

I. Women's Roles in the Revolution

A. Family Enterprises

1. Women took over
2. Succeeded Despite
  - a. inflation
  - b. British Occupancy
  - c. absence of important supplies
3. gave women self-confidence
4. proved that women could make a living by themselves

B. Army Camps

1. Women came to be with soldiers
  - a. were fed by military
  - b. were cared for by military
2. The women:
  - a. cooked
  - b. cleaned
  - c. sewed
  - d. served as nurses
  - e. were not treated specially
    1. marched with men
    2. slept in the snow

C. Women Soldiers, "Molly Pitchers"

1. reloaded muskets
2. carried pitchers of water
  - a. when men fell in battle, women took over the guns
  - b. played an important role
3. Marly Ludwig Hays McCauley
  - a. original "Molly Pitcher"
  - b. fought in the Battle of Manmouth, 1778
  - c. recieved

D. Women Spies

1. Women act as spies
  - a. Culper Ring
    1. organized spy ring
    2. Long Island
    3. consequences if captured
      - a. imprisoned
      - b. hanged
  - b. many organized spy rings
2. Secret messengers
  - a. relied on helpless stereotypes
  - b. young girls
    1. could slip through lines easily
    2. Enemy never suspected them
    3. carried orders and information
  - c. women
    1. listened to what British said
      - a. while serving food/drink
      - b. officers spoke freely
        1. thought women were not interested
        2. they were wrong
    2. Lydia Darragh
      - a. of Philidelphia
      - b. carried important information
        1. to General Washington
        2. at Valley Forge

E. After the war

1. Women continue to be interested in politics
2. Spoke of themselves as Republican Mothers
3. strengthening of a nation
  - a. Marcy Otis Warren
  - b. Abigail Adams
  - c. John Adams and Benjamin Rush
  - d. position of women

II. Abigail Adams

- A. Childhood
- B. Marriage

III. The Declaration of Sentiments

- A. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- B. Lucretia Mott
- C. Seneca Falls Convention
- D. 1920: women receive full citizenship

## Women's Roles in the Revolution

When people think of the Revolutionary War, most think of George Washington leading his men into battle, Minutemen fighting, or John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Hancock signing the Declaration of Independence. Even though all of these things did happen, and were very important to the war and to our nation, they were not all that happened. But, the people that are thought of all seem to be men.

Often, the women of the Revolution are forgotten, even though they played an important part in the forming of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Women like Abigail Adams, Mary Hays and Lydia Darragh all helped the rebellion against Britain. From seamstresses to spies, women helped as much as the men. Those women should never, through all history and future, be forgotten.

Women play important Roles

Women, as said before, took on many roles, from seamstress to spy, and everything in between. When husbands, fathers, and brothers went off to fight, family enterprises, such as farms, shops and companies, were left without the owners and executives that were regularly needed. This left the women of the family in charge. Almost all businesses were left to the women, for very few men who were qualified or old enough to run them were not fighting.

The women, much to other's surprise, and probably their own, succeeded. The businesses thrived, despite of terrible inflation, dense British occupancy, and the absence of important supplies that were badly needed. Though all of this, the women's self confidence increased drastically. With this new confidence, the women proved that they could make a living by themselves, without the aid of men.

Poorer women who didn't have a source of income without their husbands, packed up their belongings and followed their husbands to the military camps. When they got there, the government would

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feed them, along with their children and other relatives. When sickness or disease hit one of women, they would be cared for just as the soldiers would have been. Even when they were healthy, they were taken care of. As more and more women came to the camps, the camps grew into large, bustling towns.

The women, however, were not given these luxuries for free. In return for the food, care, and medical service, they cooked meals for themselves and soldiers, cleaned the camp, sewed uniforms for their husbands and other men, washed these uniforms and other clothing, and served as nurses for the wounded. Even though in other places and towns women were treated differently than men, in the camps the two were equal, both to each other and to the soldiers. For instance, they marched with the men when moving to a different site, and even slept in the same snowy conditions as the men at Valley Forge.

Many women came to the camps to join male relatives, but some actually joined them on the front lines of war. These women were called "Molly Pitchers." They would stand by the fighting soldiers and reload musket to save desperately needed time. So, they would carry pitchers of water to the men so that they could refresh themselves.

Molly Pitchers also helped the soldiers in another way. When they were carrying their pitchers and they saw a man fall with injury, they would set down the pitcher and run to him. They would take over the gun that he was using, and take his place in battle. This helped the American immensely, and made the women ever more important to the rebellion.

When the women were called Molly Pitchers, there was more meaning than just the "pitcher." Mary Ludwig Hay McCauley was the person from whom the name was adapted from. She was a twenty-five year

old, tobacco chewing, hardworking woman<sup>3</sup> who was one of the first pitcher-carrying women. The men would yell, "Here comes Molly and her Pitcher!" Therefore, she became known as Molly Pitcher.

Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley's moment of glory took place on June twenty-eighth, seventeen seventy-eight, in Manmouth (Now Freehold) New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> The British General Sir Harry Clinton, who was moving his troops from Philadelphia to New York, had run into an American Force lead by General Charles

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Lee. Among them was John Casper Hays, Mary's husband. Mary worked at her pitcher through the entire battle, bringing cool water to the thirsty troops. It is the battle that she is most noted for, and for which she received a military medals of honor, and a military pension.

All women strengthened the nation, but a few stood out from the others. Mary Otis Warren was one of them. She was a very educated woman, especially for the time, and had a vivid interest in the war. She became the most noted historian of the revolution, and her records still are a good historical source on this subject.

Abigail Adams was another important woman of the revolution. She addressed the women's role in strengthening our nation directly when she said: "We can improve and pull our nation together by teaching our children the principles of democracy and the history of this nation. Don't ever think for a moment that our quest for independence will end when the war does."<sup>5</sup>

John Adams, the husband of Abigail and the second President, and Benjamin Rush spoke out for the rights of women. They urged women to receive better educations and use what they learned. The women listened, and new academies and schools were formed to educate them.

Because of all of these women and men, women's position in society changed. More respect for them was paid, and, as was said before, women were now being educated as men were. But, women still did not gain full citizenship. That was still to come.

Abigail Adams

Abigail Smith Adams was born in Weymouth Mass. Like most of the girls of her time, she did not go to school. Even so, she taught herself to read and used her father's small library to its fullest extent. There, her quick mind absorbed all of his books, as well as works in French that were borrowed from her mother-in-law, who had taught her to read them.

When Abigail was nineteen, she married John Adams, who was twenty-nine. Her mother thought that she was taking a step down in the world because in the small villages south of Boston, where the couple had grown up, the Smiths were much better known than the Adamses. John was a rising lawyer, but he and Abigail were able to marry only after he had inherited a small house and a few acres of land across the road from his farmer brother.

With the help of a black slave woman who was borrowed from John's mother,

Abigail set up house. From the beginning, Abigail and John got on well. Their views on rights and tyranny were never far apart.

Abigail had a shrewd awareness of the political and social ideas of her time. Many letters written to her husband while they were separated showed her interest in public affairs. In seventeen seventy-six, while John was attending the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Abigail tried to persuade his to extend the rights of women. She wrote:

"In the code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire that you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors were. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands, remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to form a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."6

Seneca Falls Convention, 1848

The Declaration of Sentiments is read. James Mott lead the meeting on women's rights that took place in Seneca Falls, New York. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was present, as were many other women troubled with the Declaration of Independence.

Elizabeth Stanton spoke about how she, as others before her, including Abigail Adams, had been troubled that the opening of the Declaration of Independence has to do with the rights of men only. In her speech, "The Declaration of Sentiments," she began with, "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men and women are created equal..."7

Stanton ended the "Declaration of Sentiments" with several proposals on women's rights. These resolutions included: the right of married women to own and sell property, and the right of mothers to the custody of their children. The Seneca Falls Convention voted to support these proposals.

The Seneca Falls Convention was a partial conclusion to women's rights. But, one resolution that Elizabeth Stanton proposed was strongly objected to by both men and women attending the convention. The right for women to vote was put down by almost everyone. However, in 1920, a full conclusion was reached in women's suffrage: Women were granted full citizenship.

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