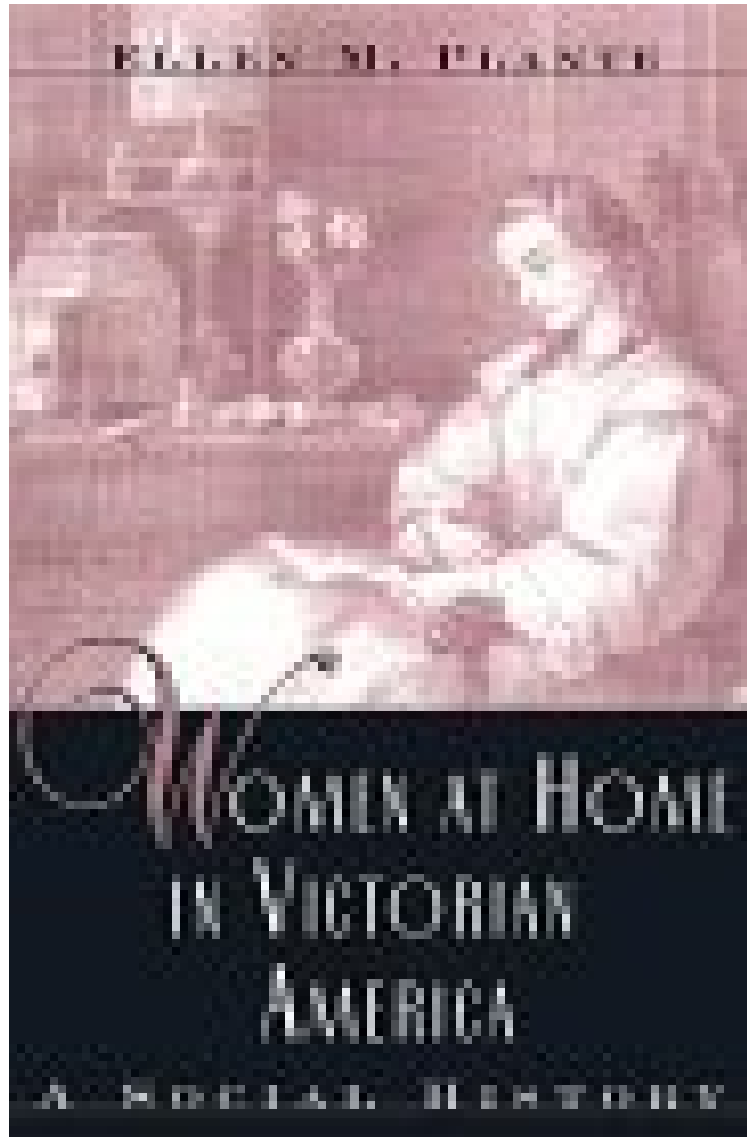


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Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History

Ellen M. Plante

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Ellen M. Plante : Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. FUN, EASY, INFORMATIVE, WORTH READING, BUY THISBy C. BradenVery fun, easy read. Detailed. Well organized. Tells you what a woman would encounter in Victorian life, for example, how did calling cards work, which corner was bent if you visited in person and which if you came to visit all the women in the family and not one only. How long did you stay and was it rude to keep your gloves on? What did

the domestic servant do and what did you do? (Hint: they cooked daily meals but you made specialty items like cakes), which card games should you know? What marked a lady? How did you walk down the street (man on the outside by the curb to avoid splashing the dress, never twirl the parasol, proper day clothes vs night clothes, what to say and not to say to passers by), social rules (never turn your back on the person sitting next to you at the table or elsewhere), splits into Southern US and Northern US since societal rules were different. What brooch is considered vile in mourning (see through stones) vs Opals (always tasteful), and even has some gents hints in there (if refused a dance, do not ask again). How do you introduce (man to lady, young to old, inferior to superior). Info starts for 1840's and takes you to 1900. What flowers meant what? (red roses were love, of course, but what were sweet peas?), what did it mean if she tapped her fan to her cheek? Boy, we could use some of the manners from back then! Watch it change from kids are little laborers to beloved children. Why the change? (economics and industrialization), lots and lots of great info. Strong recommend. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Amazing! This book is what I have been looking for!!! By YA Librarian This is an amazing book. I have been searching for a book like this for many years and just happened to stumble across it. I would like a copy of my own, but am unable to buy one due to the price. This book gives a lot of detail about the lives of Victorian women. Some of the information people will have read before in other books, but this one combines what you may have read in other books and adds new information as well. Within this book there are some primary source documents such as diary entries and also excerpts from journals during the time. Some of the topics that are written about are: a woman's life span, child, woman, motherhood and old age (and what is expected of them), knitting, daily tasks, furniture that would be appropriate for a parlor and how to behave, plus much more. This book is a MUST HAVE for those interested in Victorian society. Writers and people doing research will find this book a valuable tool. Those who are interested in Victorian women and have no history background will find this book an easy read. I strongly suggest you borrow this book from the library and then if you find it a great tool buy your own copy. This book is a gem. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Book on Victorian Life! By Sylviastel This book is an essential in regards to learning about being a woman in American Victorian times. The author has done her homework and I'm rereading it for research. Ellen Plante explains the lifestyle regarding the Victorian wife and daughter in American society. Things were not so easy even with luxuries such as washing machines, dishwashers, and iceboxes. Before those inventions, the Victorian housewife's utmost duty was toward her husband, children, and church. I am surprised that this book is no longer in print and should be re-issued. It explained women's lives during this difficult time period in American life. Regardless, the woman did not have it as easy as we might expect. Their home was their lives. They were expected to be subservient to the husband. The author points out parallels between the plantation wives and the slaves as if they are to serve only one master. We know from history and research that plantation masters had slaves as mistresses and fathered children completely disregarding their wives at times.

In *Women at Home in Victorian America*, author Ellen Plante expands our view of an important, if often-overlooked, figure in the story of America's transformation from an agrarian to an urban, industrialized society: the middle-class Victorian woman. Plante makes generous use of primary sources to explore the ideals, virtues, and exotica of the Victorian domestic sphere and provides readers with an authentic record of the great utopian vision embraced by women of the era. In *Women at Home in Victorian America* you will find 19th-century illustrations, descriptions, and contemporaneous accounts of every aspect of Victorian home life, including courtship and marriage, the ideal home, motherhood and childrearing, etiquette and deportment, recipes for home remedies and beauty, and more.

From Kirkus *A woman's world--from dollhouse to mourning dress--is cataloged in this practical overview of 19th-century American life. From the beginning, Victorian Homes columnist Plante stresses that every practice of a proper 19th-century middle-class American woman's life served a higher purpose: It answered society's call for her to be a "virtuous" being.* Achieving this state required a combination of qualities such as religious devotion, industry, and good manners. When courting, it meant seeking a "safe" marriage that achieved balance between spouses of the same class. The home was to be a "bastion of morality, comfort, and refinement," with clearly defined public and private spaces. Housework required planning, such as the system offered by the Beecher sisters in *The American Woman's Home* (Tuesday, washing; Wednesday, ironing; etc.). Virtuous dress meant wearing the colors appropriate to one's age (light for youth, somber for age); two years' mourning wear for widows; gloves at all times for outdoor voyages. While there's enjoyment in the sheer mass of facts gathered here, the most informative material comes from the many popular sources cited, such as Godey's *Lady's Book*, Hill's *Manual*, the Beechers' books, and the writings of Charles Eastlake and Lydia Maria Child. Not surprisingly, some advice is still relevant today, such as this rule for treating the aged, from *The Voyage of Life*: "If you would make the aged happy, lead them to feel that there is still a place for them where they can be useful." Plante provides fun browsing, though those seeking an original thesis or keen scholarly approach should look elsewhere. And its journalistic style, though clear, lacks the verve of Daniel Pool's social portrait of 19th-century England. Nonetheless, a full compendium, ideal for inquisitive readers. (50 line drawings, not seen) --

