

AIM: The Changing Roles of Working Class Women During the Industrial Revolution

Mid 1700's - 1830's

- Proletarianization
- Unskilled labor in early factories
- Women work and children work
- Families often work together in factories as they did on the farm – different tasks performed – owners assume it increases productivity
- Women work cheaper than men – Children work cheaper than women
- Children work because:
 - Usually no care available if woman has to work
 - Children needed to make economic contribution
 - Hired to do often dangerous jobs in factories and mines because of small stature
 - Cheap, unskilled labor

1830's - 1880's

- Roles of women and children begin to change drastically
- **1832 - Sadler Commission** – Parliamentary investigations into child labor in England – Result = **Factory Act of 1833** – first legislative limits on the ages and hours that can be worked by children in English factories
- **1842 - Mines Act** passed – for all intents and purposes women are prohibited from work in English mines
- Increasing **immigration** (especially to the US) (think Ireland) – unskilled immigrants = cheap labor to factories among other things like railroads, canals, mines, etc.
- Results:
 - Women move out of the working class workforce
 - Provide care for children – no real schooling or care available
 - Some women may do some piece work at home
 - Work only if care can be found for children
 - Married women at home = housewives = decrease in status and increased dependence on husbands as the sole provider and source of income

1880's - Early 20th Century

- The era of the “**Second Industrial Revolution**”
- New inventions open up work for women, particularly those who are unmarried: sewing machines, telephones, typewriter

- **Domestic Servants!!** - becomes the main job for women, especially unmarried ones in England by the later 1800's
- Domestic servants as an increasing profession is a reflection of the growth and wealth of the upper classes and more importantly the emerging middle class throughout the 19th century

Middle Class Women in the 19th Century

- **REMEMBER:** Middle class women did not, by and large, work! They were beneficiaries of the increasing wealth of their husbands who were the professionals, entrepreneurs, and business owners of the Industrial Revolution
- The role of women in the Middle Class:
 - Working is frowned upon
 - Women will be relegated to the "domestic sphere"
 - Independence will be seen as unfeminine
 - Women are considered the "weaker vessel"
 - Women managed the household and the domestic servants
 - "make the home a happy place" – maintain traditional values and enforce high moral standards