

Module 5: The Civil War and Reconstruction - 1860 to 1877

Topic 5 Content: Women's Role in the Civil War Notes

Introduction

Women's Role in the Civil War



Introduction

Women were not allowed to serve in the military during the Civil War. Without the men at home, however, women had to assume nontraditional roles. Many women looked to work in agriculture, nursing, and other industries created by the war. It is estimated that more than 20,000 women worked for the Union war effort. The Confederate women had fewer women working, but they served in similar capacities as women from the North.

Click **NEXT** to begin.

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Managing a Household

Women's Role in the Civil War



Managing a Household

- Women were faced with poverty and hunger.
- Women had to provide for their families with scarce resources.
- Households struggled during the Civil War.



Civil War family



Children with poor hygiene

During the Civil War, American women were faced with poverty and hunger. They had scarce resources with which to manage their families. Many women would not see the man of the household return, or he returned disabled. This caused the entire household to struggle during and after the Civil War.

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Managing a Farm

Women's Role in the Civil War



Managing a Farm

- A high percentage of male farmers enlisted in the Civil War.
- Women had to replace the men and work the fields.
- Women made sure the farm operations could remain profitable.



Women working the fields *Women tending to livestock*

A high percentage of male farmers enlisted in the Civil War. Of all men that fought for the Union Army, forty-eight percent were farmers. While younger males attempted to replace the older enlisted males, many times women would have to take to the fields to make sure the job was done correctly, and farm operations remained profitable.

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Supporting the Troops

Women's Role in the Civil War



Supporting the Troops

- Women volunteered for the Union and Confederacy.
- Women supplied troops with baked goods, canned food, clothing, and supplies.
- The United States Sanitary Commission was created to improve hospitals, hygiene, and food quality.



Sanitary Volunteers



U.S. Sanitary Commission

Women from the Union and Confederacy eagerly volunteered to help in the war effort. In the North, women organized societies to supply troops with baked food, canned food, and all types of clothing and uniforms. Women also organized events to raise money for important medical supplies. In June of 1861, the Federal Government created the United States Sanitary Commission. The goal of this commission was to battle preventable diseases and infections by improving hospital conditions, bad hygiene, and food quality.

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Nursing

Women's Role in the Civil War



Nursing

- Women served as nurses to the sick and injured soldiers.
- Dorothea Dix became the Superintendent of Union Army Nurses.
- Clara Barton was a female nurse who served on the front lines.



Clara Barton *Dorothea Dix* *Civil War Nurses*

Women served as nurses to sick and injured soldiers during the Civil War. Dorothea Dix became the Superintendent of Union Army Nurses. She required that women nurses were at least thirty years old and “plain-looking.” She believed this would eliminate women looking for romance.

The surgeon general was impressed by the women, and required all Union hospitals to use female nurses. Nurses were not generally allowed to attend to injured soldiers on the battlefield. One exception was Union Nurse Clara Barton, who served on the front lines. She often dug bullets out of soldiers with a penknife. Described as the “angel of the battlefield,” Barton would later found the American Red Cross.