

Domestic historical perspective on suffrage

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In this oral history excerpt, Rosamonde Boyd describes the view that women were less restricted during Colonial times and experienced greater equality than they did in the nineteenth century when they were perceived as the "gentler sex" and placed on a pedestal.

Audio

File:

Duration: 2:08

Transcript:

Rosamonde R. Boyd: Women could do anything they wanted to - in the colonial era - economically, professionally, mainly in running a farm or a plantation, or running an inn or having a millinery shop. Women could do most anything they wanted to do and they helped the men build the country, build the colonies, build the society, the civilization. But, in the nineteenth century, she claims, men began to think that women had some positions they wanted and women were too active, that their role was entirely too equal to that of the male. So as population increased and we had more men wanting positions, wanting opportunity, wanting the leadership, they began to talk about women being the weaker sex, women being the gentle sex, women needing the protection of men, women being so lovely that they must be worshiped on a pedestal. Men's selfishness, she thought, pushed women out of inn-keeping and pushed them out of running plantations, pushed them out of their own little businesses, and took over. Then they gave the woman the feeling of being adored and of being beautiful and of being wanted.

Constance Myers: As compensation.

Rosamonde R. Boyd: Yes, which is a very interesting approach.

Constance Myers: I think that it's probably valid. Legislation restricting their participation, or hinting at this restriction, was drafted in the state constitution where the suffrage was limited.

Rosamonde R. Boyd: Yes. Then, after 1920, we began struggling to get women back where they could do whatever they wanted without criticism.

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