AP UNITED STATES HISTORY MS. MANUEL

SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

Part I

- Read *Founding Brothers; The Revolutionary Generation*, by Joseph J. Ellis. WARNING: This is a book. You'll want to start early.
  A. For the Preface, *The Generation,* answer **each** of the following questions:
     1. Why does Ellis conclude that American independence was probably inevitable?
     2. What is the **central paradox** of the American Revolution, according to Ellis? When and how was it resolved?
     3. Briefly describe the two interpretations of the American Revolution (Mercy Otis Warren's and John Marshall's). (Note: This is a central theme in US politics right down to the present)
     4. List the 4 themes of the book (pages 17 & 18)

  B. For each chapter (1-6), write a paragraph describing how one of the themes from Q. 4 above is played out in that chapter. ***For this part, you will write a total of six paragraphs.***

Part II

C. Read the photocopy "The Republican Mother …" (excerpted from *Women's America: Refocusing the Past,* Linda Kerber and Jan DeHart-Mathews, eds.) **and** the two short articles "New Jersey Women Vote…" and "Judith Sargent Stevens Murray…" (excerpted from *What Every American Should Know About Women's History,* Christine Lunardini)

D. Answer the questions below:
   1. Briefly describe Republican Motherhood.
   2. Give one argument to support the necessity of this new role for women.
   3. Give two arguments men used against acknowledging a role for women in the public sector.
   4. What was the reason that the Republican Mother was spared the hostility directed against other women who fought for their rights?
   5. How was Republican Motherhood progressive? How was it the basis for a conservative approach to limiting women's equality?
   6. What does the life of Judith Sargent Stevens Murray and the fact that women had the right to vote in New Jersey in the period right after the American Revolution indicate about the role of women in American society during that time?

The written assignments are due on the first day of class; deadline two weeks later.

LINDA K. KERBER

The Republican Mother

The years of the early republic (1776–1820) were a time of profound social and political change. Rebellion against England meant that throughout America there was a major reconsideration of political relationships, culminating in the Declaration of Independence, new state constitutions, and the federal Constitution. Male political leaders redefined the relationship of the individual to the state. They rarely explored what the new relationship of women to the state might be, though they left some important questions open: women were citizens and alien women could become naturalized citizens; the qualifications for suffrage were framed in terms of "persons." But full political identity was also based on a willingness to take up arms for the republic, and for this role women were thought biologically unfit. Even more important, full political autonomy was assumed to involve control of enough property so that one was not vulnerable to economic pressure by a master or employer, yet married women could not control property. They were denied suffrage in large part because it was thought that to give women a vote was, in practice, to give a double vote to their husbands. (On the other hand, a substantial minority of adult women at any given moment were single or widowed and *did* control their own property; political theorists ignored their presence.)

Those who articulated the ideology of Republican Motherhood sought to draw together the political, biological, and economic reality experienced by free white women and to redefine the role of women in the new post-Revolutionary era in a way that reflected realistically the constraints of their lives but also emphasized that women, too, were part of a deeply radical republican experiment. What features of this ideology were conservative? What features were radical? What elements of the ideology of Republican Motherhood persist into our own time?

When women looked back to the years of the Revolution, what did they remember? Several themes were repeated with great frequency. The war had been a nightmare. It had frightened people and disrupted lives. It had been a time when women had chosen political identities, prided themselves on their loyalism or on their patriotism, and performed services for the government of their choice. Women who had survived the war had been strong and courageous, but the republic had offered only the most grudging response to their sacrifices, as Rachel Wells had discovered.

Americans did not choose to explore with much rigor the socially radical implications of their republican ideology. For example, only haltingly did a few develop the obvious antislavery implications of egalitarian rhetoric. Nor did they explore very deeply the implications of female citizenship; the Revolution and the republic that followed were thought to be men's work. "To be an adept in the art of Government," Abigail Adams observed to her husband, "is a prerogative to which your Sex lay almost an exclusive claim."[1] Women were left to invent their own political character. They devised their own interpretation of what the Revolution had meant to them as women, and they began to invent an ideology of citizenship that merged the domestic domain of the preindustrial woman with the new public ideology of individual responsibility and civic virtue. They did this in the face of severe ridicule, responding both to the anti-intellectual complaint that educating women served no practical purpose and to the conservative complaint that women had no political significance.

Memories of the Revolution, as they appear in postwar fiction, suggest some of the lessons women drew from the wartime experience. An early exploration of women's political options appears in Mercy Otis Warren's verse play *The Ladies of Castile*, written shortly after the close of the war. The play concerns two women of contrasting temperaments caught up in a civil war in Spain that, Warren makes clear in her introduction, is meant to be a metaphor for the Revolutionary War in America. The soft and delicate Louisa introduces herself with the words, "I wander wilder'd and alone / Like some poor banish'd fugitive . . . I yield to grief"; while the determined Maria, wife of the leader of the rebellion, announces in her opening scene, "Maria has a bolder part to act— / I scorn to live upon ignoble terms." The message of *The Ladies of Castile* is simple and obvious. Even in the exigencies of war, women must control themselves and their options. The Louisas of the world do not survive revolutions; the Marias—who take political positions, make their own judgment of the contending sides, and risk their lives—emerge stronger and in control. "A soul, inspir'd by freedom's genial warmth," says Maria, "expands,—grows firm—and by resistance, strong."[2]

The experience of war had given words like *independence* and *self-reliance* personal as well as political overtones. As the song played at Yorktown had it, the world could turn upside down: the rich could quickly become poor, wives might suddenly have to manage the family economy, women might even shoulder a gun. Revolutionary experience taught that it was useful to be prepared for a wide range of unusual possibilities; political theory taught that republics rested on the virtue and intelligence of their citizens. The stability and competence on which republican government relied required a highly literate and politically sophisticated constituency. Maintaining the republic was an educational as well as a political challenge.

Warren was joined in her demand for self-reliance by Judith Sargent Murray, of Salem, Massachusetts, whose essays provide the most fully developed articulation of the idea that political independence should be the catalyst for female autonomy. When the Revolution ended, she published a prescient argument calling for the strengthening of what she called "Self-Complacency in Female Bosoms." She decried the tradition of educating middle-class girls for an upwardly mobile marriage

A revised version of "'Why Should Girls Be Learnd or Wise?' Education and Intellect in the Early Republic" and "The Republican Mother: Female Political Imagination in the Early Republic," chaps. 7 and 9 of *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1980; paperback ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).

by encouraging fashion, flirtatiousness, and charm. Lacking a strong and positive sense of their own identity, Murray complained, young women had no personal resources to give them confidence, and so they rushed into marriages to establish their social status.[3] Eight years later, widowed and remarried, she developed this theme at great length in a series of newspaper essays in which she emphasized the need for an education for competence. "I would give my daughters every accomplishment which I thought proper," she wrote,

> and, to crown all, I would early accustom them to habits of industry and order. They should be taught with precision the art economical; they should be enabled to procure for themselves the necessaries of life; independence should be placed within their grasp. . . . THE SEX should be taught to depend on their own efforts, for the procurement of an establishment in life.[4]

The model republican woman was competent and confident. She could resist the vagaries of fashion; she was rational, benevolent, independent, self-reliant. Nearly every writer who described this paragon prepared a list of role models, echoing the pantheon of heroines admired by the fund-raising women of Philadelphia in 1780. There were women of the ancient world, like Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi; rulers like Elizabeth of England and the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia; and a long list of British intellectuals: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the historian Catharine Macaulay. Those who believed in these republican models demanded that their presence be recognized and endorsed and that a new generation of young women be urged to find in them patterns for their own behavior. "I expect to see our young women forming a new era in female history," Murray wrote.[5]

Other Americans made demands for the direct participation of women in public affairs. There is the well-known comment by Abigail Adams, which her husband jokingly turned away, that women ought to have the right to participate in the new system of government, for "all men would be tyrants if they could." All her life Abigail Adams was a shrewd commentator on the political scene, assuming as active an obligation to judge good and evil as if she were called upon annually to vote. But she was known, of course, only in a circle that, though relatively large, remained private. In *Alcuin,* the Philadelphia novelist Charles Brockden Brown sneered at the "charming system of equality and independence" that denied women a part in the choice of the governors, but the circulation of his novel was small. The distinguished Virginia jurist St. George Tucker admitted that laws neither respected nor favored females, but he made the concession in a single footnote in a three-volume work.[6]

Expressions of women's desire to play a frankly political role were regularly camouflaged in satire, a device that typically makes new ideas and social criticism seem less threatening and more palatable. In 1791, for example, a New Jersey newspaper published a pair of semiserious satires in which women discuss the politics of excise taxes and national defense. "Roxana" expresses a feminist impatience:

> In fifty quarto volumes of ancient and modern history, you will not find fifty illustrious female names; heroes, statesmen, divines, philosophers, artists, are all of masculine gender. And pray what have they done during this long period of usurpation? . . . They have written ten thousand unintelligible books. . . . They have been cutting each other's throats all over the globe.[7]

Some years later, the students at Sarah Pierce's famous school for girls in Litchfield, Connecticut, prepared a "Ladies Declaration of Independence" for July Fourth. Alongside the frivolous phrasing is some earnest comment on the unfilled promises of the republic. Less than ten years after that Elizabeth Cady Stanton would use the same technique. "When in the Course of Human Events," the Litchfield declaration begins,

> it becomes necessary for the Ladies to dissolve those bonds by which they have been subjected to others, and to assume among the self styled Lords of Creation that separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and their *own talents* entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires, that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
>
> We hold these truths to be self evident. That all *mankind* are created equal.

The Litchfield women wished to change "social relations." They complained about men who "have undervalued our talents, and disparaged our attainments; they have combined with each other, for the purpose of excluding us from all participation in Legislation and in the administration of Justice; . . . [they have declared] themselves invested with power to act & legislate for us in all cases whatsoever."[8]

To accept an openly acknowledged role for women in the public sector was to invite extraordinary hostility and ridicule. Although neither political party took a consistent position on the matter, hostility to the political participation of women seems to have been particularly acute in Federalist circles. It is no accident that it was a Republican periodical that first reprinted Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* "It is said by one of the federalist papers," remarked the Republican *Register* of Salem, Massachusetts, that

> "Women have no business to speak about politicks and that a woman meddling in politicks is like a monkey in a china ware shop, where he can't do any good but may do a great deal of mischief." On our part we are of a contrary opinion, we can see no reason why, with the same evidence before them, they cannot judge on politicks or any other subject equally with men—On many subjects they certainly are better judges.[9]

Some counterarguments developed a life of their own, appearing and reappearing under different disguises. Among these the most persistent was that linking female intellectual activity and political autonomy to an unflattering masculinity. "From all we read, and all we observe, we are authorized in supposing that there is a *sex of soul,*" announced the Boston minister John Gardiner. "Women of masculine minds, have generally masculine manners. . . . Queen Elizabeth understood Latin and Greek, swore with the fluency of a sailor, and boxed the ears of her courtiers. . . . Mrs. Macaulay, the author of a dull democratic history, at a tolerably advanced age, married a boy." A "mild, dove-like temper is so necessary to Female beauty, is so natural a part of the sex," reflected Parson Mason Locke Weems wistfully. "A masculine air in a woman frightens us."[10]

When women addressed political issues, the attacks were similar. A good example of this response appears in a newspaper letter written in 1790 by a Marylander who signed as "Philanthropos." Warning against literal interpretations of the phrase "All mankind are born equal," "Philanthropos" thought the principle of equality could be "taken in too extensive a sense, and might tend to destroy those degrees of subordination which nature seems to point out," including the subordination of women to men. "However flattering the path of glory and ambition may be, a woman will have more commendation in being the mother of heroes, than in setting up, Amazon-like, for a heroine herself." The reasons he offered in support of the continued exclusion of women from "political bustle and anxiety" were of three sorts. Women, involved as they were with domestic cares, had no time for politics. Women were in-

ept at politics; behind every queen lurked male advisers and guiding the well-known political vigor of Quaker women was a peculiar and distasteful view of the nature of the universe. But if women were inept, they were also somehow too effective.

> A Female Orator, in haranguing an Assembly, might like many crafty politicians, keep her *best argument* for last, and would then be sure of the victory—Men would be exposed to temptations too great for their strength, and those who could resist a bribe, offered in the common way, might reasonably yield to what it would be hardly possible for a *man* to refuse.

Although the political woman was thus thought to be sexually aggressive, "famous" women of the past were, however, "generally deficient in those charms which it is the peculiar lot of the fair sex to excel in." "Philanthropos" ended with the familiar argument that so long as virtuous women had private opportunity to influence men and to "mould our minds," they ought not regret "their exclusion from the perplexity and tumult of a political life."[11]

Mary Wollstonecraft had borne one illegitimate daughter (Fanny Imlay) and lived with William Godwin before marrying him; after marriage she maintained lodgings in another house so that she could be free to write. Once her life history became generally known, it could be used to link political feminism to aggressive sexuality, as the Federalist Timothy Dwight did in his bitter "Morpheus" essays, which ran in a Boston newspaper in 1802. In an early dream sequence in "Morpheus," Wollstonecraft has arrived in America and sets out to teach its inhabitants wisdom.

> Women . . . are entitled to all the rights, and are capable of all the energies, of men. I do not mean merely mental energies. If any dispute remained on this subject, I have removed it entirely by displaying, in my immortal writings, all the mental energy of Locke and Bacon. I intend bodily energies. They can naturally run as fast, leap as high, and as far, and wrestle, scuffle, and box with as much success, as any of the . . . other sex.
>
> That is a mistake (said an old man just before her.)
>
> It is no mistake, (said the Female Philosopher.)
>
> . . . Why then, (said the senior again) are women always feebler than men?
>
> Because (said Mary) they are educated to be feeble; and by indulgence . . . are made poor, puny, baby-faced dolls; instead of the *manly women*, they ought to be.
>
> *Manly women!* (cried the wag). Wheu! a manly woman is a hoyden, a non descript.
>
> Am I a hoyden? (interrupted Mary, with spirit.)
>
> You used to be a strumpet.

Wollstonecraft tells him that she was not a strumpet but a sentimental lover, "too free to brook the restraints of marriage." Her interlocutor responds, "We call them strumpets here, Madam—no offense, I hope," and then argues that when a woman claims the rights of men and the character of a manly woman, she necessarily forgoes what he calls women's "own rights" to "refined consideration." The implication is that Wollstonecraft can be insulted with impunity. "Still, (said the senior) you ought to remember that she is a woman. *She* ought to remember it (said the young man.)" Thus political behavior, like abstract thought, continued to be specifically proscribed as a threat to sensual attractiveness. "*Cupid* is a timid, playful child, and is frightened at the helmet of Minerva," observed Maria Edgeworth.[12]

Only the Republican Mother was spared this hostility. The concept was a variant of the argument for the improved education of women that republicans like Judith Sargent Murray and Wollstonecraft herself had demanded. It defended education for women not only for their autonomy and self-realization but also so that they could be better wives and better mothers for the next generation of virtuous republican citizens—especially sons. In a widely reprinted speech, "Thoughts upon Female Education," originally given at the new Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia, the physician and politician Benjamin Rush addressed the issue directly: "The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, *to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.*"[13] The Republican Mother was an educated woman who could be spared the criticism normally directed at the intellectually competent woman because she placed her learning at her family's service.

The Republican Mother's life was dedicated to the service of civic virtue. She educated her sons for it; she condemned and corrected her husband's lapses from it. It was commonly believed that republican government was fragile and rested on the presence of virtuous citizens. The creation of those virtuous citizens required wives and mothers who were well informed, "properly methodical," and free of "invidious and rancorous passions." It was perhaps more than mere coincidence that the word *virtue* was derived from the Latin word for *man*, with its connotations of virility. Political action seemed somehow inherently masculine. Virtue in a woman seemed to require another theater for its display. To that end theorists created a mother who had a political purpose and argued that her domestic behavior had a direct political function in the republic.

This constellation of ideas and the republican rhetoric that made it convincing appear at great length in the Columbia College commencement oration of 1795 entitled "Female Influence." Behind the flowery language lurks a social and political message.

> Let us then figure to ourselves the accomplished woman, surrounded by a sprightly band, from the babe that imbibes the nutritive fluid, to the generous youth just ripening into manhood. . . . Let us contemplate the mother distributing the mental nourishment to the fond smiling circle, by means proportionate to their different powers of reception, watching the gradual openings of their minds, and studying their various turns of temper; see, under her cultivating hand, reason assuming the reins of government, and knowledge increasing gradually to her beloved pupils. . . . the Genius of Liberty hovers triumphant over the glorious scene. . . . Yes, ye fair, the reformation of a world is in your power. . . . Contemplate the rising glory of confederated America. Consider that your exertions can best secure, increase, and perpetuate it. The solidity and stability of the liberties of your country rest with you; since Liberty is never sure, 'till Virtue reigns triumphant. . . . Already may we see the lovely daughters of Columbia asserting the importance and the honour of their sex. "Let us" . . . say they . . . "assiduously employ our influence over the men, in promoting their happiness and the best interests of society." . . . Begin then, ye fair! . . . It rests with you to make this retreat [from the corruptions of Europe] doubly peaceful, doubly happy, by banishing from it those crimes and corruptions, which have never yet failed of giving rise to tyranny, or anarchy. While you thus keep our country virtuous, you maintain its independence.[14]

Defined this way, the educated woman ceased to threaten the sanctity of marriage; the intellectual woman need not be masculine. In this awkward and, in the 1790s, still only vaguely expressed fashion, the traditional womanly virtues were endowed with a political purpose. "Let the ladies of a country be educated properly,"

Rush said, "and they will not only make and administer its laws, but form its manners and character."[15]

The ideology of Republican Motherhood was deeply ambivalent. Those who opposed women in politics were challenged by the proposal that women could—and should—play a political role through influencing their husbands and raising patriotic children. The Republican Mother was to encourage in her sons civic interest and participation. She was to educate both sons and daughters and guide them in the paths of morality and virtue. She was to take advantage of the "authority" invested in her by love and courtship to "mould the taste, the manners, and the conduct" of her admirers and her husband. But she was not to tell her male friends and relatives for whom to vote. She was a citizen but not really a constituent.

On the one hand, Republican Motherhood was a progressive ideology. Women were redefined as more than "helpmates" to their husbands. Within the dynamic relationships of the private family—between husbands and wives, mothers and children—it allocated an assertive role to women. In the past Western political theory had rarely contemplated the role of women in the civic culture. A political community that now accepted women as political actors would have to eliminate the assumption that the world of women is separate from the empire of men. The ideology of Republican Motherhood seemed to accomplish what the Enlightenment had not by identifying the intersection of the woman's private domain and the public order.

The notion that a mother can perform a political function represents the recognition that a citizen's political socialization takes place at an early age, that the family is a basic part of the system of political communication, and that patterns of family authority influence the general political culture. Most premodern political societies—and even some fairly modern democracies—maintained unarticulated, but nevertheless very firm, social restrictions that isolated the family's domestic world from politics. The willingness of the American woman to overcome this ancient separation brought her into the all-male political community.[16] In this sense Republican Motherhood was a very important, even revolutionary invention. It altered the female domain in which most women had always lived out their lives; it justified women's absorption and participation in the civic culture. Women had the major role in developing this formulation, women who had learned from the exigencies of the Revolution that the country needed Marias, not Louisas. Those who shared the vision of the Republican Mother usually insisted upon better education, clearer recognition of women's economic contributions, and a strong political identification with the republic. The ideology was strong enough to rout "Philanthropos" and "Morpheus" by redefining female political behavior as valuable rather than abnormal, as a source of strength to the republic rather than an embarrassment. The ideology would be revived as a rallying point for many twentieth-century women reformers of the progressive era who saw their commitment to honest politics, efficient urban sanitation, and pure food and drug laws as an extension of their responsibilities as mothers.

But Republican Motherhood legitimized only a minimum of political sophistication and interest. Women were expected to be content to perform their narrow political role permanently and were not expected to wish for fuller participation. Just as planters claimed that democracy in the antebellum South rested on the economic base of slavery, so egalitarian society was said to rest on the moral base of deference among a class of people—women—who would devote their efforts to service by raising sons and disciplining husbands to be virtuous citizens of the republic. The learned woman, who might very well wish to make choices as well as to influence attitudes, was a visible threat to this arrangement. Women were to contain their political judgments within their homes and families; they were not to bridge the world outside and the world within.

In this sense restricting women's politicization was one of a series of conservative choices that Americans made in the postwar years as they avoided the full implications of their own Revolutionary radicalism. In America responsibility for maintaining public virtue was channeled into domestic life. By these decisions Americans may well have been spared the agony of the French cycle of revolution and counterrevolution, which spilled more blood and produced a political system more retrogressive than had the American war. Nevertheless the impact of this choice was to delay the resolution of matters of particular concern to women—the continuation of coverture, for example, the inability of married women to control their own earnings, the right to judgment by a jury of their peers.

When the war was over, Judith Sargent Murray predicted "a new era in female history."[17] That new era remained to be created by women, fortified by their memories and myths of female strength during the trials of war, politicized by their resentment of male legislators slighting issues of greatest significance to women. But it could not be created until the inherent paradox of Republican Motherhood was resolved, until the world was not separated into a woman's realm of domesticity and nurture and a man's world of politics and intellect. The promises of the republic had yet to be fulfilled; remembering the Revolution helped to keep confidence alive. "Yes, gentlemen," said Elizabeth Cady Stanton to the New York legislature in 1854, "in republican America . . . we, the daughters of the revolutionary heroes of '76 demand at your hands the redress of our grievances—a revision of your State constitution—a new code of laws."[18] Stanton would wrestle throughout her own career with the contradictory demands of domesticity and civic activism. The ambivalent relationship between motherhood and citizenship would be one of the most lasting, and most paradoxical, legacies of the Revolutionary generation.

1783: New Jersey Women Vote Under the Terms of a State Statute

(Equal Rights)

A statute passed by the New Jersey legislature in 1783, authorized voting rights to "all inhabitants of this state, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds proclamation money." Under the terms of the statute, women in New Jersey exercised their right to vote.

Despite the enormous contributions to the Revolutionary War effort made by the women of the colonies, little in the way of rights or privileges accrued to them that they had not previously held. While the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are both viewed as seminal documents in American history, for women they were not. Several oppressed groups sought recognition in the Constitution while it was being written by the Founding Fathers. African-Americans, Native Americans, nonproperty holders, and artisans, all of whom were excluded from participation in the public sphere, including suffrage, had all participated in the Revolution and sought inclusion in the new nation. At bottom, all hoped that the rhetoric used by the colonists against the British would give the framers of the Constitution pause when dealing with minority groups at home.

Women, too, sought their just reward for responding to the political crisis as they did. While husbands and fathers were away fighting the British, women had to take over the tasks of keeping households, estates, and businesses as intact as possible. These new responsibilities were, of course, in addition to the multitude of daily tasks that traditionally fell to women. While women felt themselves inadequate to the responsibilities thrust upon them in the beginning, they gradually became competent managers. And, while it was expected that women would revert to their former roles once the war ended, women wanted recognition for the invaluable service they had rendered. Many of them were outspoken in their expectations. Abigail Adams had warned her husband John not to forget the ladies. And Mary Willing Byrd of Virginia voiced the discontent of many women when she noted that, despite all she had done, despite the fact that she was a model citizen, despite her patriotism, she "paid [her] taxes and have not been Personally or Virtually represented. My property is taken from me and I have no redress."

Nevertheless, the Constitution made no mention of women. Indians were granted a special role, slaves were designated as "three-fifths a person," and virtually all adult white males were guaranteed suffrage. But women were excluded. They were also excluded in state constitutions, with one notable exception. New Jersey enacted a statute that made it legal for women to vote in 1783. In 1787, there is evidence that women voted, and the election law of 1790 in New Jersey made clear reference to voters as "he or she." In October 1797, women voted in large numbers for a Federalist candidate in a hotly contested election. But repeated attempts were made to overturn the statute allowing women to vote, and in 1806, a raucous election in which people voted more than once, became the catalyst for the change that prohibited women from voting. The committee charged with investigating voter fraud in the 1806 election enacted a new statute in 1807, aimed at preventing "undesirables" from voting. Women were included in this category, and thereafter suffrage in New Jersey was limited to adult white males of property.

1790: Judith Sargent Stevens Murray Argues for Equal Education for Women

(Equal Rights, Education)

In 1790, two years before Mary Wollstonecraft published her book on women's rights, Judith Sargent Stevens Murray argued in *Massachusetts Magazine* that women were just as capable of rational thought as men (and perhaps more so).

The late eighteenth century was a time of great intellectual ferment in America just as in Europe, a time known as the Enlightenment. Part of that ferment was a reevaluation of the place and potential of women, a critical assessment of the roles and responsibilities that had traditionally been assigned to them. One example of this trend was a debate held by Yale students on the topic of "Whether women ought to be admitted into the magistracy and government of empires and republics." Another was the essay by Judith Sargent Stevens Murray.

Murray demonstrated a strong intellectual bent from early childhood. As a result, she was allowed to share lessons with her brother Winthrop, who was studying with a local minister in preparation for entering Harvard. Schooled only by the books her brother used for Harvard, Murray began writing to fill the days while her husband, a ship's captain, was at sea. She began publishing under the pseudonym "Constantia" in 1784. Her first published essay was entitled "Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, Especially in Female Bosoms" and appeared in the *Gentlemen and Ladies Town and Country Magazine*. The essay argued, among other things, that instilling a healthy degree of self-respect in women would prevent them from rushing into marriage as a means of avoiding spinsterhood.

Her husband died in 1786 while she was still childless, but she married an itinerant preacher, John Murray, the founder of the Universalist Church in America, four years later. Despite the birth of two children in 1789 and 1791 she continued her writing career, producing essays, poems, and even plays. Murray read Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in America in 1792, and although she did not agree with Wollstonecraft's radical politics, she found a kindred soul in the Englishwoman's plea for equal education for women.

It was during this period that she issued her famous challenge concerning women. "Suffer me to ask, in what" she wrote in *Massachusetts Magazine*, "the minds of females are so notoriously deficient?" She went on to inquire whether "the judgment of a male of two years old is more sage than that of a female's of the same age?" and observed "but from that period what partiality! How is the one exalted and the other depressed...The one is taught to aspire, and the other is early confined and limited." Without stating it directly, she posed the central issue of the debate about "nature versus nurture" that has been a cornerstone of the women's movement ever since.

Needing money, Murray, in 1798, published a three volume set of essays entitled *The Gleaner* under a subscription plan that included George Washington. Seven hundred and fifty people subscribed to the essays, which some critics compared to the essays of Noah Webster. When her husband suffered a stroke in 1809, Murray turned her attention to publishing his letters and sermons, and saw to the publication of his autobiography in 1816, a year after his death. Then, widowed, she moved from the vibrant cultural center of Boston where she had lived all her life to the small town of Natchez, Mississippi, to live with her daughter. Four years later, at the age of sixty-nine, she died.