

**Remembering the Ladies:  
The Fight for the Vote from 1776 to 1920**

by

Haven Holliday

Submitted to the Department of History  
School of Humanities  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of a Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College  
State University of New York

June 2019

Sponsor: Lisa Keller

Second Reader: Diana Johnson

## Chapter One: Introduction

Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt were on a speaking tour of the Deep South in January and February of 1895. Anthony was elderly for the time by then, still President of the National American Women's Suffrage Association, but well into the process of grooming the younger Catt as her successor. She and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had spent decades on lecture circuits throughout the country, speaking in favor of women's suffrage. As a speaker Anthony had been renowned, but she was seventy-five years old by that time, and most of the actual speaking was done by Catt. One night, however, when Anthony was going to speak and got off to a bad start, and Catt believed she would have to take over even sooner than expected, Anthony suddenly launched into an hour-long speech, in which she went through point after point without faltering. She later informed Catt that it was a lecture called "Bread and the Ballot" which she had first given thirty years ago, and had somehow been able to recall perfectly.<sup>1</sup>

Stanton and Anthony had led the suffrage movement for forty years, but their work was built on the foundations of earlier generations of women, since the United States was founded, and it would be carried on and finally completed (the suffrage part, at least) by later ones, like Catt. This paper will examine pivotal points in the process of women gaining the right to vote in America, from its founding in 1776 to the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920. These key points include, in Chapter Two, the Declaration of Independence being drafted and the early years of the Republic, and women's increasing levels of education and politicization leading up to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which is widely seen as the beginning of the suffrage crusade. Chapter Three analyzes the movement's early development, especially during Reconstruction after the Civil War and the controversy over opposition to the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment,

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary Gray Peck. *Carrie Chapman Catt: A Biography*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 82.

and Chapter Four covers the last twenty years of the movement leading up to women's suffrage becoming part of the Constitution.

These are pivotal points because they caused women's rights in this country to change, to grow and expand with the nation itself. The Revolution and unique new society that emerged in its aftermath opened doors for women to claim a greater connection to politics than before, and to engage with them in ways they would not have before their participation in the Revolution. The abolitionist crusades of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular drew women into the public sphere. Seneca Falls was an event organized by women drawn together by abolition, who were well-educated and passionate about abolition, and began demanding a more solid footing as political participants. Elizabeth Cady Stanton proposed women's suffrage as a way of establishing it, and twenty years later after the Civil War it became her most important cause. Reconstruction and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment were critical to the movement's growth and development, even as they divided it. It divided suffragists themselves into two factions with differing strategies and leadership. Stanton and Anthony, leaders of one of those factions, became divided from their former allies and comrades-in-arms in the abolitionist circles. And it also divided them from mainstream politics and political parties. Without the abolitionists or the government, Stanton and Anthony's suffrage movement had to find its own constituency. It had to find its own voice.

That voice rose to a shout by the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women were more politically and publicly active than ever by 1900, as well as better educated, and involved with a range of social and political issues. By 1920, from a certain point of view giving women the vote could seem like a mere formality, but it was a necessary one. For the first time women had one of their fundamental political rights guaranteed by the Constitution. And now they could, and would,

pursue the rest of their rights as equal citizens. Suffrage had to be gained before that was truly possible.

However, for all that it is so critical, as a part of our modern lives every time we vote, and as part of not only American history but women's history, the process of gaining women's suffrage is often completely unknown, or else grossly misunderstood. It was this misunderstanding which prompted me to research this topic. There was a thread on Twitter, the modern day gladiator pit of uninformed opinions, in which a self-professed feminist expounded on why no one should admire Susan B. Anthony. The thread cited the racist remarks Anthony had made while trying to block the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. I, on my phone at one o'clock in the morning, was incensed. This person was making a great moral pronouncement about one of the most important women in American history when they so clearly lacked any understanding of the context and had no knowledge of Anthony's actual beliefs or motivations. And it was then and there, fuming in the dark, that I decided this could be a perfect subject for my senior project.

I have used no Twitter threads as a source in this paper. Instead, I have used a variety of works on the suffrage movement, as well as primary source materials from its leaders. I have drawn heavily from Stanton and Anthony's own history of the movement they led. For Chapter Two I also used similar sources, including letters and essays. Through studying history, especially that which is covered in this paper, I have been reminded that it is not easy for everyone to objectively analyze people of the past, to understand their motivations or their actions, especially in the context of their time rather than ours. I make no moral judgments with this paper. Those aren't what history is about.

## Chapter Two: Revolution, Education, and Abolition

At the start of American Revolution, the leading men of the day set about creating a new government. They gave no consideration to the rights of women, who were among the many left out. White men who owned property (and it was the property requirement, not the whiteness, that may have been contested) were the only people eligible to vote in this new democracy. This was despite the growth of political awareness among women that had reached a fever pitch during the mid-18th century and the Revolution. "Republican motherhood" was a concept that had been born during that time, exemplified by women like Eliza Pinckney, two of whose sons signed the Constitution. Women were expected not only to bear children and raise them, but to also educate and inculcate the values of the new American democracy. Many women were ardent Patriots who did everything they could to support the Revolution. They ran the farms, businesses, and plantations left behind, and contended with the encroachment of enemy British soldiers, and did so while making it very clear that these were acts of true Patriotism and political contributions, even as they demurred from openly demanding their rights.

Women were, however, clearly affected by the pervasive political atmosphere. Abigail Adams is an outstanding female voice from the period. As John Adams was writing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, claiming that "all men were created equal," Abigail entreated him, "Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors." She was acutely aware of how vulnerable women were when they had no legal status or rights. "Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Edith Gelles, ed., *Abigail Adams: Letters* (New York: The Library of America, 2016), 92.

Abigail Adams tested the limits of women's role in politics and the new government by making the bold declaration, "If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation." Some might see her as the first to really advocate women having a role in government. She wrote to her friend Mercy Otis Warren, writer and advocate of women's education, "He is very sausy to me in return for a List of Female Grievances which I transmitted to him." Abigail Adams' political conscience was further evidenced by the modest request she made, that she "ventured to speak a word in behalf of our Sex, who are rather hardly dealt with by the Laws of England which gives such unlimited power to the Husband to use his wife Ill." She was essentially threatening rebellion or at least civil disobedience if women were not given additional rights and protections under the new government.

Such a passionate claim notwithstanding, John Adams replied to his wife, "When it comes to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh."<sup>3</sup> John Adams, in the midst of writing a literally revolutionary document regarding supposedly universal rights, found the idea of making any kind of provision for, let alone including women to be downright laughable. He wrote in the same letter to Abigail, "Depend upon it, we know better than to repeal our masculine systems. . . . which would completely subject us to the despotism of the petticoat."<sup>4</sup> Abigail told him that all men would be tyrants if they could, and John Adams seems to have been to be of the opinion that so would women.

Abigail Adams, wife of a prominent member of the developing government, had no ambitions of tyranny, only some voice in government. And wealthy, educated women like her were not the only ones becoming politicized. In 1780, Eliza Wilkinson wrote, "I do not love to

---

<sup>3</sup> Gelles, ed. *Abigail Adams*, 94.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Francis Adams. *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife, Abigail Adams, During the Revolution*. (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876), 155.

meddle with political matters; the men say we have no business with them, it is not our sphere! . . . " but then she went on to disagree with them: "I won't have it thought, that because we are the weaker sex as to *bodily* strength, my dear, we are capable of nothing more than...all such domestic concerns. . . . I would not wish that we should meddle in what is unbecoming of female delicacy, but surely we may have sense enough to give our opinions to commend or discommend such actions as we may approve or disapprove."<sup>5</sup>

This politicization was the result of not only the Revolution sweeping the former colonies, but many women being better educated, which led to this deeper consideration of their place in society and the new government. Women's education was an area which had been growing in importance and as a subject of discussion with the rise of the Republican motherhood ideal, or vice-versa, and became a platform for the continuing increase in political awareness among women. According to Republican motherhood, mothers had to be educated themselves so that they might better educate their children, their sons in particular, as future members of the democracy.<sup>6</sup> Other female proponents of prioritizing education for their sex had different goals in mind. This included Mercy Otis Warren, Abigail Adams' correspondent, and Judith Sargent Murray, who wrote the essay "On the Equality of the Sexes" in 1790. This work actually predated the much better known treatise by Mary Wollstonecraft; Murray wrote, "But, suffer me to ask, in what the minds of females are so notoriously deficient, or unequal."<sup>7</sup>

Murray asserted that if women seemed less intelligent or capable of political participation, that was not because of any innate inadequacy on their part, but instead because of their being barred from receiving an education on par with that of men. She wrote in her essay,

---

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Woloch. *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900*, third edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 125.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Woloch. *Women and the American Experience*, fifth edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 90.

<sup>7</sup> Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes," in *Judith Sargent Murray: A Brief Biography with Documents*, ed. Sheila L. Skemp (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), 177.

"Are we deficient in reason? We can only reason from what we know, and if opportunity of acquiring knowledge hath been denied us, the inferiority of our sex cannot fairly be deduced from thence." Murray details the ways in which women are constantly made disadvantaged by men without having any native inferiority. Murray "would calmly ask, is it reasonable, that a candidate for immortality, for the joys of heaven, an intelligent being . . . should at present be so degraded, as to be allowed no other ideas?" The most arresting line of her essay uses their status as spiritual beings to assert their equality, in more than just deserving an education: "Yes, ye lordly, ye haughty sex, our souls are by nature *equal* to yours."<sup>8</sup> Education, she felt, would allow women to engage in higher pursuits, among them politics and government, and further develop the greater political awareness they had already reached during the Revolution.

Murray's urging of increased education for women found some fruition during the early decades of the 19th century, when more women's seminaries were founded and taught more than just household skills, and some of them didn't teach non-academic subjects at all. These schools were operating at the same time women were taking more active public roles in society, in areas of social welfare and justice, and even business, as speakers and organizers. For example, Sarah Hale built a prominent public and professional career as a writer, editor, and publisher when she began publishing the *Ladies' Magazine* in 1828. And though she supported women's education, still a topic of debate more than thirty years after Murray published her essay, they should "solicit education as a favor, not exact it as a right."<sup>9</sup>

This moderate stance on women's rights was reflected in the origins of Hale's professional career. She was a widow, and at first her business ventures were a necessary extension of her sphere for the sake of supporting her "orphaned" children, but she was so

---

<sup>8</sup> Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes," 179.

<sup>9</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 106.



successful with the *Ladies' Magazine* that it went far beyond such a justification. Her writing may have been on sentimental or moral subjects appropriate for feminine consumption, but her professional status and very public existence were almost antithetical to that. However, thanks to the good morals purportedly promoted by the *Ladies' Magazine*, Sarah Hale was able to keep justifying her career. The idea of the "separate sphere," or "woman's sphere," was one of the main social forces behind the success of the *Ladies' Magazine*.

As a concept, the separate sphere expanded on the idea of Republican motherhood and deemed women not only mistresses of the household, and responsible for the education of children, but also made them the moral and spiritual center of the home and society. Some women capitalized on that part of the separate sphere to use it as justification for actually extending their influence beyond private life. Other women would use the higher level of education they had received due to the developments that occurred during the Revolutionary and Early Republic periods to go even further beyond what women were meant to do with said education, and the politicization that followed it.

Education and growing political consciousness led women to start championing social and political causes, and in so doing became public figures and political influencers, even without the right to vote or a legal role in the government. Chief among these causes championed by educated women during the early decades of the 19th century in America were temperance and abolition. Abolition and temperance, as moral issues, became areas where women could exercise their political awareness and capabilities, and their newfound higher levels of education, and publically engage with issues of law and politics. The early temperance movement was led by men, particularly evangelical clergymen, but when it came to the movement overall its adherents were mostly women. Included among them was Susan B. Anthony, who was leading

meetings of the Daughters of Temperance in Rochester the same year she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Temperance was connected with not only good morals for society as a whole, but also women's rights, especially within marriage, which was Stanton's primary focus during the 1850s. She took radical stances against laws and traditions that amounted to married women being subsumed by their husbands and basically ceasing to exist. She was also still promoting women's right to vote, in connection with temperance as well as marriage reform. Stanton wrote a letter to the Daughters of Temperance in 1852, which was read by Anthony at their meeting, declaring, "inasmuch as Intemperance is in part protected by law, we who are the innocent victims of the license system, should [have] a voice in pulling it down."<sup>10</sup> The elective franchise, marriage reform, and temperance were all connected in Stanton's philosophy.

While the future leaders of the women's suffrage movement focused on drunk husbands, other women mobilized against slavery, the biggest cause that women, as moral guardians, took up during the first half of the 19th century. Two of the greatest champions of abolition were Sarah and Angelina Grimke. The Grimke sisters were from South Carolina, a state where slavery was still the lifeblood of the economy. Both sisters connected deeply to their supposed place as the upholders of morality, and were outraged by the violence and cruelty they witnessed being meted out on slaves owned by their own family. Each of them separately left South Carolina to move to Philadelphia where they became involved in abolitionist movements going on in the Quaker community.

Angelina, who also joined the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society, wrote a letter to abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison in 1835 which he deemed a "soul-thrilling epistle"

---

<sup>10</sup> Sue Davis, *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Women's Rights and the American Political Traditions*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 85-6.

and published in his newspaper *The Liberator*.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter, she continued publishing her antislavery writings, and so impressed the American Antislavery Society that they sent her an invitation to join a group of their agents meeting in New York.<sup>12</sup> The Grimke sisters embarked on a circuit of true public appearances, giving speeches to groups of women in New York City, and increasing their involvement with antislavery organizations, especially those comprised chiefly of women. By doing so, they were blazing a trail for women's public speaking and political involvement, and promoting political issues being a concern of women as well as men, which could naturally lead to the conclusion that women should be granted the elective franchise.

"An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States, Issued by an Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women" was read by one of the sisters in 1837, and she derisively stated that ". . . [I]t is gravely urged that as it is a *political subject*, women have no concernment with it . . . We know, dear sisters, that the open and the secret enemies of freedom in our country have dreaded our influence, and therefore have reprobated our interference . . . We grant that it is a political, as well as a moral subject: does this exonerate women from their duties as subjects of the government, as members of the great human family?" This same speech came to the stunning conclusion that politics should be no deterrent where women feel they must interfere: "We do not, then, and cannot concede the position, that because this is a *political subject* women ought to fold their hands in idleness, and close their eyes and ears to the "horrible things" that are practiced in our land."<sup>13</sup> Though not stated or even suggested at the time, it's an easily drawn conclusion that if women must be involved in politics, they should be granted the right to vote.

---

<sup>11</sup> Larry Ceplair, ed., *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimke: Selected Writings 1835-1839*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Gerda Lerner. *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 137.

<sup>13</sup> Ceplair, ed. *The Public Years*, 131.

The height of the Grimke sisters' careers and their trailblazing crusade as politically involved women occurred ten years before the Seneca Falls Convention, when the idea of making women's vital role in politics (as the Grimkes had insisted it was) legally recognized through granting them the franchise was first proposed.

Women receiving the right to vote was not only proposed at the Seneca Falls Convention but codified in their Declaration of Sentiments. "Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."<sup>14</sup> Buried as the ninth of eleven such resolutions regarding the rights of women, suffrage was obviously not a major concern at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which had many attendees who were already involved with abolition. It was proposed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the two main organizers of the event. The Declaration of Sentiments put together over the two-day gathering of women and men in Stanton and Mott's little town in upstate New York was based on the original Declaration of Independence; after altering the original opening, they reiterated the 1776 Declaration's most famous line almost verbatim, with one important adjustment. "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal." The divergences continued thereafter. "Such has been the patient sufferance of the colonies," goes the original Declaration, after describing "the long train of abuses and usurpations" under "absolute Despotism."

They replaced "colonies" with "women." And then the women's specific grievances were made very plain, including how the issue of suffrage had risen to the fore: "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise. He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice. ... Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of

---

<sup>14</sup> "Report of the Woman's Rights Convention," National Park Service, last modified February 26, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm>

legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides."<sup>15</sup> Where one might have expected the concept of women voting to arise out of the emphasis placed by women like the Grimke sisters on their sacred duty to act as moral guides for the nation and society, it is instead proposed for the sole sake of being their inalienable right, the same as it is men's.

The Seneca Falls Convention's Sentiments, their demand for the franchise included, were published across the country, to great ridicule. Anti-slavery papers stood by the women, including Frederick Douglass' new *North Star*. Its slogan ran, "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren."<sup>16</sup> Douglass himself was in attendance at the convention, the only black attendee, and it was the *North Star* which published the "Report on the Women's Rights Conventions," listing their right to the elective franchise as the ninth resolution passed.<sup>17</sup> Douglass, at the Convention, made an eloquent speech in favor of women's suffrage after being convinced of its importance by his friend, Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

It was not a large gathering, organized as it was on five day's notice, but it was still regarded by Stanton as a "grand success."<sup>18</sup> And it was, by the metric with which Stanton measured it. The Convention was a small event held in a local church, but nonetheless it produced pivotal ideas, like women having the right to vote, which had been previously unheard of. Seneca Falls has since been enshrined as the event that started it all, but in truth the fledgling campaign for women's suffrage was rather slow-going for over a decade afterward. Stanton was introduced to Susan B. Anthony in 1853, and the most significant partnership in women's history

---

<sup>15</sup> "Declaration of Sentiments," National Park Service, last modified February 26, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm>

<sup>16</sup> "The North Star," Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., last modified November 11, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-North-Star-American-newspaper>

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, . Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments.* John Dick at the North Star Office, Rochester, New York, July 19-20, 1848. Online Text. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001106/>.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897.* (Schocken Books, 1971), 148-9.

began. They faced many obstacles together, from the early struggle for progress, through the Civil War and Reconstruction, and grew as organizers, speakers, and strategists from all of them.

### Chapter Three: Two Civil Wars

Despite reaching almost mythic status as the birthplace of the women's suffrage movement in America, Seneca Falls was just a gathering of local women in a small church. The franchise was not even the chief topic discussed there, and it was other issues discussed at the Seneca Falls Convention that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led campaigns for, such as the 1860 Earnings Act in New York, which protected women's property rights from their husbands. It was signed into law after Stanton made an impassioned speech to the New York State Assembly.<sup>19</sup> Susan B. Anthony's primary cause before she devoted herself to women's suffrage was temperance, and although she attended the Seneca Falls Convention, she didn't meet Stanton until 1851, when Amelia Bloomer introduced them.<sup>20</sup> They began collaborating almost immediately on issues of women's rights. This continued throughout that decade as they fought for legislature like the Earnings Act. They truly emerged as leaders of the suffrage movement during Reconstruction, when they campaigned first for women to be included in the Fifteenth Amendment, and then to block the ratification and prevent the further disenfranchisement of women. Both women were prolific writers as well as speakers and continued incorporating that into their strategies.

Anthony had arranged for a National Women's Rights Convention, the eleventh of its kind, to be held in May of 1861, just one month after the Civil War started. She was persuaded with some difficulty by Stanton and their other partners to cancel the meeting. Stanton was ready to put aside over a decade's worth of work and devote herself to a Union victory in the war and

---

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 78.

<sup>20</sup> Kathleen Barry. *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist*. (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 63.

ending slavery.<sup>21</sup> Anthony feared that doing so would lead to all their gains being undone.<sup>22</sup> This experience may have fueled their conviction nine years later that the woman suffrage cause could not afford to step aside and let black men have their moment with the Fifteenth Amendment. She already had proof that putting those issues first could cause significant damage to the women's rights campaign.

During the Civil War, Stanton and Anthony, like other Northern women, devoted themselves to supporting the Union Army. Stanton believed doing so would earn the respect and gratitude of abolitionists and the Republican Party, which could lead to women's suffrage in the future.<sup>23</sup> But she was also an ardent supporter of the war and abolition, in contrast to Anthony, a pacifist who opposed the war even though she wanted slavery to end. It is important to note again that Anthony's primary cause before suffrage was temperance, not abolition. However, Anthony's fears that the war would reverse women's progress weren't baseless; the Married Women's Property Act, which the New York State legislature had passed in 1860, was greatly weakened by further legislation just two years later.<sup>24</sup> Anthony's allies, including Stanton, were still willing to wait and continue campaigning for women's rights after the war was over.

They didn't have to wait long. Immediately after the Civil War, Stanton and Anthony founded the American Equal Rights Association. The AERA was meant to advocate for exactly what its name stated, equal rights which included suffrage for both women and newly freed black citizens, including black women. However, many of its members, such as future AWSA leaders Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, were willing to support the Fifteenth Amendment without

---

<sup>21</sup> Davis, 117-118.

<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Griffith. *In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 109.

<sup>23</sup> Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 108.

<sup>24</sup> Sally G. McMillen. *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.



provisions for women's enfranchisement, either in the text or as plans for a subsequent Sixteenth Amendment.<sup>25</sup>

Once it became clear that women's suffrage, black or white, would not be added to the Fifteenth Amendment, Stanton and Anthony, along with other leaders of the women's suffrage movement, threw all their weight behind opposing it. This was not due to racial prejudice on the part of those leaders, but because they didn't want black men to gain rights at the expense of women. They would have supported the Fifteenth Amendment if it had been structured to include women, both black and white. After it was ratified without any provisions for sex-based discrimination, suffrage leaders started campaigning for a subsequent Sixteenth Amendment that would have granted voting rights to women, both black and white. Stanton certainly wanted black women to have the vote, as evidenced by her statement that without it, black women suffered a "triple bondage that man never knows," of race, sex, and slavery. She and Anthony feared that black women's standing politically would diminish even further if black men were granted the vote, the way white women suffered under the dominion of enfranchised white men.<sup>26</sup>

Stanton and Anthony's opposition to the Fifteenth Amendment sparked discord among the AERA, and it exploded at a meeting in the early spring of 1869. Stephen Foster, a member of the AERA who is best known for his work as a composer of many classics from the Great American Songbook, accused Elizabeth Cady Stanton, presiding officer of the meeting, of having "publically repudiated the principles of the society."<sup>27</sup> This was because part of her and

---

<sup>25</sup> McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, 166.

<sup>26</sup> Ellen Carol DuBois. *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Noelle A. Baker, ed., *Stanton in Her Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of Her Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 146.

Susan B. Anthony's strategy for opposing the Fifteenth Amendment had become focused on using education as the primary qualification for the franchise; this would mean including many women but excluding most black men, and black women. This was contrary to the mission of the AERA as well as Stanton's earlier convictions. Foster declared himself, "an enemy of educated suffrage, an enemy of white suffrage, an enemy of man suffrage, an enemy of every kind of suffrage except universal suffrage."<sup>28</sup> And universal suffrage was a cause which Stanton and Anthony were no longer championing.

When the Fifteenth Amendment was being written, Stanton and Anthony focused on including woman suffrage rather than denying black suffrage. Previously, when a particular version of the Fourteenth Amendment posed a threat to black men in Southern states but may have made it easier to give women the franchise, Stanton opposed it in a piece she wrote for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*: "the spirit of caste would impel Southern aristocrats to enfranchise their women sooner than their negroes... the black man may be worse off."<sup>29</sup> Her piece in the *Standard* was not the first or only time Stanton had taken actions or expressed views that were counter to her future opposition to the Fifteenth Amendment being ratified without the inclusion of women. Historian Faye Dudden wrote, "Scholars have noted Stanton's puzzling tendency to contradict herself when she argued about black suffrage and woman suffrage." Stanton felt an internal conflict that would have been resolved by uniting black and woman suffrage, since she believed in both but was often forced to choose advocating one over the other.

Frederick Douglass went through a similar struggle as Stanton's, and ended up on the opposite side when it came to the Fifteenth Amendment. Douglass had been an ardent member of the women's suffrage movement since its inception, when he was the only black attendee at the

---

<sup>28</sup> Baker, *Stanton in Her Own Time*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> Faye E. Dudden. *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 78.

Seneca Falls Convention. He knew women like Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's partner in organizing Seneca Falls, through the abolition movement. Stanton and Mott first met at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, where they were both protesting the exclusion of women from the event.<sup>30</sup> Douglass' autobiography gives much credit to women in the abolitionist movement: "...the honorable women, who have not only assisted me, but who according to their opportunity and ability, have generously contributed to the abolition of slavery and the recognition of the equal manhood of the colored race. When the true history of the anti-slavery cause shall be written, women will occupy a large space in its pages; for the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman's cause."<sup>31</sup> His autobiography speaks highly of Lucretia Mott and Angelina Grimke in particular.

Once they decided to oppose the Fifteenth Amendment, Stanton and Anthony eventually turned to heavily racialized rhetoric to sway people against the Fifteenth Amendment, pointing out the supposed inadequacies of former slaves and by extension black men in general. Part of this was the use of education as a necessary qualification for voting rights, for which they had come under fire from the rest of the AERA. Their denunciation of certain "lower orders of men" was not restricted to black men and freed slaves, but also included "Chinese... Germans, and Irish, with their low ideals of womanhood." These ethnic groups were all accused of having a lack of "wealth, education, virtue, and refinement," all qualities found in many women.<sup>32</sup> Some white suffragist women may have feared that uneducated black men would gain the vote before them; this particularly applied to Southern women, as described in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's

---

<sup>30</sup> Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 37.

<sup>31</sup> Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Start Publishing LLC, 2012), 278, Kindle.

<sup>32</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 324.

*History of Woman Suffrage*: "the hostility they would naturally feel in seeing their slaves suddenly made their political superiors, their rulers, law-makers, judges, and jurors!"<sup>33</sup>

Purity, virtue, morality, and religion, all the established domains of women in the separate sphere of home and family, were held up as reasons why women should enter into political and public life for the good of society and the nation. This argument easily transitioned into the racialized and xenophobic rhetoric that Stanton used to argue in favor of women's suffrage over that of black men or male immigrants. She claimed that "unless some new virtue is infused into our public life the nation is doomed to destruction. Will the foreign element, the dregs of China, Germany, England, Ireland, and Africa supply this needed force, or the nobler types of American womanhood who have taught our presidents, senators, and congressmen the rudiments of all they know?"<sup>34</sup>

Stanton objected to the inclusion of the word "male" in the proposed Fifteenth Amendment, which was a hasty edit made after the original amendment proposed by Thaddeus Stevens, which would have granted suffrage to "all citizens," alienated all the other senators. "At the bare thought of such an impending calamity, the more timid Republicans were filled with alarm, and the word 'male' promptly inserted."<sup>35</sup> The proposed amendment went through with that edit, and thus marked the disintegration of the partnership between the Republican Party and the women's suffrage movement. When the Republican Party supported the Fifteenth Amendment without a Sixteenth, they turned their backs on the women's suffrage movement. Stanton and Anthony stopped seeking mainstream support or trying to cultivate politicians and political parties as their allies, and relied on themselves. The oratorical and writing skills they

---

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Goslyn Gage. *History of Woman Suffrage Volume 2: 1861-1876*. (New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1969), 316.

<sup>34</sup> Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 353.

<sup>35</sup> Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 354.

had exercised like never before while trying to change or block the Fifteenth Amendment would continue to be their greatest asset. Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment irrevocably changed the strategy and character of the woman suffrage movement for the rest of the 19th century, especially during the decades immediately following.

Stanton and Anthony and their partners turned to xenophobic arguments only after partnership with supporters of the amendment failed. Frederick Douglass, their longtime ally and Stanton's friend, believed that adding woman suffrage to the amendment would block it from being ratified entirely, and for the sake of black men, they had to take advantage of the opportunity now. Women could wait. He had come to believe that women already had de facto political equality, through "influence" exerted over their male family members, and thought that black male suffrage would extend that influence to black women.<sup>36</sup> Douglass also believed that black women were in far greater danger among society because of their race than because of their sex. At that meeting of the Equal Rights Association in 1869, he described this with as much eloquence as brutality:

"When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans; when they are dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; when their children are torn from their arms, and their brains dashed out upon the pavement; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own."<sup>37</sup>

In regards to Douglass' argument that women could vote vicariously through their husbands, Stanton and her compatriots knew that no such power or "influence" existed, and did not believe women could or should wait to be granted the franchise, even at the potential expense of black men. Anthony responded to his emotional description of the greater hardship faced by

---

<sup>36</sup> Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass Volume IV: Reconstruction and After* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 238.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, *Stanton in Her Own Time*, 148.

black people very coolly: "If you will not give the whole loaf of suffrage to the entire people, give it to the most intelligent first. If intelligence, justice, and morality are to have precedence in the Government, let the question of woman be brought up first and that of the negro last."<sup>38</sup> This positioning of women as arbiters of morality and justice was an argument that women's suffrage advocates would make all the way through World War I and the Nineteenth Amendment. It failed to convince legislators when the Fifteenth Amendment was presented. A Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution was Stanton's chief topic at the National Woman Suffrage Convention held in Washington, D.C. in 1869. When the Convention was first organized, the Fourteenth Amendment was newly ratified and the Fifteenth still pending.

Stanton gave an amazing speech the first evening of the Convention. She decried the establishment of an "aristocracy of sex" in the United States and blamed the Republican Party, erstwhile allies of the suffrage movement, while also turning to them for more support: "Hence, we appeal to the party now in power, everywhere, to end this protracted debate on suffrage, and declare it the inalienable right of every citizen..." Stanton detailed her reasons for why women should have the right to vote, and in part turned towards the justifications used by women before her like the Grimke sisters: "The need of this hour is . . . a new evangel of womanhood, to exalt purity, virtue, morality, true religion, to lift man up into the higher realms of thought and action. We ask woman's enfranchisement, as the first step toward the recognition of that essential element in government that can only secure the health, strength, and prosperity of the nation."<sup>39</sup>

Women did not earn the right to vote with the Fifteenth Amendment, but the Reconstruction was when the suffrage movement began gaining real momentum, after the previous twenty years of small conventions and slow growth. Ellen Carol DuBois argues that it

---

<sup>38</sup> Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 383.

<sup>39</sup> Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 352.

may have been their early association with politicians like William Lloyd Garrison and his established network of anti-slavery organizations which inhibited the early suffrage movement's growth; not only as a separate entity and movement, but Stanton and Anthony's development as leaders. DuBois writes, "[the women's suffrage movement's] ability to rely on the organization resources of the American Anti-Slavery Society meant that it did not develop its own."<sup>40</sup> It was only once they broke from these former allies and the shelter of established organizations that they could take control of the movement and start gaining real momentum for their own issues, even if it took fifty years. They could establish their own associations, book their own lecture tours, and publish their own work.

Frederick Douglass had been the publisher of early suffragist documents such as their Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, but during the Reconstruction, Stanton and Anthony took up the job themselves and began publishing the newspaper *Revolution*, in partnership with Parker Pillsbury, former editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, which had previously published Stanton's writing. It was a short-lived venture but had a great impact on the movement going forward, because the years of publication were 1868-1872, when the woman suffrage movement was undergoing the schism into the NWSA and AWSA. *Revolution* covered many topics Stanton and Anthony believed were relevant to women and the cause of suffrage and women's rights, and was used to circulate their views, including those on the Fifteenth Amendment.

An article in the newspaper titled "*Where is Woman?*" begins, "We are tired of this universal harping about 'Universal Suffrage' when only half the universal family are meant. It is an unpardonable affront to all womankind..."<sup>41</sup> *Revolution's* run was during a turbulent time for

---

<sup>40</sup> DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Parker Pillsbury, "The Revolution," Volume I, Issue No. 13, April 2, 1868. Lewis & Clark Digital Collections, accessed November 20, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.lclark.edu/items/show/9613>.

the woman suffrage movement, as well as the entire country. Only a few years after the Union was once again unified, in 1869, suffrage leaders went through their own bloodless Civil War, dividing into the AWSA and NWSA, largely due to a difference in opinion on the Fifteenth Amendment. The NWSA, as expressed in the *Revolution*, was the far more radical of the two groups. This division which would characterize and affect the suffrage movement for decades to come was a direct result of the controversy over the Fifteenth Amendment, and created the circumstances which led to Carrie Chapman Catt being the movement's leader when women were finally granted the vote fifty years later in 1920.

On one side of this division was the NWSA, or National Women's Suffrage Association, led by Stanton and Anthony. No men served as officers in the NWSA, and it pursued a much broader range of women's rights issues, some of those championed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton before the war, such as greater social and economic equality. They saw the franchise as an avenue towards achieving these other goals. On the other side was the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell, which was already a significant difference from the all-women leadership of the NWSA. The AWSA lobbied individual states while the NWSA remained focused on the federal level. They still supported the Republican Party that Stanton and Anthony believed had betrayed them, and because of their more conservative, mainstream approach, had a much larger constituency which included other prominent former abolitionists and supporters of women's rights.<sup>42</sup> These two organizations competed with each other for newspaper coverage, convention attendance, and new members. They eventually merged into the NAWSA (National American Women's Suffrage Association) in 1890, twenty years after the schism.

---

<sup>42</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 304.



Stanton and Anthony, despite leading the NWSA and then NAWSA together, were no longer as ideologically inseparable as they once had been. Stanton had always been much more radical than Anthony, and the latter was now much less willing to indulge her on issues outside that of suffrage. Anthony believed that to build a strong movement, they had to keep a single-minded focus on gaining the franchise.<sup>43</sup> Being allowed to vote would make gaining additional rights much easier, after all. Both leaders compromised on many of their other convictions for the sake of gaining the right to vote, and continued to do so during the rest of their careers. They shaped the women's suffrage movement into the vehicle that Carrie Chapman Catt drove home in 1920.

---

<sup>43</sup> Lisa Tetrault. *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 63.

## Chapter Four: Passing the Torch and Passing the Amendment

After the suffrage movement split in 1869, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's National Women's Suffrage Association and Lucy Stone's American Women's Suffrage Association competed with each other for over twenty years, until the movement finally reunited in 1890 and formed the National American Woman Suffrage Association. During that division, minimal progress had been made towards getting the vote. Stanton and Anthony continued leading the NWSA despite their increasing ideological differences, as Anthony was convinced they had to maintain focus on the issue of suffrage while Stanton remained more of a radical who tried bringing ever more controversial issues into the movement, like divorce and property rights.<sup>44</sup> Despite this, when the suffrage movement did reunite in 1890, Stanton was chosen the first President of the NAWSA.

By this time both Stanton and Anthony were in their eighties, and could no longer provide such dynamic leadership for the movement. Two younger women took up the mantle: Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw. Catt had joined the NAWSA in 1890 after becoming involved in the suffrage movement in the Midwest. Shaw was both a licensed physician and an ordained Methodist minister aside from her work with the suffrage movement, and the talent for public oration which made her successful as a minister was a great asset as a suffragist.<sup>45</sup> Catt was in particular the protege of Susan B. Anthony, who asked her to speak at the NAWSA's first convention in Washington, DC. in 1890, and then address Congress in 1892. However, she and Shaw, along with other younger members, were both less than impressed with

---

<sup>44</sup> Barry, *Susan B. Anthony*, 264-5.

<sup>45</sup> "About Anna Howard Shaw," Anna Howard Shaw Center, Boston University, accessed May 29, 2019, <http://www.bu.edu/shaw/anna-howard-shaw/>

Stanton and her leadership.<sup>46</sup> Stanton was partially to blame for the lack of progress made by the NWSA during that twenty year period. She drew continual fire for her controversial ideas and statements, such as the 1888 speech in which, despite Anthony's best efforts to censor her, she mentioned "these great moral struggles for higher education, temperance, peace, the rights of labor, religious freedom, international arbitration."<sup>47</sup>

Stanton's determination to make the suffrage cause about a wider range of women's rights, such as divorce reform, and even supporting birth control, continued widening the distance between Stanton and the rest of the suffrage movement.<sup>48</sup> Her notoriety reached its zenith after the formation of NAWSA, in 1895, when she published the *Woman's Bible*, which expressed views that appalled even her closest allies, such as "...all religions on the face of the earth degrade [women], and so long as woman accepts the position that they assign her, her emancipation is impossible."<sup>49</sup> *The Woman's Bible* was the culmination of decades of Stanton's issues with how religion interacted with women's rights, and how the Christian Bible was continually used as a justification for denying women their rights.<sup>50</sup> It examined how, due to women's subordinate place in the Bible, Christianity was fundamentally incompatible with women's emancipation. She had written to Susan B. Anthony in 1860, "Our religion, laws, customs, are all founded on the belief that woman was made for man."<sup>51</sup>

Controversy and public outrage over the *Woman's Bible* was such that the NAWSA voted on a resolution to deny any association with Stanton's book. Before its publication Anthony and

---

<sup>46</sup> Ellen Carol DuBois, ed., *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader*. (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 222.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 181.

<sup>48</sup> Jean H. Baker. *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 109.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton. *The Woman's Bible*. (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999), 12.

<sup>50</sup> Stanton, *Eighty Years & More*, 391.

<sup>51</sup> Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Reformer to Revolutionary: A Theological Trajectory." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 3 (1994): 687.

Catt had tried convincing Stanton not to publish it, but she refused.<sup>52</sup> Catt and Anna Howard Shaw supported the resolution which declared that "[The NAWSA] is non-sectarian, being composed of persons of all shades of religious opinion, and has no official connection with the so-called 'Woman's Bible' or any theological publication."<sup>53</sup> The resolution passed, despite Anthony's ardent protests that such a measure was unnecessary. Stanton tried convincing her that both of them should resign from the organization in protest, but neither ended up doing so.<sup>54</sup>

Anthony had succeeded Stanton as President of the NAWSA in 1892, but by this point she was almost eighty years old, and power became increasingly focused on Catt, her chosen successor.<sup>55</sup> She officially retired in 1900 and Catt was elected President. Catt had the advantage of having been associated with neither the NWSA nor the AWSA. Even after the merger in 1890, the movement's progress had remained hindered, by low membership and poor organization at the lower levels.<sup>56</sup> It was also hampered by its continuation of the AWSA's state-level strategy, dedicating almost no effort towards Congress or a national amendment.<sup>57</sup> Under Catt's leadership, the NAWSA augmented the state-by-state process with efforts to drum up support nation-wide.

Another issue was the lack of attraction for middle- or upper-class women, who were part of the growing club movement and settlement house work. The New Woman at the turn of the 20th century was publically active and donated her time, money, and skills to various causes.

---

<sup>52</sup> Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 211.

<sup>53</sup> Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4 1883-1900*. (New York: Arno & The New York Times, 1969), 263.

<sup>54</sup> Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 213.

<sup>55</sup> Peck, *Carrie Chapman Catt*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott. *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 24.

<sup>57</sup> Aileen S. Kraditor. *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 9.

Catt set out to make women's suffrage one of them.<sup>58</sup> She and her successor Shaw found success among New York socialites, the most upper-class of upper-class American women, who were also already involved in the women's labor movement. Their leader was Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, who used the skills that had once made her the queen of New York high society to advocate for both women's labor and women's suffrage. She intertwined the two, and at an enormous rally she organized in 1909, slogans included both "Equal Pay for Equal Work" and "Give Women the Protection of the Vote."<sup>59</sup>

Reform energy and the flourishing Progressive Era bolstered the women's suffrage cause, providing political momentum and attention that had been lacking since the Reconstruction. Women's role as moral guardians, well established over the course of the 19th century, was once again bolstering them as leaders of the various social movements. The women's club movement that Catt tapped for suffrage support was centered on this, as most of those clubs were dedicated to some moral issue. Temperance and labor reform were hotbeds of women's activism. However, the separate sphere concept which had been in large part responsible for the idea of women being arbiters of society's morals was being rapidly eroded by how fulfilling that role had become a public activity.<sup>60</sup>

Settlement houses like Hull House were spreading across the country, women were protesting in the streets for labor reform, and moral issues like temperance and religion were drawing more and more publicly engaged women. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) had thirty-nine national departments by 1896, which were often dedicated more to the

---

<sup>58</sup> Sarah Hunter Graham. *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 36-7.

<sup>59</sup> Johanna Neuman. *Gilded Suffragists: The New York Socialites Who Fought for Women's Right to Vote*. (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 84.

<sup>60</sup> Christine Bolt. *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to 1920s*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 215.

general wellbeing of women and children than to temperance.<sup>61</sup> Comparatively, during that same period the suffrage movement had far fewer new members and was having much less success with their cause. Involving upper-class women from the club movement brought more attention to it and made it more appealing to women who were previously indifferent, especially since they also made the movement fashionable.<sup>62</sup> Women's suffrage being seen as not only acceptable but actually fashionable and socially advantageous, as well as an established partner of club work, skyrocketed recruitment numbers. By 1914, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, a national body, officially endorsed women's suffrage.<sup>63</sup>

To make that happen and increase support overall, the suffrage movement had turned to the same tactics used by Stanton and Anthony when they were campaigning against the Fifteenth Amendment. They also continued distancing themselves from Stanton herself and her legacy of radical politics, a process that began when the NAWSA repudiated her and the *Woman's Bible* in 1895.<sup>64</sup> Stanton had died in 1902. Issues like divorce reform and critiques of organized religion were swept under the rug, and Anthony, the passionate renegade, was held up as a grandmotherly figure and called a "suffrage saint."<sup>65</sup> Catt's chronicle of the suffrage movement published in 1923 called her "the untiring, intrepid, never discouraged, never defeated, greatest-souled woman of the suffrage movement."<sup>66</sup> However, this re-branding of Anthony did not happen entirely under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt. In 1905 she resigned her position as President of

---

<sup>61</sup> Jean V. Matthews. *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930*. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 20.

<sup>62</sup> Neuman, *Gilded Suffragists*, 117.

<sup>63</sup> DuBois, *Reader*, 178.

<sup>64</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 336.

<sup>65</sup> Graham, *Woman Suffrage*, 48.

<sup>66</sup> Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler. *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1923), 268.

the NAWSA to care for her husband. Anna Howard Shaw, a very different kind of leader, was elected as a substitute.

Shaw had served under both Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt as vice president of the NAWSA. Her greatest strength was as a speaker; Catt described her as "the greatest orator among women the world has ever known, and who made more converts to the suffrage cause than any other one person."<sup>67</sup> Shaw was not so skilled as an administrator, and also much less popular with the new members from the upper classes and club movement.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, under her leadership the suffrage movement still made considerable gains, though Catt had also returned to prominence within the organization by 1908, and should be credited for much of that. In 1909, Catt helped form the Women's Suffrage Party, which had 20,000 members by the following year. They worked towards improving opinions on women's suffrage, and found considerable success, not only with the public at large but also on the government level.<sup>69</sup> In 1910, four states had legalized women's suffrage: Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho. All of them were recently admitted into the Union, after having granted women voting rights while still territories, and then that was carried over into official state legislature. Within the next two years, five more granted women the franchise. At this point the NAWSA's strategy was to continue this state-by-state campaign until they gained enough momentum to make the final push for a federal amendment.<sup>70</sup>

NAWSA was not the only organization that campaigned for women's suffrage before World War I, or even the most aggressive. That honor went to the National Woman's Party and its leader Alice Paul. Paul had previously participated in intense protests and campaigning for the

---

<sup>67</sup> Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 268.

<sup>68</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 342.

<sup>69</sup> Graham, *Woman Suffrage*, 54.

<sup>70</sup> Kraditor, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 228.

vote in England, where she was arrested and jailed multiple times. In prison, she went on hunger strikes and had to be force-fed.<sup>71</sup> Upon her return to the U.S. she initially joined the NAWSA, but soon became dissatisfied with their slow-and-steady approach and she struck out on her own.<sup>72</sup> She founded the NWP in 1916 and started employing some of the militant strategies she had brought from England, and focused on a constitutional amendment. It was the NWP which picketed the White House all throughout 1917. Alva Belmont, the socialite who had been courted by Carrie Chapman Catt and was herself known for her dramatic and forceful views, was one of her biggest financial backers, and is credited as a co-founder of the NWP.<sup>73</sup> Despite the NWP's "militant" tactics, they were also committed to nonviolence, and opposed the United States' entrance into conflict in Europe, reflecting Alice Paul's Quaker roots.<sup>74</sup>

World War I, which began in Europe in 1914 and American entered in 1917, was a critical issue for the suffrage movement. Prior to the United States getting involved in the conflict, it had little effect on the suffrage movement. Support for suffrage had been growing, and the Democratic and Republican Conventions in 1916 both endorsed it, though only at the state level. Both parties included women's suffrage in their platform, with provisos about it being an issue for the states; the Republican platform stated that it "[recognized] the right of each state to settle this question for itself."<sup>75</sup> New York granted women the franchise in 1917, a landmark victory. Even President Woodrow Wilson gave the NAWSA his support, despite the fact had

---

<sup>71</sup> Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 15.

<sup>72</sup> Lynda G. Dodd, "Parades, Pickets, and Prison: Alice Paul and the Virtues of Unruly Constitutional Citizenship," *Journal of Law & Politics* 24 (2008), 362.

<sup>73</sup> "Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument," National Park Service, last modified October 29, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/bepa/index.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Linda G. Ford. *Iron-Jawed Angels: The Suffrage Militancy of the National Woman's Party 1912-1920*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 16.

<sup>75</sup> "Republican Party Platform of 1916," The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barbara, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1916>



been indifferent to the movement. That indifference made the White House a frequent site of protests and picket lines organized by Alice Paul and the National Women's Party.<sup>76</sup>

President Wilson spoke at the NAWSA's National Convention in 1916, and by 1918, he fully supported a national amendment granting women the right to vote. He had written Carrie Chapman Catt several personal notes; in one of them, he congratulated her on helping North Dakota grant women the franchise. President Wilson wrote, "As you know, I have a very real interest in the extension of the suffrage to women, and I feel that every step in this direction should be applauded."<sup>77</sup>

But the suffrage movement had turned away from Alice Paul's pacifism. The NWP was adamantly anti-war and refused to support the US's involvement in the conflict. Carrie Chapman Catt and the NAWSA had previously espoused the cause of international peace, and the suffrage movement in general had been using the idea of women as a positive influence upon violent men to argue in favor of their right to vote for decades. As late as 1915 leaders of the suffrage movement were still involved in organizations that promoted peace, including the Women's Peace Party, which was chaired by Catt herself before she withdrew from the organization in 1917.<sup>78</sup> By that time public opinion had shifted in favor of entering the war, and the NAWSA capitalized on that. Middle-class clubwomen, Catt's favorite constituency since she first took office in 1901, were at the forefront of the war effort; they sold bonds, rationed food, and organized events in support of the troops.<sup>79</sup> The NAWSA could not afford to ignore the war, and

---

<sup>76</sup> Ford, *Iron-Jawed Angels*, 60.

<sup>77</sup> Carrie Chapman Catt. *Carrie Chapman Catt Papers: General Correspondence, Circa 1890 to 1947; Wilson, Woodrow. - 1947, 1890*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss154040369/>.

<sup>78</sup> Erika A. Kuhlman. *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>79</sup> Bolt, *The Women's Movements*, 246.

began implementing rhetoric supporting the war effort. It was worth compromising; by 1919, membership had risen to 2 million.<sup>80</sup>

Many historians credit Catt's turnaround on the war as a critical factor in convincing Congress to pass the Amendment granting women the vote nationally. After seventy years, the women's suffrage movement was on the cusp of victory; not just in the states, but on a federal level. Since his conversion to their cause, President Wilson had been urging Congress to pass a Constitutional amendment granting women the franchise. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed by the House of Representatives in January of 1918. Eighteen months later, the Senate finally followed suit. And then the thirty-six states which had not yet given women the right to vote had to all ratify the amendment. Tennessee, the last of them, legalized women's suffrage nationwide on August 26, 1920. It had taken half a century of organizing and campaigning, twenty years of concentrated effort in an atmosphere of social change and reform, and then a world war, for the first modern democracy to actually recognize that 50% of its population has the right to vote.

---

<sup>80</sup> Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 344.

## Conclusions: The End of an Era

"Fellow suffragists, we have come to a turn in the road," Carrie Chapman Catt said after the 19th Amendment was ratified.<sup>81</sup> It was now prohibited to deny someone the right to vote on the basis of sex. By the time this happened, it was in large part a formality, thanks to how many states had already legalized women's suffrage. Nonetheless, it had far-reaching consequences, beyond allowing women to vote in federal elections. The single cause that had united politically active women for decades was gone. Many women, such as Catt herself, continued to be leaders of organizations like the League of Women Voters. Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman began campaigning for the Equal Rights Amendment, an achievement that continues eluding success to this day. Younger women, especially those coming of age during the Roaring Twenties, could take their voting rights for granted. Today, it can be difficult to even comprehend that it has been less than a hundred years since women became allowed to vote under federal law.

Achieving that was a very long and very difficult process. It involved bitter conflict, between suffragists and their enemies, between white women and black men, and between different factions of the movement. Even Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, the indefatigable generals of the suffrage campaign for thirty years, did not always see eye to eye. Both of them, along with their allies and their successors, had to accept great moral compromises. They had to give up their desire for universal suffrage, their goals for improving women's social and economic situation. Stanton never quite did so, and as a result Susan B. Anthony is remembered alone. It is her sanitized and idealized visage that adorns a coin. But the

---

<sup>81</sup> Susan Ware. *Modern American Women: A Documentary History*, second edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 121.

truth is that winning suffrage was a dirty and difficult battle, that left none who were involved without damage of some kind.

Very little of that battle is known or understood by most people. Modern women learn of the negative things said by the leaders, and claim it makes them unworthy of approbation.<sup>82</sup> This disdain requires a lack of understanding of the movement and its leaders, and no respect for what they did help achieve regardless of any other statements they may have made. Neither Stanton nor Anthony lived to see the 19th Amendment ratified, the fruits of almost 75 years of women's labor, and an achievement that Abigail Adams could never have even dreamed of when she requested that her husband remember the ladies. People would be wise to heed her now. Remember the ladies, like Stanton and Anthony and Catt and Paul, who worked so hard and fought so long for our rights as citizens of the United States, and all they overcame, because they did it for us.

---

<sup>82</sup> Ginia Bellafante, "Is a Planned Monument to Women's Rights Racist?" *New York Times*, January 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/nyregion/is-a-planned-monument-to-womens-rights-racist.html>.

## Bibliography

Adams, Charles Frances. *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife, Abigail Adams, During the Revolution*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876.

Adams, Katherine H., and Michael L. Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Anthony, Susan B., and Ida Husted Harper, ed. *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4 1883-1900*. New York: Arno & The New York Times, 1969.

Baker, Jean H. *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005.

Baker, Noelle A., ed. *Stanton in Her Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of Her Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016.

Barry, Kathleen. *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Bellafante, Ginia. "Is a Planned Monument to Women's Rights Racist?" *New York Times*. January 19, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/nyregion/is-a-planned-monument-to-womens-rights-racist.html>.

Bolt, Christine. *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to 1920s*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

Boston University. "About Anna Howard Shaw." Anna Howard Shaw Center. Accessed May 29, 2019, <http://www.bu.edu/shaw/anna-howard-shaw/>

Catt, Carrie Chapman, and Nettie Rogers Shuler. *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1923.

Ceplair, Larry, ed. *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimke: Selected Writings 1835-1839*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Davis, Sue. *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Women's Rights and the American Political Traditions*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Dodd, Lynda G. "Parades, Pickets, and Prison: Alice Paul and the Virtues of Unruly Constitutional Citizenship," *Journal of Law & Politics* 24 (2008): 340-433.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Start Publishing LLC, 2012.

DuBois, Ellen Carol, ed. *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader*. Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

DuBois, Ellen Carol. *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Dudden, Faye E. *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "The North Star." Last modified November 11, 2016.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-North-Star-American-newspaper>

Foner, Philip S., ed. *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass Volume IV: Reconstruction and After*. New York: International Publishers, 1955.

Ford, Linda G. *Iron-Jawed Angels: The Suffrage Militancy of the National Woman's Party 1912-1920*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1991.

Gelles, Edith, ed. *Abigail Adams: Letters*. New York: The Library of America, 2016.

Graham, Sarah Hunter. *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Griffith, Elisabeth. *In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Kraditor, Aileen S. *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.

Kuhlman, Erika A. *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967.

Library of Congress. *Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments*. John Dick at the North Star Office, Rochester, New York, July 19-20, 1848. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001106/>.

Library of Congress. *Carrie Chapman Catt Papers: General Correspondence, Circa 1890 to 1947; Wilson, Woodrow. - 1947, 1890*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss154040369/>.

Matthews, Jean V. *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003.

McMillen, Sally G. *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

National Park Service. "Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument." Last modified October 29, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/bepa/index.htm>.

National Park Service. "Declaration of Sentiments." Last modified February 26, 2015. <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm>

National Park Service. "Report of the Women's Rights Convention." Last modified February 26, 2015. <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm>

Neuman, Johanna. *Gilded Suffragists: The New York Socialites Who Fought for Women's Right to Vote*. New York: New York University Press, 2017.

Peck, Mary Gray. *Carrie Chapman Catt: A Biography*. New York: Octagon Books, 1975.

Scott, Anne Firor, and Andrew MacKay Scott. *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

Skemp, Sheila L., ed. *Judith Sargent Murray: A Brief Biography with Documents*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1996.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. *The Woman's Bible*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Goslyn Gage. *History of Woman Suffrage Volume 2: 1861-1876*. New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1969.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, and Parker Pillsbury. "The Revolution," Volume I, Issue No. 13, April 2, 1868. Lewis & Clark Digital Collections, accessed November 20, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.lclark.edu/items/show/9613>.

Stevenson-Moessner, Jeanne. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Reformer to Revolutionary: A Theological Trajectory." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 3 (1994): 673-697.

Tetrault, Lisa. *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Woloch, Nancy. *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014.

Woloch, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience*, fifth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

University of California, Santa Barbara. "Republican Party Platform of 1916." The American Presidency Project. Accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1916>.