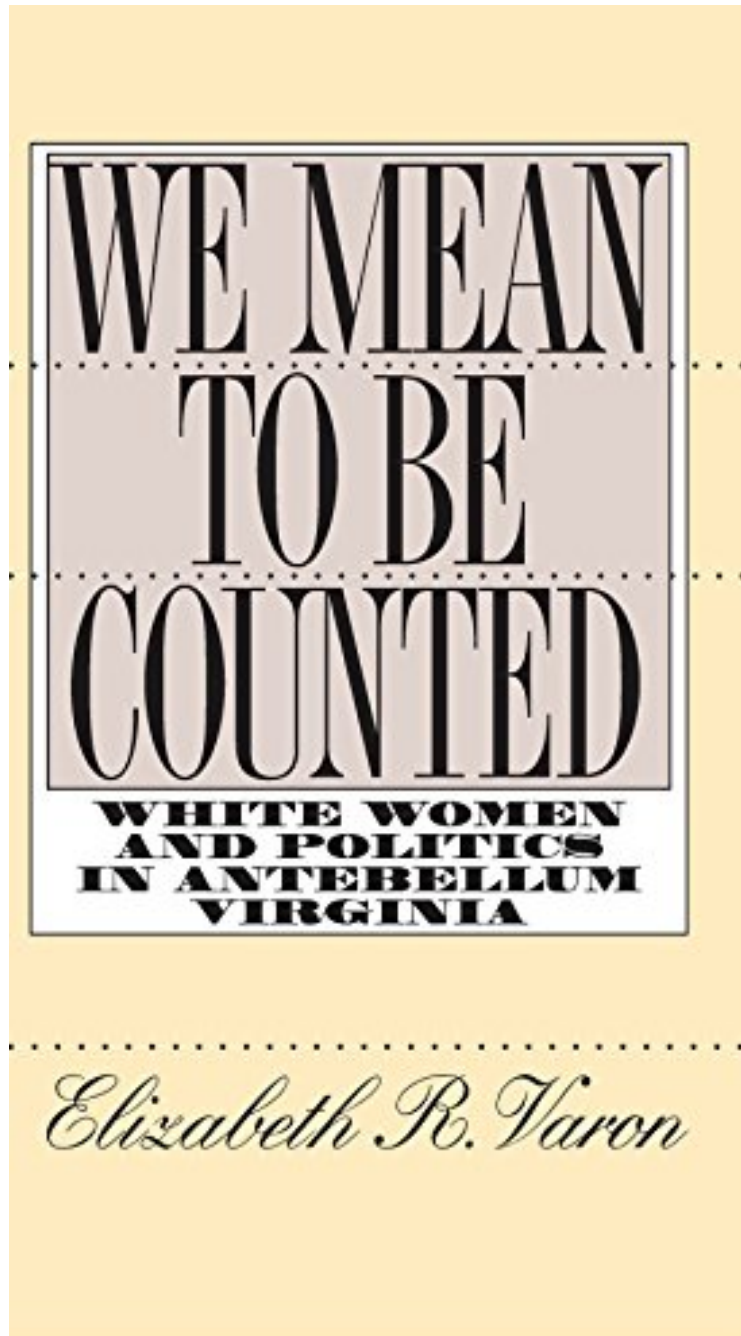


[Mobile library] We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Gender and American Culture)

We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Gender and American Culture)

Elizabeth R. Varon

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Elizabeth R. Varon : We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Gender and American Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Gender and American Culture)*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A new look at antebellum Southern womenBy Valorie T.The historical consensus is that white women in the antebellum period were excluded from political participation. Varon argues that elite middle class women were active in political participation, but they did not attempt to occupy the public sphere of men. Instead, women organized benevolent societies, worked as mediators, petitioned, volunteered, wrote, and attended public meetings. This book is not to show us women were always a cohesive force with a long term goal of suffrage or equality, indeed not because Southern women were generally quite content with the social order. *We Mean to be Counted* merely rejects the premise that women were entirely excluded from politics by showing that, no, there were women involved. Whether 10 or 10,000, women still found a place for themselves and their talents. According to Varon, women were believed by their nature to be disinterested, moral forces of restraint and education for men and children. In occupying a public sphere through political activity, women were fulfilling the duties of their private sphere of motherhood and wifedom. Organizations such as girl schools and colonization societies were seen as perfect for the nature of a woman, and any political knowledge passed on to her through participation in parties such as the Whig party (Whig Womanhood) was only so that she could use her intelligence to form a patriotic family. Initially also, Southern women were to act as sectional mediators between the North and South. As time went on, though, and slavery debates heated up, the concept of "Confederate motherhood," with its fervent belief in preserving the south as it was. Varon has written a well rounded perspective on elite white antebellum women and their roles in politics, which she supports convincingly with her source usage. By refuting a popular and generalized claim that women were not politically active in this time, she contributes new information that is unique and important not only to southern history, but women's history and political science. The book is easy to read, flows coherently, and is made interesting by her inclusion of actual quotes and manuscript snippets. The only weakness to be found in this book is that it is absent anything related to women other than the elite class with the occasional middle class woman thrown in and a small inclusion on African American women after the war. The book would have presented a more complete picture of women in the antebellum period if it included some information about lower class women. Though lacking influence, common women still would have had ideas and opinions political in nature, and would have communicated them to one another by some means. It would seem by the evidence Varon gives that the political participation of women was very large in influence and widespread among the gender, but it must be taken into account that she is speaking of a portion of the female population, not just 'white women' in general. The authority with which Varon speaks could be misleading in this way. Virginia was a unique state in the South, though, and by isolating it from the rest of the United States, we see just how much it was. This fact must be kept in mind while reading lest the mistake of made of assuming the entire south was like Virginia.

Over the past two decades, historians have successfully disputed the notion that American women remained wholly outside the realm of politics until the early twentieth century. Still, a consensus has prevailed that, unlike their Northern counterparts, women of the antebellum South were largely excluded from public life. With this book, Elizabeth Varon effectively challenges such historical assumptions. Using a wide array of sources, she demonstrates that throughout the antebellum period, white Southern women of the slaveholding class were important actors in the public drama of politics. Through their voluntary associations, legislative petitions, presence at political meetings and rallies, and published appeals, Virginia's elite white women lent their support to such controversial reform enterprises as the temperance movement and the American Colonization Society, to the electoral campaigns of the Whig and Democratic Parties, to the literary defense of slavery, and to the causes of Unionism and secession. Against the backdrop of increasing sectional tension, Varon argues, these women struggled to fulfill a paradoxical mandate: to act both as partisans who boldly expressed their political views and as mediators who infused public life with the "feminine" virtues of compassion and harmony.

This pathbreaking [book] will appeal to both scholars and nonspecialist audiences."Choice"
"A well-written, carefully argued examination of Virginia women's public roles."
"Left History"
"A very good book that all women's and southern historians need to read."
"Journal of Southern History"
"Varon argues convincingly that women took an active role in antebellum politics in the Commonwealth of Virginia."
"The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography"
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History" A very good book that all women's and southern historians need to read." *Journal of Southern History* "This book clears a window into a previously obscure realm of southern white women's history." *American Historical* " A very good book that all women's and southern historians need to read.--*Journal of Southern History* This book is an important contribution to Virginia and southern history and to the history of southern and American women. . . . A brilliant study that focuses on a small geographic area but makes a major contribution to the whole of American history.--*Virginia Libraries* Meticulously researched and compellingly written, *We Mean to be Counted* is a groundbreaking study that invests antebellum southern white elite and middle-class women with a rich and complex political history, from their involvement in single-sex voluntary organizations and mixed-sex reform movements, to their participation in Whig and eventually Democratic politics, and finally to the politics of secession and Southern nationalism. Of interest not just to women's historians, this is a work that will point the way toward a new political history that takes into account gender.--Jane S. De Hart, University of California, Santa Barbara Varon's groundbreaking study of women's roles in politics in antebellum Virginia puts an end to any supposition that the mythic creature was based on reality. . . . Varon argues convincingly that women took an active role in antebellum politics in the Commonwealth of Virginia and suggests that the patterns of their political activity probably held true across the South. . . . A solid and imaginative reading . . . that expand[s] our view of Virginia women's political history.--*The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* A well-written, carefully argued examination of Virginia women's public roles. . . . This study broadens our understanding of antebellum southern women's lives and their involvement in a world beyond their traditional domestic sphere.--*Left History* A consistently revealing portrait of Virginia women's political activities. . . . Illuminates how both politicians and women constructed the southern lady as political symbol and weapon as well as political actor. . . . This book clears a window into a previously obscure realm of southern white women's history, and that is no small achievement.--*American Historical* This pathbreaking [book] will appeal to both scholars and nonspecialist audiences.--*Choice* Studies of the antebellum South have tended to assume, or to argue, that the peculiarities of the southern social order prevented women from participating in public life. Now here comes Elizabeth Varon with evidence of widespread reform and partisan political activity among white women in the antebellum period--and in Virginia, of all places. This is an eye-opening chapter in the history of women's activism in the United States.--Suzanne Lebsock, University of Washington *From the Inside Flap* Demonstrates the widespread reform efforts and partisan political activities of elite white women in antebellum Virginia. An eye-opening contribution to the history of women's activism in the U.S.