HOW DID AMERICAN WOMEN GET THE VOTE?

Every year on election day, women come to Mt. Hope Cemetery in Rochester where they place stickers on a tombstone to honor the woman who symbolizes the right of all citizens to cast their ballot.

The stickers say "I voted" or "thank you" and sometimes there are personal letters or flowers left on or in front of Susan B. Anthony's tombstone.

This past year the cemetery, which usually closes at 5 PM, installed floodlights and stayed open until 9 pm to accommodate the hundreds of people, men and women, who came to celebrate that something amazing that just happened -- unthinkable less than a century ago — a woman was on the ballot in every state as Presidential candidate of a major political party.

Today I am going to tell you some highlights, in as short a time as I can, of the extremely complex and amazing struggle of women in the US to make this incredible milestone possible.

I can't tell you everything so I hope my talk and the handout will encourage you to research further how it was that so many women, and also men, were successful in the arduous struggle to grant basic rights to half the American population.

When the framers of the Declaration of Independence wrote, "all men are created equal" they really meant *all white men of property*.

The exclusion of women from participation in political life up to the mid-nineteenth century was absolute and universally unchallenged -- everyone assumed that any legislation involving the word "person" meant "male."

Everyone also accepted that women were naturally in charge of household duties, a sphere closed to men, and that men were in charge of everything else, including making ALL decisions about women's finances, the household, the community and the country.

This was the post-Civil War world of Carrie Lane, a child of politically-aware parents who owned a farm in Iowa. The family continually discussed national events at home.

But a turning point in 13-year old Carrie's life occurred on Election Day. Her father and his male farm workers stood by the door about to go and vote, and her mother did not join them. Carrie asked why her mother was not going also and they all laughed at her, including her mother.

Voting, she was told, was too important a civic duty to leave to women.

And out the door went the men, still laughing.

That was definitely an "ah-ha moment" for Carrie.

After high school she wanted to go to college, but her father tried to prevent her from attending. When she insisted that she would pay most of the tuition, he relented.
To make ends meet, she worked as a dishwasher, then in the school library, and also as a teacher at rural schools during school breaks.

Only six of her classmates were female. Carrie and some of them joined a student organization aimed at advancing student learning skills and self-confidence.
But only men were allowed to speak in meetings.

Another a-ha moment.

Carrie had enough - she defied the rules and spoke up during a male debate. This started a discussion about women's participation in the group, and this ultimately led to women gaining the right to speak in meetings in the college.

Her speaking skills improved. She was the only female of her class to graduate, but was also the school's first female valedictorian.

We will leave Carrie for now and go back four decades to 1840 when another ah-ha moment was taking place in England.

It was a time when the American abolitionist movement was gaining momentum and in that year the World Anti-Slavery Convention was being held in London.

Eight American women who had been extremely active in the movement attended with their husbands. They hoped to attend as delegates but the convention voted to ban women from participating.

It was an epiphany moment - while they were working tirelessly to procure freedom and rights for enslaved Africans, they suddenly realized that they and all women were kept socially and legally inferior to white men.

Two of those rejected delegates were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and they decided to call a convention of their own, this one devoted to women's rights.

In 1848 Elizabeth, who had now moved from New York City to the quiet town of Seneca Falls NY, invited Philadelphian Lucretia Mott and Lucretia's sister to come and help her plan for that convention.

They met with two other abolitionists who had also been with them in London, Jane Hunt and Mary Ann McClintock, **and at that moment the American women's rights movement was born.**

Lucretia and her sister were Quakers, really the only religious community that respected the equal status of women. It was accepted that women could speak in Quaker Meeting for Worship, if moved by the Spirit.

At this time many Quakers were extremely active in the abolitionist movement, both men and women were making impassioned public speeches throughout the country, and were experienced in campaigns for social justice.

So you might not be surprised to learn that four of the five women planning the convention -- all except Elizabeth Stanton -- were Quakers.

At the meeting the five women drew up a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, and it begins: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that ***all men and women*** are created equal" and then lists eighteen what they called "injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman."

In addition, they also drafted eleven resolutions, arguing that women had a natural right to equality in all spheres, including economic equity. But it was the ninth resolution that was the most radical: it stated that it was the duty of women to secure for themselves the right to vote.

After obtaining space in the Wesleyan Chapel they put announcements in all the local papers saying that "A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women would be held on July 19. "

About two and half weeks later 250 women and 40 men, including Frederick Douglass, attended.

All except one of the 11 resolutions passed unanimously-- the exception was the one proclaiming a woman's right to vote. Both Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Stanton gave impassioned speeches in its defense and then that one barely passed.

This was the first of a great many meetings and annual conventions and the movement took wing.

Petitions and lobbying stopped during the Civil War when women took on many roles to help the war effort, including as spies and fundraisers and medical caregivers, and they demonstrated they could keep their communities going while the men were serving in the war.

This increased respect for women and also gave more of them confidence to fight for equality after the war.

In addition, many suffragists supported temperance legislation, as they felt liquor was detrimental to the cause of women's equality, especially regarding resultant violence toward wives and children who had no recourse or protection or financial means to leave the household.
In this way they made allies of many in the Temperance Movement.

One of my favorite stories concerns a friend of Elizabeth Stanton, Amanda Bloomer, a temperance and woman's rights advocate. Amanda lived in Seneca Falls and was the first female news publisher in the U.S.

At the second women's rights convention held in Rochester, Amanda introduced Susan B. Anthony, an abolitionist and a Quaker, to Elizabeth Stanton.

Elizabeth had six children and was a terrific writer. Anthony was an experienced speaker who decided never to marry because she didn't want to be subservient to a man.

It was a perfect symbiotic relationship.

Elizabeth wrote the speeches and Susan gave them. Sometimes Susan stayed with the children and Elizabeth went out to speak.

A room in the Stanton house was set aside for Susan. Elizabeth's husband once declared that Susan saw his wife more than he did.

In 1869 the two women founded the National Women's Suffrage Association and published a weekly newsletter, "The Revolution."

The style in the 1860's was a dangerous, uncomfortable wide skirt with many layers. Those campaigning for women's rights found it difficult to wear this fashion and wore the new hoop skirt and bustle -- but this still was cumbersome until Amanda Bloomer used her magazine to popularize a new less restrictive style which rapidly became named after her.

Susan Anthony loved it and began wearing "Bloomers" when she spoke. Sadly, the press focussed on her bloomer outfit and not on her words, so she went back to traditional long dresses, but nothing overly fashionable and always trying to be comfortable, usually long dark dresses with a lace collar.

She became very media-savvy. The press followed her and she was careful not to ever smile in public when photographed, because she felt she would not be taken seriously if she did.

When the 14th amendment was passed in 1868, the language stated that everyone had the right to vote who was born or naturalized in the United States.

Remember - it was understood that "everyone" was a man.

But, based on this language, in November 1872 Anthony and 15 other women in Rochester cast a ballot in the Presidential election, and two weeks later were arrested for illegally voting in New York State.

Only Anthony was put on trial and she felt if she could convince the jury that since women were citizens, they could not be denied the vote.

But the judge was an anti-suffragist and refused to let her testify in her own defense. He directed the jury to find a verdict of guilty.

Although Susan Anthony lost, the trial was a turning point in the struggle for women's suffrage.

Until then, people had ridiculed Anthony as an "old maid" who wanted to upset the traditional authority of men.

But the courage she had shown at her trial won her new respect, and more support, especially from younger women.

This was a new generation. They too went out and made speeches and handed out petitions. Affectionately, they called her "Aunt Susan."
Even some men were beginning to admire her.
She continued to fight for decades.
In 1906, Susan B. Anthony made her last speech at a women's rights convention in Baltimore.
She was given a 10 minute ovation.
She told the women, "I am here for a little time only, and then my place will be filled... The fight must not cease. You must see that it does not stop.
Failure is impossible."

So now we go back to Carrie, who became a teacher after college and the first female superintendent of the Mason City, Iowa school district.

She met a newspaperman, Leo Chapman, who she married in 1885. She was required to quit her job, because female teachers were not allowed to be marrried.

No surprise that Carrie was now getting more involved in women's rights issues.
They lived California. Leo taught her the newspaper business and she honed her writing and reporting skills.
Sadly, Leo died within the first two years of their marriage. Carrie remained in San Francisco where she became that city's first female reporter.

In 1890, Carrie Chapman married George Catt, a wealthy engineer from Iowa who supported her involvement in suffrage.

They made an agreement, perhaps one of the first pre-nups: she would spend two months a year on the road, campaigning for women's suffrage and he agreed.

Carrie became a delegate to the National American Woman Suffrage Association and in 1900 succeeded Susan B. Anthony as its President.

George Catt was one of many men who supported, lobbied for and also financed the suffragist movement.

But many men and women were vehemently opposed to women voting, and the anti-Suffrage movement was very strong, especially in the South.

There the majority felt it was un-Christian for women to be political and others feared that black women would use their new power to change the balance of society.

Although black men could now vote, Jim Crow laws
and groups such as the Klan were keeping them from the polls.

But something else was going on — the Western U.S. Territories, one by one, granted women the right to vote. When they became states, women there already had the right to vote.

And so it began -- a groundswell of protests that every state should have universal suffrage like Oregon, like Wyoming, like Utah, like Washington State . . .

Many women, like Alice Paul -- another Quaker -- were impatient with the speeches and petitions of the suffragists. Alice Paul learned aggressive civil disobedience and how to survive in prison from Emmaline Parkhurst in England.

She returned to the US and formed the National Woman's Party, whose members continually picketed the White House in every weather, around the clock, trying to bring media attention to their cause and influence President Wilson by highlighting his hypocrisy in that he was trying to bring democracy to Europe, but women were still not part of the larger democratic fabric at home.

These women wanted aggressive action and became known as suffragettes. They sometimes defaced property, picketed the White House in rain and snow, had huge marches with pageants and floats, did everything they could think of to make noise and bring attention to their cause.

While picketing or marching they were often attacked. Policemen would walk past, pretending they didn't notice.

The big hats the women wore protected their eyes from rotten eggs, cayenne pepper and garbage thrown at them everywhere they went. Rats were let loose at their rallies.

But still they didn't give up.

Arrests were common. They were sent to jails with horrible conditions. Cold cells with no blankets or light, some with no beds, and forced to use toilets in open areas where the guards could see everything.

Many went on hunger strikes in prison, and were force fed raw eggs, which made them vomit until they were almost dead.

Most of the charges were for illegal assembly, trespassing or obstructing the sidewalk, but they were not valid charges and the women were released.

On November 10, 1917, 33 women were arrested in Northern Virginia, where they were clubbed and tortured. This was later called "The Night of Terror."

One women was manacled to the bars above her cell and forced to stand all night, another was slammed twice against an iron bench, another suffered a heart attack and received no medical care for 14 hours.

An elderly suffragette was poked between her eyes with an iron bar and some of the women were sexually assaulted by the guards.

This went on for two weeks until they finally were released.

Four months later the D.C. Court of Appeals declared that all the suffragist arrests had been unconstitutional and the charges were dropped.

Their accounts of what occurred during their imprisonment further helped to galvanize the movement.

Even President Wilson condemned what happened.

A few months later Woodrow Wilson publicly endorsed women's right to vote in a speech before Congress, and began to actively appeal for passage of the 19th Amendment, popularly called "The Anthony Amendment" which would give all U.S. women the right to vote.

Finally, on June 4, 1919 the amendment received the votes necessary in the House to be sent to the States for ratification.

And here's my favorite and last story -

Thirty-six states were needed to ratify the Amendment and 35 had done so. Tennessee seemed to be the most likely swing state -- it could go either way.

The Tennessee State Senate voted to ratify, but the State House of Representatives was tied.

In August 1920 both suffragists and anti-suffragists arrived en masse in Nashville to lobby ardently for their cause. It seemed as though the tie would continue.

24-year old Harry Burn, the youngest representative, was against ratification.

But the morning of the vote he received a note from his mother who was not well.

When he read it, he changed history.

His mother asked him to "vote for suffrage. . . and implored her son to to "be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the 'rat' in ratification."

By voting "aye" he broke the tie and made the vision of women of Seneca Falls a reality.

When interviewed later he said, "I knew that a mother's advice is always safest for a boy to follow and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification. . . .I appreciated the fact that an opportunity such as seldom comes to a mortal man to free 17 million women from political slavery was mine."

So women now are considered full citizens with the right to vote because a young man listened to his mother.

On August 26,1920 the 19th Amendment became law.

Only one of those in attendance at the first Seneca Falls convention lived to see this wonderful watershed in American history.

The next day South St. Paul, Minnesota scheduled a special election on a water bond bill and at 5:30 a.m. Margaret Newburgh became the first woman to vote under the 19th Amendment.

And on November 2, 1920 women throughout the country finally were legally able to cast their vote for President.

One last thing about Carrie Chapman Catt: In 1920 she founded the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan organization which still has as its mission to encourage informed and active participation in government.

Although originally founded to assist newly-enfranchised women, the League's membership now includes both men and women throughout the country who continue to honor the legacy and struggles of those who made voting possible for all of us.

We are so fortunate to have had these courageous women to fight for our rights.

I feel strongly that it is now our obligation to try to help women throughout the world who still don't have these rights.

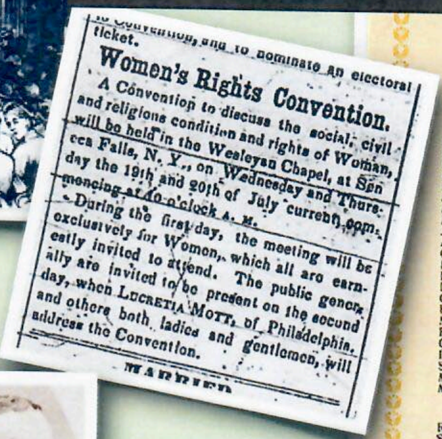
# # #

SOME HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

based on a talk by Susan Weisfeld of the LWV 3/23/2018

Election Day 2017

Seneca Falls - July 1848



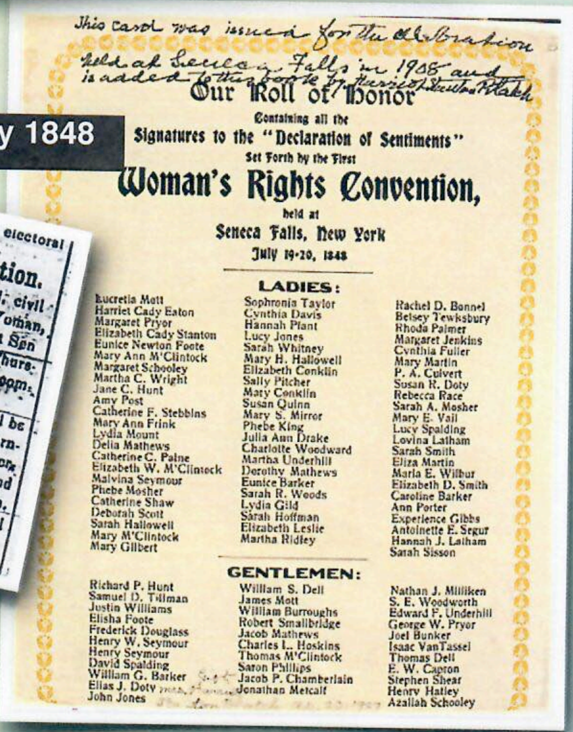
ticket.

Women's Rights Convention.

A Convention to discuss the social, civil and religions condition and rights of Woman, will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current, commencing at 10 o'clock A. M.

During the first day, the meeting will be exclusively for Women, which all are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when LUCRETIA MOTT, of Philadelphia, and others both ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention.

MARRIED



This card was issued for the celebration held at Seneca Falls in 1908 and is added to this book by [illegible]

Our Roll of Honor

Containing all the Signatures to the "Declaration of Sentiments" Set Forth by the First

Woman's Rights Convention,

held at Seneca Falls, New York July 19-20, 1848

LADIES:

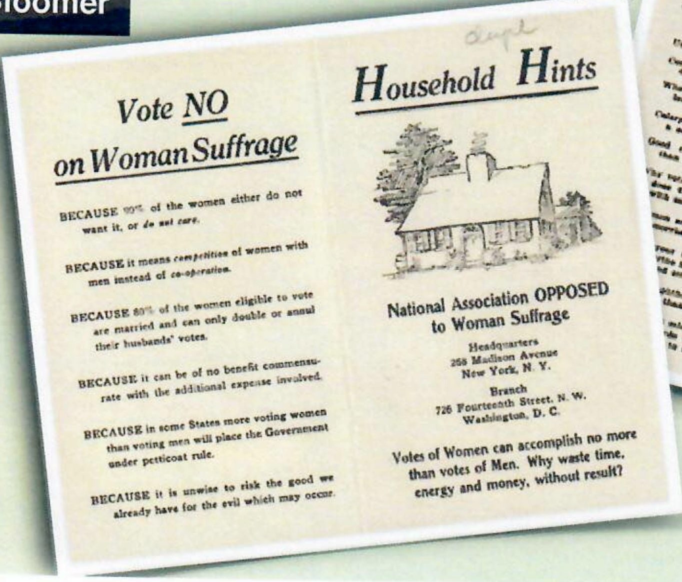
Lucretia Mott	Sophronia Taylor	Rachel D. Bonnel
Harriet Cady Eaton	Cynthia Davis	Betsey Tewksbury
Margaret Pryor	Hannah Plant	Rhoda Palmer
Elizabeth Cady Stanton	Lucy Jones	Margaret Jenkins
Eunice Newton Foote	Sarah Whitney	Cynthia Fuller
Mary Ann M'Clintock	Mary H. Hallowell	Mary Martin
Margaret Schooley	Elizabeth Conklin	P. A. Culvert
Martha C. Wright	Sally Pitcher	Susan R. Doty
Jane C. Hunt	Mary Conklin	Rebecca Race
Amy Post	Susan Quinn	Sarah A. Mosher
Catherine F. Stebbins	Mary S. Mirror	Mary E. Vail
Mary Ann Frink	Phebe King	Lucy Spalding
Lydia Mount	Julia Ann Drake	Lovina Latham
Delia Mathews	Charlotte Woodward	Sarah Smith
Catherine C. Paine	Martha Underhill	Eliza Martin
Elizabeth W. M'Clintock	Dorothy Mathews	Maria E. Wilbur
Malvina Seymour	Eunice Barker	Elizabeth D. Smith
Phebe Mosher	Sarah R. Woods	Caroline Barker
Catherine Shaw	Lydia Gild	Ann Porter
Deborah Scott	Sarah Hoffman	Experience Gibbs
Sarah Hallowell	Elizabeth Leslie	Antoinette E. Segur
Mary M'Clintock	Martha Ridley	Hannah J. Latham
Mary Gilbert		Sarah Sisson

GENTLEMEN:

Richard P. Hunt	William S. Dell	Nathan J. Milliken
Samuel D. Tillman	James Mott	S. E. Woodworth
Justin Williams	William Burroughs	Edward F. Underhill
Elisha Foote	Robert Smallbridge	George W. Pryor
Frederick Douglass	Jacob Mathews	Joel Bunker
Henry W. Seymour	Charles L. Hoskins	Isaac VanTassel
Henry Seymour	Thomas M'Clintock	Thomas Dell
David Spalding	Saron Phillips	E. W. Capron
William G. Barker	Jacob P. Chamberlain	Stephen Shear
Elias J. Doty	Jonathan Metcalf	Henry Hatley
John Jones		Azaliah Schooley

Amanda Bloomer

Two Perfectly Matched Friends



Vote NO on Woman Suffrage

BECAUSE 90% of the women either do not want it, or *do not care*.

BECAUSE it means *competition* of women with men instead of *co-operation*.

BECAUSE 80% of the women eligible to vote are married and can only double or annul their husbands' votes.

BECAUSE it can be of no benefit commensurate with the additional expense involved.

BECAUSE in some States more voting women than voting men will place the Government under petticoat rule.

BECAUSE it is unwise to risk the good we already have for the evil which may occur.

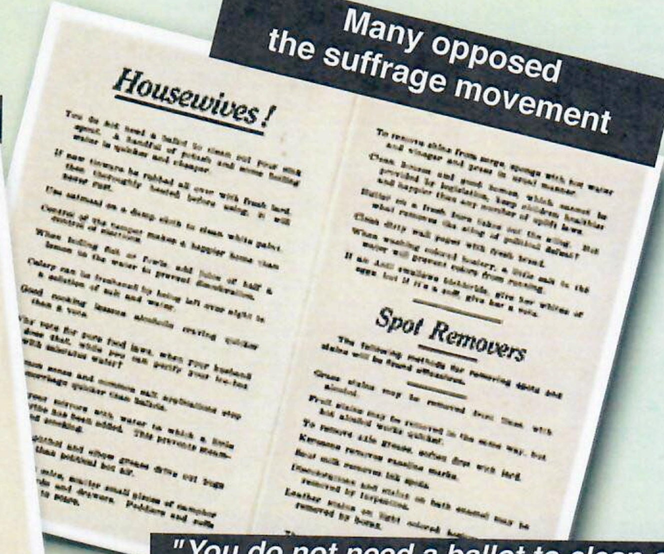
Household Hints

National Association OPPOSED to Woman Suffrage

Headquarters
268 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Branch
726 Fourteenth Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Votes of Women can accomplish no more than votes of Men. Why waste time, energy and money, without result?

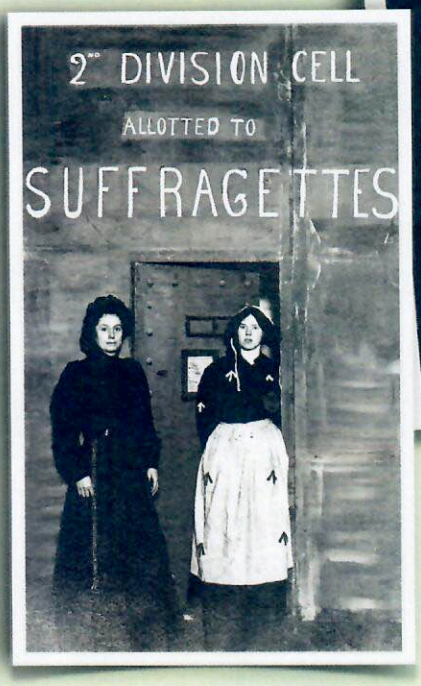


Housewives!

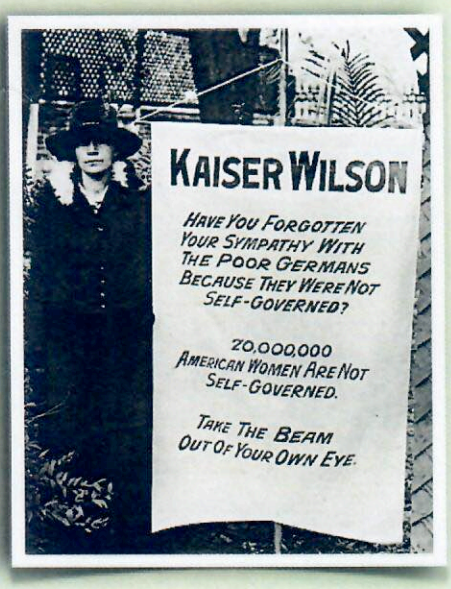
Spot Removers

Many opposed the suffrage movement

"You do not need a ballot to clean out your sink spout"
"There is...no method known by which mud-stained reputation may be cleaned after bitter political campaigns."



PROTEST &
NEVER GIVE UP!



NOVEMBER 2, 1920