



# **The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970**

*Glenna Matthews*

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In the 1630s, Anne Hutchinson--the wife of a Boston merchant and mother of fifteen children--defied the Calvinist clergy by holding meetings and espousing a controversial religious stance. When asked to stop, she did not, and as a result of her outspokenness, Hutchinson was subjected to two trials, then excommunicated and exiled to upstate New York. For 200 years, Hutchinson was held as the model of an American Jezebel, a female transgressor who threatened the community with social chaos and sexual impropriety. But as *The Rise of Public Woman* skillfully reveals, what was really on trial was not Anne Hutchinson but the expression of public womanhood.

This richly woven history ranges from the 17th century to the present as it masterfully traces the movement of American women out of the home and into the public sphere. Matthews examines the Revolutionary War period, when women exercised political strength through the boycott of household goods and Elizabeth Freeman successfully sued for freedom from enslavement in one of the two cases that ended slavery in Massachusetts. She follows the expansion of the country west, where a developing frontier attracted strong resourceful women, and into the growing cities, where women entered public life through employment in factories and offices. Matthews illuminates the contributions of such outstanding Civil War women as Mary Ann "Mother" Bickerdyke, who supervised a cattle drive down the banks of the Mississippi so that soldiers would have fresh milk; Clara Barton, whose humanitarian work on behalf of the International Red Cross led her to become the first American woman to serve as official representative of the federal government; and Sojourner Truth, an impassioned black orator who devoted herself to emancipation. And Matthews brings the narrative through to the 1970s, detailing the growing presence of women in American politics--from the suffrage marches of the early twentieth century, to the courageous stands women took during the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

A fascinating and perceptive look at women throughout our history, *The Rise of Public Woman* offers an important perspective on the changing public role of women in the United States.

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