

Women and Children in the Revolutionary War

In addition to the men, there were also women and children in the armies. Often, their husbands and fathers were soldiers, so women and children lived with the army. The women had different jobs in the camp. They washed and mended clothes, and they did some cooking and cleaning. They sold cider and rum, and they were nurses. They were often called "camp followers" because they followed the Army as it moved from camp to camp. The work they did was important and it kept the camps healthy and running smoothly.

The children in the army had to work too. They were expected to be as busy as the adults. They hauled water and gathered firewood. Boys served as runners carrying messages from one person to another. Some boys became military musicians who played the fifes and drums. Girls helped their mothers with cooking, cleaning, and mending and washing the clothes. The children had time to work because there was no school in the army.

It was a hard life traveling with the Army, but women and children sometimes did it to keep the family together. Also, a father or husband in the army was not able to help his wife or children at home. And if the British controlled the land where you lived, it might not be safe to stay there. For example, New York City, Long Island, and Staten Island were all under British rule. Also, if you were loyal to the King and the Rebels controlled the land where you lived, it also was unsafe for you to stay there.

The army took care of its families. Women were fed half rations and children got quarter rations. They were given shelter and protected. Those who washed clothes or became musicians were paid for their work.