do not enter into the bounds of marriage without choice. They are educated as to the challenges that they will face and the duties that they will hold.

The American woman, moreover, never falls into the bonds of marriage as into a trap set for her simplicity and ignorance. She has been taught in advance what is expected of her, and she freely places herself in the yoke on her own. She tolerates her new condition courageously because she has chosen it.39

American women do not see themselves as “slaves” who have been sold into the bondage of marriage. They have not been forced into marriage or coerced into it, but rather have been educated as to what is expected of them, and have chosen to enter into the confines of marriage. She does not find weakness or complaint within her new station in life, because she has chosen it. She does not enter into marriage lightly, but rather considers the implications and obligations that arise from such a commitment and happily enters into marriage with all of the expectations conveyed to her. American women are connected with their husbands and loyal to them.

Husbands “bring their companions with them and make them share the innumerable perils and miseries that always signal the beginning of such undertakings.”40 While John Adams’ was absent from home during the American Revolution, he wrote to Abigail “rouse your attention to the family, the stock, the farm, the dairy.”41 On April 11, 1776, Abigail wrote to John that “I hope in time to have the reputation of being as good a farmeresss as my partner has of being a good statesman.”42 Although John agreed to be a part of the American Revolution, the burdens of such an undertaking fell on Abigail as well. She was forced to perform as both the

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39 Tocqueville, Alexis de p. 566.
40 Tocqueville Alexis de p. 567.
42 Adams, Charles Francis p. 152.
matriarch and patriarch of the family, a challenge that her education as a young women in the revolutionary era had prepared her for. “It is therefore the girl who is found again beneath the features of the wife in the United States; the role has changed, the habits differ, the spirit is the same.”43 Underneath every American woman is the girl she once was. At any necessary moment, she has been prepared to resume her independent and self-sufficient role, and the American Revolution as well as the Founding era called upon the women of the Republic to do such a task. Each woman of the Republic retained the spirit of the young girl she once was in her youth.

In the household, men and women held different roles according to what they were educated for.

You do not see American women directing the external affairs of the family, conducting a business, or indeed entering the political sphere; but neither do you encounter any of them who are obliged to engage in the rough work of plowing or in any painful exertions that require the development of physical force.44

According to Tocqueville, women were well accustomed to the position which women held in the household and did not venture out of their traditional roles unless, as otherwise noted, called upon to do so by their husbands. Women were not seen participating in government in public, but rather used their political influence within the home. They left the external affairs and business to their husbands. To Tocqueville, it appears that American men and women have outlined the roles that each individual sex will participate in. American women are not accustomed to hard physical labor, and as Tocqueville notes later in that page, there is no family too poor to be the exception.

Tocqueville also discusses the way that Americans view women. “It is true that Americans rarely show women the ready attentions…but they always show by their conduct that they suppose them virtuous and delicate; and they have such a great respect for their moral

43 Tocqueville, Alexis de p. 567.
44 Tocqueville, Alexis de p. 574.
freedom that in their presence each watches his discourse carefully.”  

Women of the American republic are silently revered for their dedication, loyalty, and morality. They are respected and seen as delicate and fragile. American women are respected for the values they bring to the republic. It was a traditionally European thought which linked women and virtue. “Over the preceding century, prescriptive writers had frequently asserted that men would be virtuous only if women were, that the morals of the female members of a society automatically determined the morals of their male counterparts.”  

Further, if the female members of society were not virtuous, and instead were filled with vice, their male counterparts would be full of vice. Therefore, it was imperative for women of the American republic to practice virtue as the source of virtue for society according to the correlation that was being made.  

“Americans do not believe that man and woman have the duty or the right to do the same things, but they show the same esteem for the role of each of them, and they consider them as beings whose value is equal although their destiny differs.” Within the republic their roles may be different; however, they are still a vital part of the greater functionality of the whole. There is a mutual respect among husbands and wives for the role in which they contribute to the marriage. The husband is to command the external affairs and participate in the external political sphere, while the woman is expected to maintain the household and educate children as to their future responsibilities within the republic—the sons to serve a political role through participation in government and the daughters to prepare their sons for political activity and their daughters for the responsibility as a mother within the republic.

45 Tocqueville Alexis de p. 575.  
46 Norton, Mary Beth p. 243.  
47 Norton, Mary Beth p. 243.  
48 Tocqueville, Alexis de p. 576.
While the husband was actively participating in the external sphere of the family, the mother had assumed her role as the educator. “The mother plays an absolutely central role as the inculcator of democratic values in her young, values that they will need in a system characterized by the flexibility, participation, freedom, and the absence of an absolute rule.”49 The republic demands the participation of citizens to sustain existence. If there are no participants, the republic falls. It was the mother’s duty to instill the importance of political participation within her sons. It was her duty to prepare her daughters to combat the evils of vice and remain virtuous for they would have to educate their sons on how to be virtuous citizens. “Virtue must be not only “the national characteristic” but also the “regulator of the conduct of each “individual” in the republic.”50 At some points, writings would indicate that the fate of the republic “rested squarely, perhaps solely, upon the shoulders of its womenfolk.”51

The role of the republican mother was significant, and she was determined to fulfill it. Eliza Lucas Pickney wrote on her view of her role as a mother in the late 1740s by saying:

I am resolved to be a good Mother to my children…to pray for them, to set them good examples, to give them good advice, to be careful both of their souls and bodies, to watch over their tender minds, to carefully root out the first appearing and budings of vice, and to install piety, Virtue and true religion into them; to spair no paines or trouble to do them good; to correct their Errors whatever uneasiness it may give myself; and never omit to encourage every Virtue I may see dawning in them.52

The view of motherhood that was expressed by Eliza Lucas Pickney was the view that was largely accepted among white American women. The mothers wanted to serve as good role models and staples of morality for their young children. They felt that it was careful to correct the first showings of vice that small children may exhibit as it could either fuel future vice or

49 Elshtain 160
50 Norton, Mary Bet 243
51 Ibid., p. 243.
52 Ibid., p. 100 Quote included in the text
restrict vice. They wanted to show them the importance of faith and virtue as guides for life. In an effort to do this, they were willing to sacrifice themselves to provide for their children regardless of the pain or challenge that it may cause them. They wanted to cultivate the Virtue that was developing in their children and never cease to accentuate the importance of being virtuous and living morally. It was from her children that mothers of the republic reaped the joys and satisfaction of life.

During the founding of the republic, the view of children, as well as the way as to which they were to be raised shifted. “Americans came to view childhood as a discrete period in a person’s life, one that included maternal care, training in ideals and values, and specific paraphernalia.”53 Children would no longer be treated as miniature adults, but would rather been taught throughout their developmental years. They needed the tender care of their mothers who would also train them in the necessary ideas and values.

Prior to the Revolution, mothers held a pivotal role among their daughters. “Girls were told to “imitate” their mothers, to “try to emulate” and “equal” them.54 From their early adolescence until marriage girls were expected to serve as an assistant to their mother. Mothers advised their daughters. The loss of a mother or adult daughter caused anguish for each of them due to the close relationship that had been formed during their daughter’s youth years. During the first anniversary of the death of her mother, Abigail Adams wrote in her journal that the date “brought more than common depression of spirits.”55 Prior to the Revolution, the relationship between mothers and sons was rather distant. The mother was seen as the primary authority of the son until his toddler years concluded. Beyond that, the son was governed by his distant and

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53 Riley 79.
54 Norton, Mary Beth 98.
55 Ibid., p. 103.
demanding father. The Pre-Revolution “linguistic custom disclosed by the practice: men spoke of “my son” and mothers of “his Boys,” at the same time women wrote of “my Girl” and fathers of “your” daughters.”

After the American Revolution, “the stress upon women’s ability to inspire their children with patriotic sentiments helped to lead to a significant shift in emphasis in familial relationships.” It became the duty of women to instruct their sons on how to become loyal and patriotic within in this new republic. The treatment between mothers and sons and mothers and daughters became more equal rather than the more powerful mother-daughter relationship which had occupied pre-revolutionary families. “For the first time, women began to assume a didactic function with respect to their older male children, self-consciously instructing them to prepare for a future of serve to the republic.” Upon entering Princeton in 1783, Sarah Gibbes wrote to her son John her want of him to become not only, “a credit to your Family; but also an honor to your Country; that you may when yr Country calls in the hour of exigency rise up in her behalf.”

Many of the same sentiments of mothers are shared with their sons during the writings of the times.

Women of the republic did not seek to lose the femininity and delicacy that they had been accustomed to prior to the Revolution, instead they wanted to guarantee that there sphere within the home would be viewed as equal to the sphere of the man, outside of the home. They were not seeking to establish individual equality, but wanted their sphere to be revered with the same sort of respect that had been given the sphere of men. Abigail Adams wrote to her sister

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56 Norton, Mary Beth p. 95.
57 Norton, Mary Beth 95. “My son”: Robert Livingston to Gilbert Livingston, Dec. 19, 1779, Gilbert Livingston Papers, NYPL; “his Boys”: Debby Logan to [Mary Norris], May 28, 1794.
58 Ibid., p. 248.
59 Ibid., p. 248.
60 Ibid., p. 248. Sarah Gibbes to John Gibbes, Aug. 11, 1783, Gibbes-Gilchrist Papers, SCHS.
61 Ibid., p. 250.
Elizabeth Smith Peabody in 1799 saying “I will never consent to have our sex considered in an inferior point of light…let each planet shine in their own orbit. God and nature designed it so—if man is Lord, woman is Lordess—that is what I contend for.”

Men did not contest women fighting for their sphere to be equal for it was only solidifying what was common practice already. It only presented a stronger emphasis and distinction as to the separate realms of men and women. Men were the Lords of the political sphere and business while woman performed as the Loredess of the family and child rearing.

Prior to the Revolution, women of the colonies did not receive formal education. However, “In the new republic…the importance of female education was repeatedly emphasized. “The American’s vision of the ideal woman—an independent thinker and patriot, a virtuous wife, competent household manager, and knowledgeable mother—required formal instruction.”

Prior to the Revolution, colonial women could sufficiently live without knowing how to read or write. However, the Revolution has pointed out the errors of this thinking and left many women in a difficult predicament when their husbands left to fight and they had to run the household. Women of the republic needed to be literate not only for the instruction of their children, but also to prepare them for the challenges of assuming the entire household, internally and externally, should another conflict arise which called for the absence of the husband.

Women of the early republic were their children’s first and possibly only teachers, so it was imperative that they be able to instruct the future of America not only in the importance of Virtue and Patriotism, but also the teach them reading and writing which would be necessary for life. The skills build off of each other with reading being taught first followed by writing.

In some homes, the education process began very early with farm wife Sarah Snell Bryant

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62 Norton, Mary Beth p. 250.
63 Ibid., p. 256.
64 Ibid., p. 258.
recording that she starting teaching her sons Austin and Cullen at age two.\textsuperscript{65} The education of children extended beyond their basic skills. From the earliest of ages, children were treated with regard that they had some form of reason. Mary Smith Cranch wrote to her son, Billy, saying “When any thing was demanded of you the reason was given why it ought to be done.”\textsuperscript{66} The emphasis was placed on teaching children by example rather than in theory. Mothers of the Republic wanted their children to be independent thinkers and use reason to make intelligent and educated decisions. They wanted their children to understand why things had to be done by giving them the reason necessary behind it.

The role of the American developed and progressed from the pre-American Revolution era to the era of the new Republic. The role of the woman was ever changing, and the American woman was not afraid to embrace the new freedoms and opportunities that had been given to her. The American Revolution offered a new number of opportunities for women to express themselves and their political thoughts through participation in boycotts and declaring loyalties during the American Revolution. The American Revolution also created a new necessity for American women—a need to be capable to run the household including the family farm in the absence of the family patriarch. Never before had women of the American colonies been placed in such a situation, and instead of scouring in fear, they embraced the strength which they possessed and faced the challenge which was placed in front of them while their husbands were fighting for freedom.

Prior to the Revolution, childbirth and early childhood had been seen as a purely feminine sphere, which would transition depending on the child’s sex as he or she grew. Men governed their sons and women their daughters. But after the revolution, these relations

\textsuperscript{65} Norton, Mary Beth 258
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 236. Mary Smith Cranch is quoted as to have written this.
undertook a strong transition. The mother became the primary source of education for both sons and daughters. It became the role of women to teach their children to be virtuous in order to protect the safety of the republic. Tocqueville accredited women as to the source of virtue, for if women of the republic were virtuous, the men would also be virtuous. The American republic is a prime example of this sentiment. Women of the republic viewed their role as the teacher of virtue not only as a duty to their children but as a way to fulfill their political self within the republic. Abigail Adams wrote to her son John Quincy, then a student in England: “I would rather see you in a grave in the ocean you have crossed than to see you an immoral, profligate, or graceless child.”\(^67\) If women raised selfish and immoral children, they had failed the republic. And as Abigail Adams told John Quincy, they would rather see that child dead than see them cause any harm to the republic. Women of the republic were given one of the single most tedious and significant tasks of the early republic—they were charged with creating the next generation which would sustain what they had worked so hard to achieve. With the charge came a demand for training and education which would create a series of effects which would change the opportunities to women far beyond anything that could have been conceived by the founding generation of the American republic.

\(^67\) Riley 81
Chapter 2: Republican Motherhood Leaves the Home

Before the American Revolution, women did not question their role within politics; because they had never before been given the opportunity to participate in political activity. During the American Revolution, women were forced to prove their loyalty or face censure by those around them. After the experiences of the American Revolution, many women discovered that they were able to possess and act upon political principle; they too could participate in the political sphere. They had been able to successfully manage homes while their husbands were absent and, in addition, fulfill all of the duties of colonial women. The women of the American Revolution created the foundation for women to explore opportunities they were previously denied.

Although they were not explicitly written in or included during the writing of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, the women of early America had a duty to fulfill and they would fulfill this duty to the best of their ability. Within the households of the new American family, it became the responsibility of the mother to instill the ideals of the republic while the father was serving in an active political role. These mothers were to teach their sons the role of a man within the republic, the value of rights, and the importance of acting for the nation rather than for one’s self. She was also expected to teach her daughter how to be a good republican mother in order to teach the future generations. Mothers were the source of virtue, morals, and political duty to their children. Republican Mothers saw these responsibilities as a way to manifest and express their political selves; they were expected to accept their role and their early involvement in the political sphere while still remaining in the comforts and safety of home.
The educational duties of Republican motherhood in turn made the mothers’ own education a growing priority. Mothers were the primary educator, but the education that women were provided during the American Revolution and shortly after still left many women unable to read or write. It became necessary to develop an educational system which would assist young men and women in the development of their education in order to ensure the development of the republic. During the early to mid-19th century, America was consumed with the development of education. It was the view of many Americans that education would ensure the future of America and enable the country to grow productively in many different fields. 

Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman, visited America in the early portion of the 19th century. He was to study the prison systems. It was during this visit to America, he was also able to note and make record of the major differences between the American views of education which was in large contrast to the European view. In Europe, education posed a threat to society which could unravel hundreds of years of tradition. If a lower class citizen were to be educated in Europe, it could potentially upheave the social system and classes as well as challenge the reason behind the monarchies of which many of the European nations were governed. Education in Europe also posed a great threat to religion. There was difficult relationship between church and science. It was feared that should citizens study science and be educated they would refute the principles of religion. Tocqueville observed something quite different during his travels in America. “Everyone I have met up to now, to whatever rank of society they belong, has seemed incapable of imagining that one could doubt the value of education.”68 Americans did not see a danger in education, but rather, they viewed education as something that the citizens of the republic had a right to. Dangers such as an imbalance of social structure or threat to religion did

not exist. Citizens of America had a right to practice the religion of their choice without persecution. Every male citizen had a right to vote, and ensuring those voters were educated was only logical and in the best interest of the country.

Women faced many challenges in the right for education. While some felt it necessary to educate women in order to achieve the education of their sons as future statesmen of the republic, others were convinced of the inability of women to learn. Women were viewed as weak unintellectual beings. “Indeed, the more she used her heart rather than her mind the more feminine she was.”

To be called feminine was an insult and one that argued you were ruled by passion and heart rather than reason. In a republic in which reason was a foundational principle, the lack of reason proved one to be inferior to the citizens. Some even went as far to conduct research and studies as a means of proving that women’s intellectual capacity was greatly inferior to that of men’s due to the anatomy of a woman’s body. “Most authorities on anatomy and gynecology agreed that woman’s cerebral system was less well-developed, her nervous system better developed than man’s.”

It was argued that because her brain was less developed she was not able to possess the same intellectual capacity as men. It was also the belief of some that she was not able to understand or think as critically as men. Women were believed to have a stronger developed nervous system. They were believed to be ruled by their emotions and unable to separate emotion from logic which would make them arguably unable to serve as a positive and productive member of society. Another group argued that there was no need for women to learn because their domestic work did not demand it of them.

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70 Ibid., p. 71.
71 Ibid., p. 71-72.
Women struggled to find the appropriate outlet for their intellectual ability. Some quietly accepted the social qualms with women in education while others struggled to find a way to express their intellectual abilities. Margaret Fuller is an example of a woman who did not quietly accept the social role that she was expected to take. As a young girl, she decided that because she was unable to change her plain appearance, she would become clever. She very outwardly refuted the belief that women accept their station in life simply because men believed it was the only option. “She wanted, or at least she said she wanted, for woman to be free to develop as a human being, in whatever sphere she chose.” Margaret Fuller experienced persecution and ridicule for her, at this time, radical views. Many viewed her marriage, which would produce a child, as the saving grace to her reputation. Margaret Fuller died early as a result of a shipwreck.

Although not all women were as vocal about their opposition to limited opportunities for the education of women, there were others fighting a valiant fight, and giving women the opportunities they had been refused for the good of the nation and for the good of the American woman.

Arguments refuting the claim that women’s minds were smaller and therefore unable to handle the same academic capacity as men started surfacing as early as the 1810s. Advocates began coining the phrase “improved female education” as a way to reference what they were working towards and what they were hoping to achieve. Hannah Mather Cocker argued in *Observations on the Real Rights of Women*, written in 1818: “There can be no doubt that there is as much difference in the powers of each individual of the male sex as there is of the female: and

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72 Welter, 80.
73 Ibid., p. 80.
if they received the same mode of education, their improvement would be fully equal.”\textsuperscript{75} Women had the ability to learn at an equal capacity as men, but they were not given the opportunities or the chances. It was people such as Hannah Mather Crocker who pointed out the major flaws in the anti-intellectual argument. Women were not going to prove otherwise to the anti-intellectual arguments if they were never given the opportunities to learn. If women were to be given equal opportunities to education, they would be able to prove the anti-intellectual arguments wrong. Reformers also argued female education would be in the best interest of the nation because “motherhood demanded education if motherhood was to produce salutary adults.”\textsuperscript{76} The woman was not expected to take the place of the schoolmaster or deter from the education that children were to receive from a formal schooling, however, mothers were expected to utilize their mental structure and moral foundations to be a successful mother. These reformers questioned how mothers could be successful and serve the necessary role required of them if they were unable to receive an education to support the rearing of the future children of the nation.

Emma Hart Willard, who supported the advancement of female education and believed that women were of equal mental capacity, took these views to the New York legislature for state aid for women’s education in 1819.\textsuperscript{77} Willard had added the subjects of algebra, trigonometry, history, and geography to her Middlebury Seminary for women curriculum so that she could demonstrate women were capable of achieving in academically challenging subject areas. It was her belief that female education must be supported by the government as men’s education was provided for it to be considered “equal.”\textsuperscript{78} The New York legislature denied her appeal, and did not provide financial support for women’s education, but Willard persisted in other ways. In

\textsuperscript{75} Riley, Glenda 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition page 77  
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 77.  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 77.  
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 77.
1821, Emma Hart Willard opened the Troy Female Seminary in New York. The Troy Female Seminary was the first school in the United States to offer a high-school education to women. Although she had not been able to achieve financial support for female education through legislation, Willard was able to advance female education through her own productive means and perseverance.

Reformers had various philosophies of how they could advance female education. Scottish born Frances Wright concluded “whereas men establish their own pretentions upon the sacrificed rights of others, we do in fact impeach our own liberties, and lower ourselves in the scale of being.” Women and others who were being denied the right to an education were allowing men to constrict their rights and giving them permission to lower their abilities and therefore diminish the role which they could play in society. The advancement of female education was to Frances Wright, giving women the opportunity to gain access to a right that had been denied—a right to education.

Catherine Beecher was inspired by Frances Wright, and alongside her sister Mary, the two Beecher sisters ran the Hartford Female Seminary. In the 1830’s Beecher collaborated with William H. McGuffey on the McGuffey Readers. She developed coursework which would be compatible with the domestic sphere, such as domestic science, but would also be pertinent to the major academic structure of the times. This type of work utilized the accepted domestic sphere, but also advanced the education which women would receive. The Beecher sisters applied the advancement of education to a realm which society would be comfortable. Others, however, were not as conservative with their advancements.

79 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 78
80 Ibid., p. 78.
Other reformers began to explore the multitude of possibilities that existed within higher education for women. Oberlin, Ohio was known to be a utopian society and in 1833 founded Oberlin College, the first coeducational college in the nation. They not only felt there was warrant for female education, but argued that it was necessary for women to “enhance their powers through advanced education.” Oberlin College encouraged women to strive for academic success, and by allowing them to receive an education alongside men, in many ways, they argued that women were just as capable as men to learn academically. It allowed women the opportunity to exercise the equality that they possessed in the realm of academia.

Mary Lyons arose as one of the most identifiable reformers and advocates of female education. Lyons had been an educated woman; however, she did not feel as though her education was sufficient and did not meet the advanced curriculum that she had hoped to experience. In 1834, Lyons decided that she would pursue and eventually open her own educational institute that would specialize in the education of women. Lyons sought to create a school which would be “a residential seminary to be founded and sustained by the Christian public.” Lyons knew that she would not be able to achieve government funding for such a venture, so she appealed to a group which would be more supportive of her concept. The Christian public in many ways would be more receptive to the idea of female education because being literate would allow for Christian women to more diligently study The Bible and other works of faith. Lyons, although criticized, traveled unaccompanied and personally appealed to the public which she came into contact with for “five or ten dollars of hard-earned money,

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81 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 78. It appears as though Oberlin College has a history of being advanced concerning what is socially acceptable. Recently, they became the first college in the United States to offer co-habitant male and female rooms as a residence option to their students living on campus.
82 Ibid., p. 78.
collected by the slow gains of patient industry.” She was also aware that women would be more likely to assist other women in their pursuit of education and identified a target market of who she would solicit for the funds necessary to open the school which she desired. Mary Lyons felt as though she was to serve some ultimate purpose as she wrote: “My heart has so yearned over the adult female youth in the common walks of life, that it has sometimes seemed as if there was a fire shut up in my bones.” Lyons felt connected to these women who were searching for some alternate life to simple domesticity. They were searching for the means to develop, experience, and execute the intellectual ability which they knew they possessed. Lyons saw the progression of female education as a life goal and something she would continuously persevere to achieve. In 1837, Mary Lyons perseverance and dream came to fruition, and the first student of Mount Holyoke was enrolled. The three year course study consisted of courses in Latin, science, and anatomy. For $60 a term, students were able to pay for tuition, room, and board. By 1848, when Mary Lyon’s died, Mount Holyoke had attained a reputation as an outstanding teacher-training institution.

An effect of educating women included the idea that women could possess a role outside of the home. As Mount Holyoke did, many schools developed programs for female students to become specialized in teacher training or preparing their students to eventually form their own classrooms and instruct young students. As primary schools developed across the country, qualified teachers became a high demand and an ideal job for an unmarried woman. Families began to support the idea of their daughters serving as teachers because of the benefits that it would hold for the family. In most instances, these unmarried women would be boarded with a local family, and while she would pay them for her room and board, she would send the

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83 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition p. 78.
84 Ibid., p. 78.
85 Ibid., p. 78.
remainder of her income to her family to assist them in their finances. Teaching seemed a logical extension for women beyond the domestic sphere as it was a way in which they could express their moral compass and the tenderness which was identified as a trait of women. Reformers argued that for women to be successful teachers, it would be necessary for them to possess adequate training, therefore there would need to be improved education “not just for women but for women who would serve as teachers of the nation’s youth.” As the education of women expanded, the roles which women could play also expanded in a limited way. After it was perceived that women could serve as effective teachers in primary schools, women were able to gain access to this previously denied occupation. Although they were able to reach into fields that they had never before been able to work, they were still limited to a certain number of select fields.

Outside of education, women were experiencing new opportunities in other areas outside of the domestic sphere due to the vast expansion that came with industrialization. Industrialization called for a work force far beyond what could be filled simply by men alone. Women and children began filling positions in the factories that were to become a huge part of the American economy. Large numbers of people began to move off of their large farms and into cities in order to take these positions. They would no longer be reliant on the weather to determine the success of their crops which would in turn determine the success of their farming venture. Many found security in industrialization; however, it was not without its risks.

Many of the first factories to appear were specialized in the textile industry. It was the main goal of the factory to weave and spin yarn. Due to the dynamics of America at this time, many families were dependent on their family farms for not only their own food but also a surplus crop which could be sold for profit. Removing workers from the field threatened the

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86 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 79.
productivity and success which would eventually come from that crop, so men were very unlikely to be able to support an employment need in factories. The next available option would be the women who would be less of a necessity at home. It was also viewed that “it seemed natural for women, who had spun and woven in their homes, to continue their customary work in a new venue.” These women were not asked to perform tasks, which men would consider challenging or one which would develop a new skill; they were being asked to perform the same tasks which they had been performing since they had assumed their position as the woman of the household. Spinning was a task which was familiar to most American women, they were just asked to work in a factory rather than in their homes. One of our most famous founding fathers, Alexander Hamilton, noted that factory employment would make women “more useful than they otherwise would be.” These women were playing a pivotal role in their home by serving as the principal educator for the children of the republic and setting the moral standard; however, there was a need to be met, and women appeared to be the most accessible and suitable for this new position.

The already negative view of women in the household only deteriorated once the financial benefits of industrialization became apparent. Arguments for women working in factories increased and the appreciation for the role they played within the home diminished. Arguments, such as those made in the diary of George Washington, were made that “the portion of time of housewives and young women which were not occupied with family affairs could be

87 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 65
88 Ibid., p. 66. Alexander Hamilton advocated for the employment of women in his Report on Manufacturing of 1791 while he was serving as U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. He noted that women should work because the employment of women would guarantee the possibility of industrialization “without taking them from the fields.” It was the belief of Alexander Hamilton that the employment of women would support industrialization without sacrificing the success of agriculture.
profitably filled up.”

Not only were these women expected to maintain the household, rear the children, and uphold her position as the woman of the house, any spare time which she may have expected to be spent in the factory in order for the family to experience a more profitable income. The vigor of being an American woman increased during Industrialization; however, these women were determined to complete any task which was asked of them despite the hardships or challenges which it would cause them.

As industrialization grew, the demand for workers only grew. Thousands of young farm women in New England took these positions. They left their small family farms to move to mill towns, towns like Lowell, Massachusetts. Lowell, Massachusetts is just one example of many mill towns which existed throughout New England. In these towns, young farm women would reside together in company-owned boardinghouses. They would work twelve to fourteen hours a week, while watching two or more machines, and make about two dollars a week. Many of these girls sent part of their small pay home to their families. These earnings may have been supplemental to the family income which supported the ability of brothers to stay at home and work on the farm, or the brother may be able to attend college, paid for by their sister’s earnings.

In the beginning, working in the factories had its benefits. These early workers enjoyed many benefits including an independence and distance from their families. They were given access to libraries in which many enjoyed reading and writing for The Lowell Offering. As the success of industrialization began to affect the American economy, there was an increased demand of productivity which then created a need for an improved and increased work pace.

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89 Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 66.
90 Ibid., p. 66.
91 Ibid., p. 66. The Lowell Offering was a company-sponsored literary journal in which the Lowell workers had the opportunity to write articles for the journal.
Wages failed to reflect the increased demands on the Lowell workers and the other “mill girls.” Conditions were degenerating quickly. The once comfortable boardinghouses had become overcrowded. Work hours had increased. The items available in the company store were increasing in price. An opportunity which had once offered so many benefits to young women seeking alternative options or a form of independence had transformed into an unsafe and uncomfortable environment.⁹²

In 1824, a group of women, frustrated and angered by the deteriorating working and living conditions, sought a change in the form of protest. Their complaints were low wages and bad conditions. These women protested by walking out of a mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Many other similar protests, also known as “turnouts,” occurred in other areas. These protests were unable to make any impact and proved to be unsuccessful in large part due to the large source of workers. The amount of young women willing to work in these New England factories was not limited. An increase in Irish immigrants, during the late 1830s, provided even more of a source of potential labor. These Irish immigrants were willing to cross protest lines and replace the women on strike. The “mill girls” were also at a disadvantage because they were unable to support labor organizations and denied the knowledge of the important avenue of power of office holding.⁹³

There was a work force of women who needed the money to support the livelihood of their families, and as long as this supplemental income was necessary, they would endure the harshest of working conditions. By 1828, nine out of ten textile workers in New England were women, many of these immigrants.⁹⁴ Almost 60 percent of young, single Irish women worked,
with German and other groups following similar employment patterns. These women made up the workforce in textile factories, cotton mills, the needle trades, and shoe factories. These women were seen as disposable; they could be hired or fired as the management saw fit because there was always another woman willing to take the previous’s position.

During the beginning of industrialization, these women continued working in these conditions because it was necessary for their family. These women felt they had a role to play. It was vastly different from the role of Abigail Adams; however, the purpose was the same—for the betterment of the family and the betterment of the country. However, this view began to change with time. As women became isolated from their families, they became less connected to the greater whole and placed more of an emphasis on improving their immediate situation. These women had emerged and separated themselves from the sphere of domesticity. Across time, they lost their sense of national pride. They had been deprived of the knowledge of labor unions, the power that was possessed in public office, and lacked a general knowledge in human rights. Instead, they fought through the methods of which they were familiar. They protested. If the protest was not successful, they would be replaced and forced to move on to the next mill town. As Riley notes, “Because such issues as education, property ownership, and the right to vote had little relevance to their lives, such women did not form the basis of a women’s rights campaign. Instead, they provided the nucleus of the emerging American labor movement.”

Industrialization changed women in America forever. Women were taken away from their homes as young women and given an independence that they or their mothers had never known before. An emphasis was not placed on their individual education, even though some of these women paid for the education which would be received by their brothers. The emphasis

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96 Ibid., p. 67.
97 Ibid., p. 68.
was placed on them to provide some sort of income, regardless of how small it may be. These women had a role to fill within their families which permitted them to attain their goal from some distance. Chosen because their labor would not detract from the amount of men in the fields, women were the unlikely successor in industrialization. They had not been chosen for industrialization because their talents would be favorable for the work; they had been chosen because they were the most expendable. American society never imagined the strength and independence which would be created within these women because of their experiences. Their biggest failure lies in their inability to tap into their strength and see the power that would exist should they establish that they have rights as laborers. Had they been able to establish this right, they would have been able to successfully fight for higher wages and better working conditions. In the end, it was more important for them to earn the money that was requested of them than to challenge the system that lay before them. Industrialization produced a woman that had never before existed in American society.

America was expanding in a variety of ways in the mid-19th century—through education, industrialization, and westward expansion. There were demands for women to receive a suitable and acceptable education that would allow them to serve as teachers. Industrialization was changing the American economy by taking an emphasis off of agriculture and placing it on the value of industry. Women assumed the positions available to them because it was expected of them. Outside of industrialization, America was also experiencing another new found growth—westward expansion. The area on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains promised fertile ground and boundless opportunities to many families, the benefits that were possible greatly outweighed the potential risks. People traveled west for many reasons. Some came for money, some for opportunity, and others simply for a place to call their own.
During the first part of the nineteenth century, settlers traveled to inhabit states which would later become Illinois, Missouri, Florida, and Texas.\textsuperscript{98} As it moved to the mid part of the nineteenth century, settlers began to expand farther west by crossing the Mississippi River entering into Iowa. By the mid 1830’s the Oregon Trail began to take shape in migrants’ pursuits of areas such as Oregon and California.\textsuperscript{99} In 1836, while serving as missionaries, Eliza Hart Spalding and Narcissa Whitman became the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains.\textsuperscript{100}

In most instances, the men of the family had decided that the family would pursue opportunities in the west. In these cases, women did not have the option to refuse. Instead, wives and daughters would pack the families belongs which could be taken with them and sell off all that was not necessary. The money could prove useful on their journey. During his visit to America, Alexis de Tocqueville observed the behavior of the western settlers:

They bring their companions with them and make them share innumerable perils and miseries that always signal the beginning of such undertakings. I often met young women at the utmost limits of the wilderness who, after having been raised in the midst of all the delicacies of the great cities of New England, had passed almost without transition from the rich dwellings of their parents to leaky huts in the middle of a forest. Fever, solitude, and tedium had not broken the springs of their courage. Their features seemed altered and faded, but their look was firm.\textsuperscript{101}

The wives and daughters to these settlers were forced into very dangerous and insecure situations; however, they did not deny their husbands or families their loyalty. In no way had they been prepared for frontier life. The majority of settler women had grown up in New England cities where there were shops, fashion, society, and a civilization. They were abruptly moved from the comforts and familiarity of home for the opportunities that existed in the west.

\textsuperscript{98} Riley, Glenda 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition p. 91.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p. 92
\textsuperscript{101} Tocqueville, Alexis de. \textit{Democracy In America} page 567.
Diseases were a large threat to those traveling westward. After traveling in harsh conditions, extreme weather, and in an uncomfortable wagon, the lack of sleep would wear down the travelers, making them even more susceptible to fever, typhoid, and cholera. Nearly one in ten who set out on the Oregon Trail did not survive due to these diseases or the accidents that occurred.\(^{102}\)

Despite the hardships they faced, many found joy in their experiences. These women were separated from their friends, sisters, and mothers, although journal entries would tell of the family, friends, neighbors, and new friends in which they would interact with while on their journey. They tell of songs and storytelling. While on their journey there were great celebrations of marriages and births.\(^ {103}\) Tocqueville noted, “I do not doubt that these young American women had gathered from their early education the internal force they made use of then.”\(^ {104}\) These women had an internal drive that allowed them to endure such hardships. Even though others may have doubted the strength and endurance that a woman may possess, these women proved otherwise. They endured the same challenges and struggles that their husband endured while possibly raising a family in such strenuous conditions. They knew what was asked of them and the accepted the challenges which would come from fulfilling their role.

During their travels, these women sought the comforts of routine and what was usual to them—to retain their true womanhood. Kitturah Belknap is an example of one such woman who recorded in her journal while traveling to Iowa that she was proud of her “housekeeping.”\(^ {105}\) Many viewed this journey as a transition rather than a completely new beginning. They used the time of their travels to hone their domestic skills, for if it was more challenging to maintain their

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\(^ {103}\) Oregon-California Trails Association

\(^ {104}\) Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy In America* page 567

\(^ {105}\) Riley, Glenda 2nd Edition page 93
domestic skills on such a treacherous journey, once they were settled, it would appear simpler. One woman wrote, “I never thought about its being hard. I was used to things being hard.” A group of these women had come from farms in which they were somewhat used to a struggle and working. They took the view that this journey was not a new challenge but rather it was a continuing challenge in a different form.

After the journey had ended, and the emigrants had arrived at their destination, the challenges took a different form. There was solitude in the wilderness that would prove difficult to many who had been accustomed to the New England social life. Their new homes were hand made by their husbands from the materials which could be found in the area surrounding their new homestead which could include a lean to, tar paper shack, sod hut or log cabin. Instead of having several bedrooms, a kitchen, and parlor, they were now residing in a one room cabin. These settler women turned their ambitions and energy to making their log cabin a home. Depending on the region which they settled, they could face a variety of weather conditions ranging from scorching sun to snowflakes on the blankets. They found ways to make their homes feel like home whether that meant hanging quilts to signify room divisions or hanging newspaper on the walls as wallpaper. Women settlers were determined to make their log cabins their new western home. In addition to their household tasks, frontierswoman made candles, clothing, and soap. They also gave birth to many children of which they also educated and trained as a labor force.

Many frontiers women noted that within 2 years of arriving the extreme hardships had ceased and they felt as though they had a resemblance of civilization again. At this point, many

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107 Ibid., p. 93.
108 Ibid., p. 94.
109 Ibid., p. 94.
were able to move out of their log cabins and into homes. Also with the large amount of people traveling west, towns began springing up across the country which provided churches and schools.\textsuperscript{110} Women left the fields as soon as they could for they preferred the work of the home, often limiting themselves to the house, garden, and barn.\textsuperscript{111}

Contrary to popular belief, the western settlers did not establish laws which would favor the participation of women in government. When Indiana applied for statehood in 1815, women could not make wills, convey property, or control their own incomes.\textsuperscript{112} It wouldn’t be until the 1840s that Indiana would pass legislation protecting married women’s property and started discussing the possibility of women voting. In 1848, New York passed the “Married Women’s Property Act” which granted women the ability to own and regulate property “as if she were a single woman.”\textsuperscript{113} This document became the model used by other states for similar legislation.\textsuperscript{114}

Women of the west were in a constant battle to turn their log cabins into homes even going as far as to place newspaper on the walls in some sort of resemblance to wallpaper. They sought to fulfill a role which had been established for them. They faced many challenges and struggles including being removed from the comforts of home; however, they found a strength which few knew they possessed in order to persevere through the difficult situation of living without civilization. They stood true to their moral convictions and the roles they felt they played in the home buy educating their children and maintaining a home. Tocqueville wrote: “It is therefore the girl who is found again beneath the features of the wife in the United States; the

\textsuperscript{110} Riley, Glenda 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition page 94.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{114} Law Library of Congress
role has changed, the habits differ, the spirit is the same.”\textsuperscript{115} Underneath every frontierswoman is the same spirited New England girl she once was. She may be challenged beyond what others believe her to be capable of handling; however, it is her spirit and her pride of duty that will permit her to persevere.

The role of women expanded to the credit of education, industrialization, and westward expansion. It was during these times that American women faced a time of re-definition and understanding. Women were in a constant search for “True Womanhood,” however, no one was able to identify a woman who exemplified such a concept or truly identify or define “True Womanhood.” It became a concept which each individual woman defined for herself based upon her view of society’s expectations. It was not until later generations, that “True Womanhood” became the way to identify this generation. Women of the early nineteenth century were restricted by the accepted belief that they were feeblener in mind than men and therefore unable to learn to the same capacity. Those who had the ambition to achieve more were persecuted, ridiculed, and looked down upon. An American woman seeking an education was not common and it wasn’t until a few women had successfully achieved it had they found a role within society. These women could serve as educators and teachers, a position which was not too far of a stretch outside the sphere of domesticity.

Another group of women looked to fill a void which existed because there was a hesitation to remove men from the fields of family farms. Industrialization was booming in American and there was a need for a labor force. Young women were the most apt to take these positions. They were not confined to a family, and in many ways could assist the families by providing a supplemental income. “Mill girls” developed a sense of self-reliance. Being away from their families, they became more reliant on the other women they were boarding with rather

\textsuperscript{115} Tocqueville, Alexis de. Democracy In America page 567
than the family back home. As working conditions degenerated, hours increased, and pay remained meager at best, these women persevered because this was their livelihood. They were unable to pay for labor organizations, and uneducated to the powers which could work against these businesses. As immigrants became a part of the work force, the effectiveness of protests diminished because women could easily and readily be replaced. The “Mill girls” were a new generation of working American women.

Yet another form of American women emerged from the early nineteenth century. Frontiers woman required an internal inextinguishable flame in order to be successful in the west. They would face challenges beyond anything their New England experiences would ever prepare them for. They would seek to establish some sort of resemblance of a society and a normal life of what they were accustomed in a world which was very different from what they were used to. They felt a duty to their families to provide strength. They bore many children and provided them with an education and taught them how to be laborers necessary in the environment of which they lived in.

All three groups of these women possess one like characteristic despite all of their obvious and distinct differences—perseverance. This trait was not lost on a woman initially denied education despite her abilities would prove she was more than capable, the “mill girl” who was sent away from home to earn money for the family and in the process found her own identity, or the frontiers woman who would be settling and creating the new America. Perseverance was a trait which was not lost on the generation before these women such as Abigail Adams and the founding mothers. They too experienced their own kind of perseverance, but it was relative to the family and identifying the role which they would play in this new nation. Women of the early nineteenth century dedicated their perseverance to the exploration of
the possibility of roles that women could play beyond the household. The next generation of
women would find a way to incorporate the perseverance and passion of the Founding Mother’s
along with the opportunities which the early nineteenth century American woman had received
to establish the way in which women could use their boundless strengths to serve as the moral
compass of not only their families, but also the nation through active political participation. They
began to apply their education, knowledge, experience, and their values to topics such as slavery
and women’s rights. The role of women in America was evolving.
Chapter 3: The Emergence of the Women’s Rights Movement

During the founding era of the United States, women’s involvement in this new republic was called to question, and many wondered the extent women would be involved in American politics. No mention was made regarding the individual rights or lack of rights of women during this era; they were left undetermined. Because women were not given a clear role in American politics, they sought to fulfill their need for political activity elsewhere, in a place that was comfortable and to which they were accustomed—the home. American women perceived it as their duty to educate their children and the children of the nation regarding their duties as citizens of the republic. The children of the republic, in particular the children of Republican Mothers, were taught to believe in the power of the representative government, to cherish and protect their liberties, and to actively participate in the government to which they belonged. American women perceived it as their duty to properly educate the children on the role of government in order to protect the republic and guarantee its survival and sustainability. In order to better prepare for this role, many sought the expansion of education for women so that they could serve as beneficial and proper teachers. As women proved successful and the position was perceived to be a natural extension of the household sphere, young women were placed in community schools as teachers in order to better serve the educational needs of the American republic. Women would serve in these roles until they were married.

Education was just one area in which American women extended the ideals of republican motherhood. In another part of the nation, frontierswomen were establishing the new America. They were not only educating their children, but they were civilizing the west. In a place that had never been governed, it was the responsibility of the frontierswomen to assist in the development of society. Upon arriving in the West, these women sought to preserve any form of civilization for their children and families, whether that meant hanging newspaper on the walls for wallpaper
of hanging blankets to create individual rooms within their small cabins.\textsuperscript{116} As the frontierswomen expanded their families, it became the responsibility of the mother to educate her children due to the unavailability of formal schooling in the early west to not only enable their children to receive and adequate education but also to allow them to read the Bible.\textsuperscript{117} Frontier women also saw the use they could be within the home, and as soon as it was possible, they restricted their work to the home, barn, and garden.\textsuperscript{118}

As industrialization became a major facet of the American economy, women assumed yet another role outside the home. Many Americans of the time were hesitant to pull their sons out of the fields because that could potentially lead to a diminishing productivity of the crops, so they sent their young daughters. These young women experienced an independence which had never been known by women in American society. Mill workers lived free from their families’ direct control, but were still required to supplement the family income by sending a portion of their income home. Beyond that, these young women largely governed themselves—they were not confined to a husband and a family.

Each new generation of women learned from and built upon the foundations of the previous generations of women. Each previous generation created a path of which the next generation could continue to explore their rights and experiment with the role of women in American government. By the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century a new generation of women had emerged. A generation of women, who wanted to officially expand their role not only within American society, but also American government, had appeared. “Although the ebb and flow of this activism varied across party and region, it spread with a consistency that surprised even

\textsuperscript{116} Riley, Glenda p. 94.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 94.
women.”¹¹⁹ These women had been educated by their mothers to believe that they could make a difference in the society they lived in, and that they could serve a positive role in that same society. There are also several other circumstances that emerge from female political activists. From these women, a large number were usually the firstborn child without male children in the family or male children many years younger than the daughter.¹²⁰ It has also been observed these women felt as though “the girl and her father develop an extraordinarily close relationship, as part of which she feels as though she must compensate him for the son she is sure he wished her to be.”¹²¹ These women felt as though there was a challenge to be faced and an ability to be proven. As America struggled with the morality of slavery, these women rose to meet the challenges that existed. Their intent was to serve as the moral standard of America. Although these women came from a variety of locations, classes, and backgrounds, they were united in the common belief that women were entitled to the same liberties as the male citizens of America and that they too could serve as an influential and positive participant of the American republic.

Americans were in search for reform, and many women saw this as their opportunity to become involved in the American political system beyond what had been permitted previously.

As the calls for reform increased, the women of America were portrayed as the “Moral Keepers” of American society. Mrs. S. E. Farley, as it appeared in Letters to Mothers published in 1838, wrote, “As society is constituted, Domestic and Social Claims on Woman, the true dignity and beauty of the female character seem to consist in a right understanding and faithful

¹²¹ Welter, Barbara, p. 6.
and cheerful performance of social and family duties.”

Women’s expectations for behavior and in the home were shaped by the examples set forth in popular publications. There was an increase in women’s publications such as *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, in which editor Sarah Josepha Hale exhibited her foundation for women as the moral keepers of the home by writing: “He must work—the world subduing/Till it blooms like Eden bright/She must watch—his faith renewing/From her urn of Eden light.” According to Hale’s writings, it was the duty of the American woman to maintain a moral standard within in her home. It was her role to serve as the steadfast moral character in which her husband could be reminded of his values as he ventured from the home in pursuit of business. The American wife was a fixture of values and morals for the American home which was demonstrated through the literature which many women of America were reading. The American wife was given ideals, of which she was to attain, and the literature was creating a mold for the personalities and characteristics American women were to possess.

The way in which American women served as moral guardians varied among each individual woman. Some argued that women of purity were “the true pole-star which is to guide humanity aright in its long, varied, and perilous voyage.” These women argued that women could serve from their homes as a moral “pole-star,” influencing and guiding their families. Hale, however, argued for an extension of the “sphere of the home” by increasing the activity which women had as teachers, missionaries, and medical practitioners. These roles were a natural

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123 Riley, Glenda 100 This particular quote was quoted by Glenda Riley and originally appeared in Hale’s *Godey’s Lady’s Book* in 1847.


125 Riley, Glenda 100
outgrowth of women’s domestic duties, as many women served in these capacities while completing their household tasks.

As the literacy of American women increased, women’s literature expanded in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s to meet the demand for literature which would be pertinent to the American housewife. Caroline Lee Hentz, who was first published in the 1830s, began as the primary wage owner in her home after undertaking writing full time due to the unfulfilled business ventures of her husband. 126 Her storylines consistently included a strong, decisive, and moral heroine who rescued ill, weak, and immoral men.127 Another prominent female author of the times was E.D.E.N. Southworth, whose literature was characterized by the absence of men. Southworth removed them from the situation by sending them off to war or in the pursuits of younger pretty women in order to demonstrate the resilience and independence of the women they left behind.128 If the man returned, the heroine would without question take him back because he was unable to function without her moral guidance.129 The heroines in the stories of Hale and Southworth were the goal to which American women aspired. They represented the morality, understanding, and loyalty of the proper American woman.

These aspirations are characterized by the phrase, “The Cult of True Womanhood.”

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Put them all together and they spell mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power.130

126 Riley, Glenda 101 Caroline Lee Hentz was first published during the 1830s in Godey’s Lady’s Book which has been referenced above.
129 Ibid., p. 101.
130 Welter, Barbara 21
Each of these attributes was present in the literature accessible to the American woman. These women were constantly striving to achieve “True Womanhood” and the heroine of the stories they read were the inspiration for their diligence to morality. They were given a character of a novel which possessed all of the qualities which they were expected to possess. The heroines of these novels served as role models and the standard by which they were to judge themselves. Literature proved a very powerful tool in the 1830s when determining the standard by which an American woman was to attain.

The “Morality” argument brought forth several unforeseen effects on the role of women in American society. Not only was there an expansion of publication for women, but as has been discussed there was an expansion of female authors. Although the women portrayed in these stories stood as pillars of morality and values, the men of which they sought to instill their moral wisdom on were depicted as sinful, immoral, and in need of reform. With these generalizations being made regarding the character traits of the individual sexes, the women characters were presented as the superior being—a being which could protect society from evil.

From this argument arose a large variety of interpretations regarding the ability of women to participate in the political sphere by utilizing their morality as a positive influence on the law and lawmakers. The moral guardianship argument served as a foundation for the arguments that women must understand politics and therefore can influence lawmakers prudently. It also gave justification to the concept of forming charity organizations which would permit women to

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131 Riley, Glenda 102.
132 Ibid., p. 102.
133 Ibid., p. 102.
134 Ibid., p. 102.
serve the poor by assisting their needs and serving as a positive example.\textsuperscript{135} Women were able to use the moral guardianship argument to insert themselves into any realm of society in which piety and righteousness may serve as a positive attribute or influence.\textsuperscript{136}

American society was undergoing feminization. Attributes which had been attractive in men such, as aggression and economic success, became less attractive as characteristics such as piety, righteousness, honesty, and truth became necessary for success in American society. As values that were viewed to be possessed by women, it was these characteristics that enabled women to acquire prestige and recognition within American society. They always had a role, however, the dedication with which they performed their daily tasks and the morality that they were perceived to have was never before recognized. “Made conscious of themselves and their status by the work…and made aware of the needs of other human beings through participation in many reform movements to an effort to improve their own status as a prerequisite to their real effectiveness in any social work.”\textsuperscript{137} As the womanly traits of morality took a place in American society, so did the women themselves.\textsuperscript{138}

Contrary to popular belief, not every woman in America was a “feminist” or worked towards the advancement of the rights of women in America. Some women were content with their position in the home, and did not see the necessity of challenging the American political system. Other women did not want to stretch themselves politically beyond what had been socially acceptable for women. They had been taught to be submissive towards their fathers, husbands, and brothers and therefore, feared any repercussions that may result in their

\textsuperscript{135} Riley, Glenda 102
\textsuperscript{136} Riley, Glenda 102
\textsuperscript{138} Riley, Glenda 102
involvement in the women’s rights reform movement. “In all her roles, [woman] accepted submission as her lot. It was a lot she had not chosen or deserved. As Godey’s said, ‘the lesson of submission is forced upon the woman.’” Upon entering into the family, a woman had certain expectations placed upon her and she was expected to be complacent with these expectations. In many households, the woman was chosen as the moral guardian; however, her opinion was only welcome when it had been asked for.

From the women’s journals it almost appears that the woman’s role as the moral guardian was not to interfere and protect against sinful or immoral behavior, but rather, it was to remind them of their moral foundation and return them to morality after they had already sinned. Some speculated that a woman’s life was “To suffer and to be silent under suffering seems the great command she has to obey,” while others referred to a woman’s life as “a series of suppressed emotions.” A woman faced severe criticism if she were to act or express any thought that may seem immoral.

So who were these women who emerged from the role of submissive house wife to challenge the socially acceptable and reform the rights of women? The profile of the early reformers was not overly varied or of stark contrast. The majority of these participants were women, however, men were not excluded and a number of them actively participated in the reform movements of the mid-19th century. Women of the reform movement, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott had been educated beyond what was typical for the era. These educational opportunities were derived from their upbringing. All of these women had been raised in upper-middle and high society families. Their fathers were businessmen, bankers, or

139 Welter, Barbara 30.  
140 Ibid., p. 31. As quoted from “Woman,” Godey’s Lady’s Book, II (Aug. 1831), 110  
141 Ibid., p. 31. As quoted from George Burnap in Sphere and Duties of Woman, p. 172.
lawyers—all prestigious and well known in their communities. Each of these women had taken advantage of the opportunities that were given to her—some openly and some in secret.

Lucretia Mott was born to Thomas and Anna Coffin on January 3, 1793 on the island of Nantucket on southeastern coast of Massachusetts. At the time of her birth, Nantucket was recovering from the American Revolution. They had remained neutral during the war, mostly because of the pacifist beliefs of the Quaker religion and also in an effort to maintain their successful whale industry; however, they were unable to maintain this neutrality and had endured the hardships caused by the war. Her family was very prestigious, not only in Nantucket, but also across New England as active members of the community including several governors, judges, and other officeholders. Her father made his livelihood by being a captain on his own whaling ship, which caused him to be away from his family for up to two years at a time. While Thomas was away, Anna maintained a small store selling “East India goods.” The absence of her husband placed many demands on Anna that were not considered normal for the era including the maintenance of the store as well as the authority to handle the family business both privately and publicly. It was evident of the impact which Anna Coffin had on her daughter witnessing her self-sufficiency as Lucretia later wrote:

I can remember how our mothers were employed while our fathers were at sea...At that time it required some money and some courage to get to Boston. [The women] were obliged to go to that city, make their trades, exchange their oils and candles for dry goods, and all the varieties of a country store, set their own price, keep their own accounts; and with all this, have very little help in the family to which they must discharge duties.

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144 De Angelis, Gina, p. 15. The text also references that Lucretia Mott was related to several notable people in American History including the reported founder of the Underground Railroad, Vestal Coffin, founding father Benjamin Franklin.
145 De Angelis, Gina, p. 16.
146 Faulkner, Gina, p. 17.
147 De Angelis, Gina, p. 17. Lucretia Mott’s words appear as a quote within the text, but the original location of the writing is not referenced.
Anna influenced her daughter and inspired Lucretia by performing the duties necessary for the success of their family. She witnessed a courageous and dedicated mother which led the example for Lucretia.

The young Lucretia had not only received an education in the duties and responsibilities of a mother, but she also had the opportunity to receive a formal education from the Quaker Society of Friends of which her family belonged as well as the Nantucket school which the majority of the children in the community attended. Similar to the other children at the Nantucket school, Lucretia learned handwriting, basic mathematics, as well as basic poetry and literature. The school emphasized piety and morality in their lessons.\textsuperscript{148} The education that she received from the Quaker faith taught her that “all people—male, female, white, black—are spiritual equals. Quakers believe that each person has an Inner Light—that God resides in every man’s and woman’s soul and that every person communicates directly with God.”\textsuperscript{149} During their services, called Meetings, “The people sit in silence contemplating God…If a person—either male or female, a radical notion at the time at the time—speaks well and frequently, the Quaker elders might confer on him or her the title of minister.”\textsuperscript{150} Quakers challenged the boundary lines of society and acted in accordance with their faith.

The Nantucket Quakers had opposed slavery as early as 1716 while the Society of Friends became the first organization in the world to ban slavery in 1775. The abolitionist movement depended on those who believed in putting an end to slavery, many of which were Quakers.\textsuperscript{151} Like other Quaker children, Lucretia Mott had been taught to hate slavery.\textsuperscript{152} Lucretia’s interactions with slaves during her youth were limited and infrequent because of the

\textsuperscript{148} De Angelis, Gina, p. 18.  
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 18.  
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., p. 18.  
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 19.  
\textsuperscript{152} Faulkner, Carol pg 18.
rarity on the Nantucket; however, she did come into contact with several free blacks who came to Nantucket in search of work on the whaling vessels.\textsuperscript{153} From a young age, Lucretia was outraged by the injustice of slavery, although her primary interaction with the “peculiar institution” had been from school books and she had never witnessed slavery in person.\textsuperscript{154} This was only the beginning of Lucretia Coffin Mott’s involvement in the reform movement.

In 1804, after Thomas Coffin had returned to Nantucket after a three year absence in which his ship had been captured by Spaniards off the coast of South American and he had been assumed dead, Thomas decided to depart from a career on the seas and begin merchant life in Boston, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{155} In Boston, the Coffin family faced the decision of schooling for their children—they had the wealth to afford private school, but Thomas wanted to avoid the development of “pride and superiority” so he decided that a public school which would encourage “democratic principles” would be more beneficial for the Coffin children.\textsuperscript{156} At the age of 13, Lucretia was sent to Nine Partners, a Quaker boarding school in Dutchess County, New York, along with her sister Eliza, in order to continue her education.\textsuperscript{157} Nine Partners worked to achieve an equal curriculum among boys and girls, a unique environment for the era; they received the same education in reading, writing, math, accounts, and grammar.\textsuperscript{158} The Nine Partner school board was compiled of male and female members of New York Yearly Meeting.\textsuperscript{159} Student’s attire was to be in conjunction with the Quaker lifestyle—simple and practical.\textsuperscript{160} During her time at Nine Partners, Lucretia was known for her personality and her

\textsuperscript{153} Faulkner, Carol p. 19.
\textsuperscript{154} De Angelis, Gina p. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{155} Faulkner, Carol p. 24.
\textsuperscript{156} De Angelis, Gina p. 22.
\textsuperscript{157} Faulkner, Carol p. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{158} Faulkner, Carol p. 27.
\textsuperscript{159} Faulkner, Carol p. 27.
\textsuperscript{160} De Angelis, Gina p. 22.
study habits—a top student among both boys and girls.\textsuperscript{161} By 1808, she had gained the position as an assistant to Deborah Rogers, the head female teacher.\textsuperscript{162} At the age of fifteen, Lucretia had mastered the academic curriculum offered at Nine Partners and began the transition from student to teacher.\textsuperscript{163}

It was during a break away from school, while visiting the family of friend and fellow teacher Sarah Mott that Lucretia’s life would change forever. It was there that Lucretia Coffin met James Mott, Sarah’s twenty year old brother who was also a teacher at Nine Partners.\textsuperscript{164} Despite their difference in personalities, Lucretia being very lively and outgoing while James was known to be quieter in nature, a deep friendship developed.\textsuperscript{165} After Lucretia’s family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Thomas Coffin required assistance to maintain his store and sought the help of James Mott. Both families approved of their close friendship, and in April 1811, James and Lucretia were married in a simple Quaker ceremony beginning their lives together.\textsuperscript{166}

Lucretia, even as a child, was vivacious, studious, and lively. These qualities were not subdued after entering into marriage. After giving birth to her first child, Anna, in August 1812, Lucretia was seen riding in a carriage just a week after childbirth.\textsuperscript{167} This was entirely against customs of the time and Lucretia was “classified among the Indians for so rash an act.”\textsuperscript{168} As the harsh economic times began to take their effect on the Mott family, James began to turn his attention to opportunities beyond Philadelphia. In 1814, the young couple moved to Mamaroneck

\textsuperscript{161} De Angelis, Gina pg 23. 
\textsuperscript{162} Faulkner, Carol pg 33. 
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p. 33. 
\textsuperscript{164} De Angelis, Gina pg 24. 
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p. 24. 
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., p. 25. 
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p. 27. 
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p. 27.
along with Anna and newborn son Thomas; it was here that James would work in his uncle’s mill.\textsuperscript{169} After several failed business attempts, Lucretia decided to help their young family by taking a teaching job at a Quaker school; she soon learned of a teaching opportunity for James and he joined her there.\textsuperscript{170}

In April 1817, young Thomas Mott died as the result of an illness. Both Lucretia and Thomas had been ill, but the boy was unable to recover.\textsuperscript{171} Thomas’ death marked the beginning of a period of discovery for Lucretia. She sought solace through spiritual and intellectual studies.\textsuperscript{172} Lucretia never challenged the existence of God, but rather, she questioned the way in which God worked and refused to accept that good could come from evil. “She decided that human error, not God’s will, resulted in tragedies like her son’s death—and in other wrongs like slavery and the subjugation of women, as well.”\textsuperscript{173} Her readings did not consist of the popular novels that other women of the era were reading, but rather Lucretia focused on the advancement of her education—particularly in religion.\textsuperscript{174} A year after her son’s death, Lucretia Mott began her career as a Quaker minister at Twelfth Street Monthly Meeting.\textsuperscript{175} By 1821, at the age of 30, Lucretia Mott had been formally recognized as a Quaker minister; it was evident she had a gift for public speaking, proving both powerful and persuasive during her sermons.\textsuperscript{176} “Lucretia’s focus on the female sex suggested her transformation over the course of the decade from a respectable Quaker minister, wife, and mother to a controversial dissenter, social critic, and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[169] Faulkner, Carol p. 39.
\item[170] De Angelis, Gina p. 28.
\item[171] De Angelis, Gina p. 28.
\item[172] Faulkner, Carol p. 40. Both texts comment on Mott’s search for solace and the spiritual search. Faulkner also discusses how Lucretia’s search placed her at the “heart of the social and religious conflict that severed the Society of Friends in America.”
\item[173] De Angelis, Gina p. 29.
\item[174] De Angelis, Gina p. 29.
\item[175] Faulkner, Carol p. 41.
\item[176] De Angelis, Gina p. 30.
\end{footnotes}
activist.”177 As Mott’s prominence grew, she became known for her “peculiar testimony” on “female elevation” and “woman’s responsibility as a rational and immortal being.”178 Mott’s sermons were advanced beyond what had been considered socially acceptable for the time. Women’s activists were not common, and she was standing as a woman challenging all that had been considered socially acceptable. Her thoughts and views were ahead of her time, however, others would join with time.

During the 1820s, Lucretia began to take her first steps toward activism. James Mott’s business dealt in cotton, primarily produced by slave labor. As stories of escaped slaves being returned to the South as well as stories of the rags and chains that were worn by these slaves surfaced, Lucretia’s tolerance for such an institution began dwindling.179 One day it occurred to her a way in which she alone could show her concern for such a volatile practice. Boycotting all products produced through slave labor was her method of choice. Challenges stood in the way of her goal, including the fact that her husband made his livelihood through cotton produced by slave labor.180 Biographer Margaret Hope Bacon characterized the challenges that Mott would face as well as Mott’s view regarding these challenges:

No more sugar, no more cotton, no more writing paper with rag content, no more molasses...Moreover, what was she to do with a husband who dealt in cotton? Never mind, it was on her alone the duty had been laid and it was she who must be faithful.181

Lucretia Mott had been called to fulfill this challenge; she would not hold James accountable for the challenges that she faced. Sugar, cotton, and molasses were common place in almost every American home, but Lucretia Mott was determined to serve her higher purpose and it is at this

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177 Faulkner, Carol p. 42.
178 Faulkner, Carol p. 42.
179 De Angelis, Gina p. 32.
180 Ibid., p. 32.
181 Ibid., p. 34.
moment that she had taken her first official stance against slavery. She saw the injustice that existed, and refused to support such an institution. As a housewife, boycotting these items would enable her to make the statement and meet the objectives that she was hoping to make.

To Lucretia Mott…the antislavery effort was connected with every other reform movement. She was against war and violence, against slavery, against the root causes of poverty, and she was for the right of all people to be treated with respect. To her, all of these causes were bound closely to the duty she felt was hers: to leave the world a better place than she had found it.¹⁸²

Lucretia Mott, through educational opportunities, sought forth to change the world. She did not see herself as a helpless housewife, but rather embraced the role that she could play within society. Gender boundaries did not exist to Lucretia Mott. In her mind, it was her spiritual and political duty to serve a higher purpose within the American society. She had educated herself on the issues at hand through extensive studies in literature, and now, she felt as though it was her duty to educate the rest of the country of the moral implications of the unfair treatment of individuals whether that is enslaved blacks or the women of the country. In the coming years, Lucretia Mott became a vital character in the road to women’s rights. Lucretia Mott, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, would become two of the most recognizable women in the nation regarding the expansion of the involvement of women in American politics.

Like Lucretia Mott, the character and personal development of Elizabeth Cady Stanton would be deeply rooted in her childhood experiences. Born in 1815, Elizabeth Cady was introduced to a developing country based on land and a nation where respect was still given to those who put the good of the whole ahead of their own individual well-being.¹⁸³ This Revolution-era concept had not been lost on the next generation. Elizabeth was the daughter of Margaret Livingston and Daniel Cady, a distinguished lawyer, state assemblyman, and

¹⁸² De Angelis, Gina pg 34
congressman of Johnstown, New York.\textsuperscript{184} Elizabeth’s family was deeply rooted in tradition, and even when the country was turning from its agricultural roots toward the prosperity of industrialization, the Cady family stood true to their agricultural rooted foundations by continuing to invest in farmland.\textsuperscript{185} They also continued to produce large numbers of children, held true to their Calvinist pre-destination beliefs, and stood firm with the old Federalist Party.\textsuperscript{186} Her father was considered brilliant, yet painfully shy while her mother was extremely sociable yet stern with her daughters.\textsuperscript{187} Although Elizabeth’s educational pursuits would take her in legal studies similar to her father, it was the education that Elizabeth would receive from her mother regarding the sternness of running a household and the foundations pertaining to the influences and roles of an American mother which would become the basis for her speeches and the framework for her role as a political activist.\textsuperscript{188}

One of the strongest influences was that both Elizabeth’s parents continued to hold and support the ideals of the republic and the principles of the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{189} “They balanced a sense of order and community responsibility with ideals of liberty and independence.”\textsuperscript{190} These founding principals were not lost on Elizabeth Cady Stanton; instead, they served as the basic foundational principles that were to guide American life. To her, there were no limits to whom these ideals would apply, which is what fueled her passion for abolitionism and women’s rights.

\textsuperscript{185} Wellman, Judith, p.18.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{187} Wellman, Judith, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{188} Wellman, Judith, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{189} Wellman, Judith, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{190} Wellman, Judith, p. 18.
Her education began far before formal schooling. As the daughter of a Johnstown elite and political participant, Elizabeth had received access to many of the prominent political thinkers of the era through conversations at dinners and in the social life that existed within the Cady household with five daughters.\textsuperscript{191} There were also young men who came to study with Daniel Cady who brought with them their own knowledge.\textsuperscript{192} During the mourning of her most recently deceased brother, the only son in the Cady family, Elizabeth’s father told her, “Oh, my daughter, I wish you were a boy!”\textsuperscript{193} Her father’s remarks would be part of the motivation that Elizabeth would utilize in her journey for the equal rights of women. In that moment, something in her changed; she would attempt to be equal to a boy in every matter possible. Elizabeth later said, “The chief thing to be done in order to equal boy was to be learned and courageous. So I decided to study Greek and learn to manage horses.”\textsuperscript{194} Learning Greek and managing horses were activities that were associated with the activities of boys. It was not proper for a girl to partake in these activities; however, Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not defer from something because it was not proper. Elizabeth Cady Stanton possessed a profound resilience that enabled her to face adversity and overcome the challenges that she would face.\textsuperscript{195}

Her formal education was what was to be expected of a young woman of her parent’s social class. She attended the Johnstown Academy and Emma Willard’s Troy Female Seminary.\textsuperscript{196} As she had been determined to do, she learned Greek from Simon Hosack, after she convinced him to teach her.\textsuperscript{197} After her brother’s death, she experienced a freedom that had not existed before. She was given the opportunity to serve as her father’s law clerk, which gave her

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{191} Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady.”
  \item \textsuperscript{192} Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady.”
  \item \textsuperscript{193} Wellman, Judith p. 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{196} Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady.”
  \item \textsuperscript{197} Wellman, Judith p. 27.
\end{itemize}
access to law books, legal experience, and stories from her father’s clients.\textsuperscript{198} She created personal relationships with these clients and was able to serve as a witness to many of the plights that fell upon women of the country as a result of a refusal to recognize their legal rights. One example was “Old Sarah.” Sarah had become a woman at the mercy of her son after she became a widow. Her home was left to her son and his wife because of her inability to inherit the farm that had once belonged to her father.\textsuperscript{199} Elizabeth created a connection to these women and witnessed the hardships that they faced where others viewed the issue from a very objective standpoint without taking into consideration the effects that an eviction would have on the livelihood of these women.

It was during her time at Troy that Elizabeth began to have a conversion experience during which she rejected the Calvinist teachings of her youth and embraced the belief that human beings were not innately evil; she said “I found my way out of the darkness into the clear sunlight of Truth.”\textsuperscript{200} The next few years were spent developing her beliefs while carrying on with regular life. One man, Edward Bayard, who Elizabeth called an “inestimable blessing,” assisted Elizabeth in the development of her political thought as they discussed law, political economy, and history.\textsuperscript{201} “By imitating Baynard’s] skills of logical analysis, as well as her father’s, she forged a weapon with which to fight for women’s equality, first in debates with her father’s law students and ultimately in debates with the world.”\textsuperscript{202} Elizabeth Cady had been given the opportunity to speak her mind and engage in political debates with those around her. The development of these skills as a product of her environment would prove vital to her later role in the early progression and push for women’s equality. She had been given an opportunity

\begin{footnotes}
\item[198] Wellman, Judith p. 27.
\item[199] Ibid., p. 28.
\item[200] Ibid., p. 31.
\item[201] Ibid., p. 32.
\item[202] Ibid., p. 32.
\end{footnotes}
that was rare for women at the time, but this rarity would prove far more important than
Elizabeth would have ever been able to have foreseen at the time.

Elizabeth Cady was a young woman in America, and despite her academic achievements,
she still had certain expectations to uphold. She came from a prominent family; therefore
marriage was one of these expectations. Although she had plenty of men to choose from, as there
was a constant supply of them coming to study with her father, Elizabeth delayed her marriage
beyond the age at which her older sister’s had taken a husband; she was twenty-four and a half
years old when she married.\(^{203}\) Elizabeth Cady and Henry Stanton were married in 1840, against
the will of her parents.\(^{204}\) Elizabeth Cady and Henry Stanton had met in October 1839 while
Henry was conducting a series of anti-slavery conventions in which she fell in love and
experienced her conversion to abolitionism.\(^{205}\) Elizabeth later wrote:

\[\text{I had never had so much happiness crowded into one short month… I felt a new}
\text{inspiration in life and was enthused with the new ideas of individual rights and the}
\text{basic principles of government, for the anti-slavery platform was the best school}
\text{the American people have ever had on which to learn republican principles and}
\text{ethics.}\]

She had found a group of people who had understood that all human beings have basic rights
regardless of their race—a belief that Elizabeth Cady strongly associated with republican
principles. Although Elizabeth had found a group with similar beliefs to her own, she had found
so much more—she had found her husband. Henry Stanton was an abolitionist, which challenged
the Calvinist and Federalist beliefs of Daniel Cady. Henry Stanton was not financially sound; he
had left his professional training early to work for immediate emancipation, loaned savings to

\(^{203}\) Wellman, Judith, p. 33.
\(^{204}\) Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady.”
\(^{205}\) Wellman, Judith, p. 41.
\(^{206}\) Ibid., p. 41.
anti-slavery agents, and worked without pay for the American Anti-Slavery Society.\textsuperscript{207} In no way was Henry Stanton the ideal husband for Elizabeth by her father’s standards. At one point, the engagement had been called off, much to the satisfaction of her father, however, on May 1, 1840, nearly in secret, Henry and Elizabeth were joined in matrimony without the word \textit{obey} in their vows.\textsuperscript{208} She wore a simple white evening gown and friends had rushed to find silver presents.\textsuperscript{209} The simplicity of their wedding would serve as the symbolic simplicity of their lives, Henry would never place an emphasis on money and Elizabeth would never again experience the wealth of her parents and sisters.\textsuperscript{210}

Shortly after their marriage, Elizabeth and Henry departed from Johnstown for England and the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention. There were to be seven American women delegates seated on the floor at the convention, including Lucretia Mott.\textsuperscript{211} However, this hope was not to come to fruition and the women were denied the opportunity to serve as delegates at the convention.\textsuperscript{212} “Stanton later located the origins of the British and the American women rights movements in that convention’s decision to bar American women…from taking their seats as delegates.”\textsuperscript{213}

It was at this convention and through this experience that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed a relationship that would propel the women’s rights movement. Prior to this moment, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had never had a role model in her pursuit of women’s equality. She had been given the opportunity to learn and had been able to demonstrate her ability exercise and participate in political thought—but those demonstrations would only allow

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\textsuperscript{207} Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady.”
\textsuperscript{208} Wellman, Judith pg 44.
\textsuperscript{209} Wellman, Judith pg 44
\textsuperscript{210} Gordon, Anne D “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
\textsuperscript{211} Wellman, Judith pg 59
\textsuperscript{212} Wellman, Judith pg 59
\textsuperscript{213} Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
\end{flushleft}
her to go so far. “With strong ideas about woman’s rights, disillusioned with traditional religion,” Stanton had struggled to find an identifiable source that could answer her questions or even share similar challenges—Lucretia Mott became the answer.214

At the convention Lucretia Mott became known as the “Lioness of the Convention,” but she reported feeling more like a “sheep for slaughter.”215 Mott became the face of the yearning for women to participate in the abolitionist movement which also opened the door to the questions regarding the rights of women. Her experience at the convention, “unleashed her; thereafter she did not attempt to hold back either anger or commitment…by opening herself thus to her own feelings as well as to the demands of the times she ensured that she would continue to grow decade after decade.”216 The denial of her right to sit as a delegate had fueled a fire within Mott that would change the future.

In London, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton created a force to be reckoned with. Many years younger, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was overjoyed to learn about Mott’s experiences both within the realm of reform as well as her experiences with other women of academic achievement and accomplishment. The networks of women’s rights political activists were strengthening. They were no longer isolated in their individual homes in the countryside. These women had found each other and had discovered that they were not alone in their thinking. Stanton later recalled:

The actions of this convention…was the topic of discussion, in public and private, for a long time, and stung many women into new thought and action and gave rise to the movement for women’s political equality both in England and the United States.217

214 Wellman, Judith p. 61.
215 Ibid., p. 61.
216 Ibid., p. 61.
217 Ibid., p. 63.
A bond had been created among these women who had attended this anti-slavery convention. They had the mental capacity to understand that slavery was morally wrong and these women were able to articulate their beliefs intelligently, but because they were women, they were denied the right to participate. A spark had been lit. As they walked together, arm-in-arm down the streets of London, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton “resolved to hold a convention…and form a society to advocate the rights of women.”

Before this experience, Elizabeth had been a part of the networks that were at her disposal because of connections such as her father and husband, however, after London this changed. She had formed her own networks in which she would perpetuate the pursuit of women’s equality. She became connected with members of the Boston and Philadelphia antislavery societies including Angelina and Sara Grimké while also strengthening the bonds she had created with Lucretia Mott. Although Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had hoped to hold this women’s rights convention upon their return to America—there was a delay of several years between the decision and the event that would later become Seneca Falls—the first convention to specifically address the issue of women’s rights in 1848.

Upon her return to America, Stanton split her time between Johnstown and Albany with her parents and Boston with Henry. She also acquired new responsibilities as a mother in 1842 and bore seven children between 1842 and 1859. Henry traveled frequently and for extended periods of time, which left the responsibility of child rearing in the hands of Elizabeth.

218 Wellman, Judith, p. 63.
219 Wellman, Judith, p. 64.
220 Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
Although she became enthralled with the responsibilities of motherhood and raising a family, Elizabeth never ceased her pursuits of individual education on the topics of law and reform. It would eight years before Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton would organize the event that they had discussed in London. The Stanton’s had moved to Seneca Falls, New York in 1847 and it would be the place they would reside until 1862. America had undergone another deep transition as people moved from the countryside to cities as well as from other countries around the world to America in pursuit of the opportunities that arose with industrial success. With all these changes American faced challenges regarding the role of traditional institutions such as churches, schools, as well as traditional family values. It was time to accept and face the challenges that would await them. Elizabeth Cady Stanton initiated the call for the convention through publication a mere eight days prior to the start date. They had never organized a convention; however, this lack of experience would not defer them. Instead they played to their strengths and their experiences by utilizing the passion that they possessed.

The Seneca Falls Convention opened on July 19, 1848. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, at thirty-two years old, stood before the crowd in the Wesleyan Chapel declared: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men and women are created equal.” This profound statement connected the Declaration of Independence and the rights of men to the mandate that was being made that women were too endowed these natural rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This would be the first formal and public meeting in which the rights of women and

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224 Wellman, Judith, p. 64.
225 Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
226 Wellman, Judith, p. 65.
227 Ibid., p. 65.
228 Ibid., p. 190.
229 Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
equality for half the population of the world would be addressed. The convention served its purpose by motivating women and some men to seek justice for the women of the world and initiated the battle for the rights of women.

The convention proclaimed revolutionary ideas regarding American women and the opportunities that should be given to them. In politics, they demanded the right to vote, the ability to serve on juries, and the opportunity to serve in public office. In their personal lives, they pursued the ability to claim their own possessions, earn equal wages, acquire a good education, have access to divorce, and pursue meaningful work. These demands were those that every single white male had been guaranteed in American, and the only thing that differentiated these citizens was their gender. Those in attendance wrote one of the most profound documents regarding the early fight for the equality of women—The Declaration of Sentiments. This document, along with the resolutions that were discussed, argued “that consistency with the fundamental principles of the American Revolution required an end to women’s taxation without the representation and government without their consent.” The American government was denying women the opportunity to actively participate in government in the same manner in which the British had suppressed the rights of the colonists during the American Revolution. Women were taxed on goods they purchased for their homes and their livelihoods, yet they were denied the opportunity to choose their representation in Congress. The Declaration of Sentiments also accused men of America of “usurping divine power and denying women their consciences by dictating the proper sphere of womankind.” Women had played a role in American society; however, that role had been limited to the home, and never before had

231 McMillen, Sally G. pg 71
232 McMillen, Sally G. pg 71
233 Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
234 Gordon, Anne D. “Stanton, Elizabeth Cady”
these sentiments and views been as outspokenly displayed. Men and women joined the women’s rights reform movement; many of them worked for both abolitionism and women’s rights. Subsequent events were held in response to Seneca Falls, but “for years to come, the Declaration would serve as the basic text for the women’s rights movement and be reintroduced at future meetings.”235 In no way was the battle over, but progress had been made and the overarching initial objectives of making women’s rights a prominent reform movement in American society had begun to come to fruition.

The women of the women’s rights reform movement had been a product of their environment and the opportunities that had been extended to them. Both Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had been privy to the opportunities that existed for daughters in prominent families including good education and the opportunities to learn from those around them who were actively involved in the political world. Although separated by nearly 20 years in age, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were a part of a changing America. Society had become accustomed to the pursuits of wealth through industrialization as well as becoming increasingly influenced by the immigrants that were arriving in multitudes each day. The Federalist system and the republican principles of representation, morals, values, and liberties were becoming a figment of the past.

During the 1830’s the reform movements took a prominent place in American society, as they demanded a re-visitation of the morals and values to which America was founded on. Since the American founding, women had served as the foundation of moral values in the American home. They were responsible for instilling values within their children, and now as America appeared to be losing their moral compass, many women viewed this as their opportunity to guide the country back to a foundation of morality and re-instill the foundations of values within

235 McMillen, Sally G. pg 72
the American government. This also gave them the opportunity to demonstrate that they had the mental capacity, physical capability, and soundness to participate in government. Women such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton rose to the challenges that faced them and the traditional understanding of women in American society, and in the process, they created a revolution for half the population of America. They had been limited throughout their lives, although they knew that they possessed the same capabilities that any American man possessed. Although Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton would not win the war of women’s rights, they had opened the door to the women’s rights movement. The issue had always been present; however, this was the first generation of women to capitalize on the experiences and advancements made by the women who preceded them. American women would now have the opportunity to speak to their political aspirations while also participating in reform movements publicly. Republican Motherhood was no longer the only means for female political participation. The daughters of the nation were able to envision the role which they could publicly display in politics because their mothers had taught them the importance of morals, values, and to work for the good of the nation as a whole.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and many of the other women’s rights activists struggled with the same questions that had challenged previous generations of American women, but because the nation was struggling with the moral implications that surrounded them, they were able to assume a more public role—an opportunity that would change the future forever.
Conclusion

Republican Motherhood was an evolution of the role of women in America following the American Revolution. It was a concept that empowered women at a time when they were denied representation and rights in a country that had just fought to defend the philosophy that “all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” Instead of starting their own revolution for women’s rights immediately following the American Revolution, the women of this new republic embraced their position within the home. They saw the significance which could be made through motherhood as a way in which women could serve the republic. The women in America took on the role of preserving the moral foundation of the United States and saw their role within the home as a way to educate the future generations of America in order to secure liberty for the future of America. They were charged with the responsibility to raise children who would come to understand the principles of representation and rights and who would, in turn, help to maintain the republic and its principles. These women did not see themselves as oppressed rather, they viewed this opportunity as their duty to their country.

The American Revolution had opened a door which had never been opened before. When we think of the American Revolution, we automatically think of the Founding Fathers; it is rare that we consider the role which their wives, mothers, and sisters played. While men like John Adams were off fighting a war, women like Abigail Adams were able to step into the authoritative role at home. It became the responsibility of the women to maintain their homes, farms, stores, and families so when the war ended their husbands would have something to come

back to. The women of the Revolution also faced the same scrutiny, regarding their political
loyalties, as their husbands. Women were expected to take a political position, and demonstrate
their loyalties through boycotts of items being taxed, sewing sessions, and other local political
events. This marked one of the first times in history that women were able to have a political
voice, and a spark had been lit.

Although the Revolution did not bring equal rights for women, they had been given the
opportunity to experience something unlike any other previous generation, and it would only
continue to extend and build from this point. The foundation had been set. American women
became the moral foundation within their homes and it became their primary responsibility to
teach values, liberties, and the responsibilities of citizens to serve the government by placing the
good of the whole ahead from any personal needs. As it became apparent the role that
“Republican Motherhood” would play in the United States, a call for a stronger educational
system for girls and woman began to be heard. For women to educate the future generations of
America, they themselves would have to receive some form of education. This philosophy was
not without its critics. Some argued that women were not physically capable of the demands of
men, while others argued that they did not have the mental capacity. These arguments were
superficial to many American women. They had sought to prove these theories incorrect and had
persevered to high academic achievement. American women had a role to play in this new
nation, and they would not be deterred.

238 Berkin, Carol. Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence. New York: Vintage
239 Riley, 4.
240 Elshtain, 159.
241 Riley, 79.
242 Welter, 71.
As women attended schools, it became apparent that they could serve as effective teachers in a public education system then developing in the United States. Many argued that it was socially acceptable for women to serve as teachers because it was in many ways an extension of the “sphere of the home.”243 Serving as a teacher was not far beyond the responsibilities that these women would have been serving as a wife and mother and for that reason it became more socially acceptable.

America itself also began to undergo an economic change as women began to make their first appearances in the public schools. The Industrial Revolution had reached America. During the first several decades of the Industrial Revolution, America’s economy was still heavily reliant on agriculture. Taking sons and husbands out of the fields would pose a risk to the success of the family farm, so to meet the employment demands of the new factories, families sent their daughters to raise extra funds for the family or to earn money which would be used to send their brothers to receive a higher degree of education.244 This demographic of women experienced an independence which had never previously been felt by women in America. Until this time, it had not been socially acceptable for young ladies to live independently of their parents without having a husband. Many arrived in cities such as Lowell, Massachusetts not knowing what to expect, but soon embraced this independent lifestyle.245 Many decided to remain working at the factories for an extended time beyond their original commitment because they were able to experience this independence and self-sufficiency. This lifestyle was beyond anything that could have been conceived during the American Revolution, but it was a key element in the argument that women did not have to rely on men to provide for the women of America. These women had proved a self-sufficiency and ability that they had been denied previously. It was these women

243 Riley, Glenda, p. 100.
244 Ibid., p. 79.
245 Ibid., p. 66.
who proved that they did not have to rely on a family for income and they were able to perform hard physical labor. The women of the industrial revolution gave women the opportunity to seek an independence that had never before been available.

In another part of the country, America was experiencing a westward expansion and the realization of “Manifest Destiny.” As these women departed from the comforts of their communities, they were challenged to establish an understanding of government and of political rights in a part of the country that was still wild and untamed. The American mothers of the frontier challenged the harshness of their environment by instilling remnants of a civilized society.246 Regardless of the surroundings, these women were determined that their children would receive an education and know the importance of being a responsible citizen for their nation. Influenced by the church, these women advocated for education for all of their children, regardless of sex. They refused to allow their children to absorb the mentality of their uncivilized surroundings and made every effort to bring the eastern mentality to their new homes in the West. These women carried on the ideals of “Republican Motherhood” to even the newest and harshest locations within the United States.

From the very conception of the United States, Americans had debated the question: to what extent were all men created equal? At times this question was the main discussion, while at others it was brushed aside. Since its founding, the United States of America had undergone extreme growth in a very short amount of time. During the Industrial Revolution of the 1830s and 1840s, many citizens felt as though the country as a whole had begun to lose their emphasis of morality and values, especially those of the American founding. It was their belief that America had turned away from the very principles that had made them a great nation in pursuit of the almighty dollar. A new movement arose, dedicated to restoring the morality of America

246 Riley, Glenda, p. 105.
through the abolition of slavery. Many of those involved in these early movements were women. During the late 1830s and early 1840s, women again began to be perceived by the nation as the moral foundation of American society. The country was in turmoil, and the women of the country were looked upon to restore the principles of liberty and values of the American Founding—re-assuming their roles as “Republican Mothers” of the nation. As reform movements arose, women were at the forefront of the moral foundation of America. From this position in reform movements, the women of America became the face of morals and values for the nation.

Women such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had seen the injustice of many of America’s current policies and became especially passionate about the abolition of slavery. Both women had been the beneficiaries of the extension of education to women and each had received an education to the highest extent possible for women despite the near twenty year age difference between them. Both women attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London that advocated the abolition of slavery, and it was out of pure chance that the women’s rights movement was conceived.\(^{247}\) Lucretia Mott was denied the ability to sit as a delegate at the conference because she was a woman.\(^{248}\) This left quite an impression on the young Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and as the two women decided upon holding a women’s rights convention. It was from this experience that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave birth to the women’s rights movement and in particular the Seneca Falls Convention.

The women’s rights movement was not a reform movement that emerged in a single moment. The movement was derived as a culmination of all of the achievements of the previous generations of women in American history. The foundation had been laid by the “Republican

\(^{247}\) De Angelis, Gina, p. 54.
\(^{248}\) Wellman, Judith, p. 59.
Mothers” of the American Founding and each subsequent generation had been able to build upon that first foundation. The women’s rights reform took nearly three-fourths of a century to even begin to come to fruition. It had been developed through the proper accession of each generation of women following the “founding mothers,” the women of the American Revolution. It was during this first generation of American woman that a female voice was heard in a male dominated aspect of life. Women were called upon to vocalize their loyalties during the challenge of the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{249} No one woman was the overarching contributor to change, but rather it was a cumulative effort of every single woman in American and her perception of her duties as an American citizen whether that be sewing clothes or growing food in her family garden to supply the troops.\textsuperscript{250} During the war, women such as Abigail Adams, had maintained the family farm and proven self-sufficiency while her husband was away establishing the new nation.\textsuperscript{251} When the war ended, and their husbands came home, the women of the early republic were denied the fundamental rights of citizenship including the right to choose representation and the right to vote. They viewed their role as mothers as a vital duty to the continued success and development of America as a nation. They were determined their children would know their fundamental rights.

As the nation continued to grow, so too did the role which women played in American society. Demands in both industrialization and education gave women the opportunity to explore realms outside of the “sphere of the home.” These opportunities gave women the chance to prove they could serve other useful purposes within society aside from the accepted realm of motherhood. Critics of women’s rights could no longer say that women did not possess the

\textsuperscript{249} Riley, Glenda, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., p. 62.
\textsuperscript{251} Berkin, Carol p. 27.
mental capacity to serve as responsible citizens; women had proven themselves academically sound by being trusted to teach the youth of America. Challengers could no longer argue that women were of feeble build, unable to withstand the physical demands of complete citizenship—women had proven that they could successfully work in the intense and in many cases unacceptable working conditions of industrial life as well as establish and maintain a home in the western frontier.

Contrary to popular belief, American women did not force their way into the reform movement, but rather the development of American society gradually opened a door of opportunity of which American women could take advantage. The women of America had been standing outside the door of women’s rights since the American Revolution. This door had gradually been approached starting with the turning of the doorknob by the women of the American Revolution. They had begun to address a topic which was not the social norm. These women demonstrated that women were able to participate in the political sphere. However, it would take several generations and a culmination of efforts and achievements to make women’s rights a topic of debate and conversation. It was not until 1848 that American women were able to completely open the door through the efforts of such women as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Although the Seneca Falls Convention would not immediately bring forth the right to vote for American women, the door had been opened, and further opportunity existed. It would become the responsibility of the next few generations of women to continue the progress and growth of the previous generations. As the topic of slavery came to the forefront of conversation in the 1840s through the Civil War, many saw the moral implications which slavery provided including the denial of basic human rights as continued support for the denial of basic human rights and citizenship to the women of the American republic.
Although the right to vote would not be affirmed until the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution until 1920, the women of America had made their case and a sufficient argument regarding the solidification and recognition that all men and women are created equal. Since the American founding, each generation of women had taken on a role in the republic, even though it had not officially been recognized by the United States government. These women perceived themselves as citizens despite the fact that the United States government had failed to do so. From this very first generation, it had been instilled in every generation after that regardless of whether the United States government recognized them as citizens; they had a role to play and a duty to fulfill to this country. America and the women which inhabited it were not moving in two separate directions, but rather, they were constantly running in a parallel line of development and growth; it just would not be until 1848 that these two paths would intersect. Every woman since Abigail Adams had answered to the call of duty of their country and had completed the task charged to them with such sufficiency that their daughters and their female lines had a complete understanding of natural rights. They had been taught that all men and women had been created equal and were endowed with certain unalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness regardless of sex. Republican Motherhood had served its purpose. This vital role of American women had taught the future generations of America duties, responsibilities, and rights which would be necessary to maintain the foundations of the American Revolution. It was the duty of every citizen of America to work towards the good of the whole, and this lesson was taught with such sufficiency that their daughters refused to be given any less than that which had been endowed to them by their Creator as stated in the Declaration of Independence. Those attending the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, declared: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men and women

252 The United States Constitution
are created equal.” Republican Motherhood prepared America for the women’s rights movement and as an effect taught their daughters the duty of true citizenship—the right to vote, to petition, and serve as an active member of the American political system in whatever capacity she deemed necessary for the good of the nation. Republican Motherhood of the founding mothers had changed the course of history and provided the original catalyst for the women’s rights movement. Starting with the women of the American Revolution and culminating through the Seneca Falls Convention, the achievements of each generation culminated to create the early women’s rights movement.

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253 McMillen, Sally G., p. 71.