Women Of The Grange: Mutuality And Sisterhood In Rural America, 1866-1920

Donald B. Marti

In this decade, America became the wealthiest country in the world with no obvious rival. Yet by 1930 she had hit a depression that was to have world-wide consequences. But in the good times almost everybody seemed to have a reasonably well paid job and almost everybody seemed to have a lot of spare cash to spend. One of the reasons for this was the introduction of hire-purchase whereby you put a deposit on an item that you wanted and paid instalments on that item, with interest, so that you paid back more than the price for the item but did not have to make one payment in one go. Hire-purchase The New Woman became associated with the rise of feminism and the campaign for women’s suffrage, as well as with the rise of consumerism, mass culture, and freer expressions of sexuality that defined the first decades of the 20th century. In late 19th- and early 20th-century America, a new image of womanhood emerged that began to shape public views and understandings of women’s role in society. Identified by contemporaries as a Gibson Girl, a suffragist, a Progressive reformer, a bohemian feminist, a college girl, a bicyclist, a flapper, a working-class militant, or a Hollywood vamp, all of these images came to epitomize the New Woman, an umbrella term for modern understandings of femininity.