

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

On June 4, 1919, the United States Senate approved the 19th amendment to the Constitution, which states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the needed 36th state to ratify the amendment.



Youngest parader in New York City suffragist parade
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500068/>

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This triumph was the result of centuries of struggle, culminating in the late 19th century in a burst of public activism and civil disobedience that not only secured voting rights for women, but also helped define new possibilities for women's participation in the public sphere.

Early Suffrage Rights and Fights

Early in the history of the United States, women in New Jersey could legally vote, provided they met property requirements. However, this changed in 1807 when the State Assembly passed a law limiting suffrage to free white males. There would not be another law explicitly giving the vote to women until 1869, when the Wyoming territory granted women over 21 years of age the right to vote in all elections.

While some states explicitly prohibited women from voting, in 1872 New York did not, opening the door for Susan B. Anthony and a small group of suffragists to register and vote. They were arrested three weeks

later on a charge of "criminal voting." Anthony was found guilty and fined \$100 plus court costs.

Early Activism and Organizations

The first large gathering of those fighting for women's rights occurred in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. One outcome of the Seneca Falls Convention was the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the Declaration of Independence that called for civil, social, political, and religious rights for women. Many of the signers of the Declaration, including Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, would go on to become the leaders of a generation of suffrage activists.

In the decades that followed the Seneca Falls Convention, formal groups were established to lead American women in their bid for voting and other rights. Well-known organizations include the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which

would eventually unify to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. These groups lobbied for local and state voting rights in addition to working at the national level.

The Congressional Union was formed in 1913 to accelerate and intensify the fight with more radical protest methods as had been done in Britain. The National Women's Party, formed in 1916, was an outgrowth of this organization.

Suffragist Strategies

In addition to organizing formal suffrage groups and rallying at conventions and meetings, supporters of universal suffrage employed a number of other strategies. Suffrage activists exercised their First Amendment rights to "peaceably assemble" and "petition for a government redress of grievances" first using traditional strategies, including lobbying lawmakers, and then implementing more radical -- for the time -- tactics such as public picketing and refusing bail after arrest.

Individuals and groups published periodicals such as *The Revolution*, which focused on women's rights but also covered politics and the labor movement. Activists campaigned in ways that were considered "unladylike," such as marching in parades and giving street corner speeches. One radical strategy that had not been tried previously was regular picketing of the White House. Protesters carried banners naming President Wilson as an opponent of suffrage. The resulting arrests only served to bring more attention to the suffrage movement. The fight for suffrage rights escalated when the United States entered World War I in April 1917 and many women moved into the workforce.

Anti-Suffrage Activism

Both women and men worked to oppose universal suffrage. Some argued that women wielded enough power within the home that there was no need

for power in society. State and national groups such as the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage and Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage were formed to actively resist suffrage rights for women. These groups were often opposed to any role for women outside the home, fearing the downfall of the family as well as a decrease in women's work in communities and their ability to influence societal reforms.

A Continuing Legacy

Although women's right to vote was secured by Constitutional amendment in 1920, the legacy of the suffragists continues to the present day. In fighting for the right to vote, women formed national political organizations, developed new strategies for protest, and brought women into the public sphere in new and more visible ways. These advances were not limited to their work for enfranchisement, but also laid the groundwork for civic action that has been emulated by those working for other civil rights causes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Select items that reflect different strategies used in the fight for equal suffrage. Study the items opposing suffrage and compare strategies. If time allows, brainstorm or research to identify other strategies used in the struggle for suffrage.

Use the anti-suffrage items to identify and study the arguments made by those opposed to suffrage.

Study the maps to form a picture of which states and territories enfranchised women and which did not. Speculate about why there were differences in rights in different states and areas, and then look for evidence to support the hypothesis.

Study the political cartoons and select one for further analysis. What do you think was the cartoonist's opinion of women's suffrage? Who do you think was the audience for the cartoon? What methods does the cartoonist use to persuade the audience? If time allows, search the Library's collections for another political cartoon about suffrage, identify the cartoonist's opinion about women's suffrage, and compare the methods each cartoon uses to make its point.

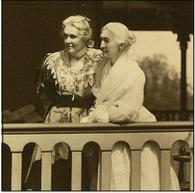
Examine several items reflecting the consequences for the suffragists' actions. What can you discover about the treatment of suffragists from these items? Ask students to think about what causes they'd be willing to fight for, knowing there might be harsh consequences.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



By Popular Demand: "Votes for Women" Suffrage Pictures, 1850-1920

http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/076_vfw.html



Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/suffrage/millerscrapbooks/>



Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party

<http://www.collection/women-of-protest/about-this-collection/>



Topics in Chronicling America - The Nineteenth Amendment

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/nineteenth.html>

PRIMARY SOURCES WITH CITATIONS



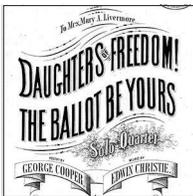
"The first convention ever called to discuss the civil and political rights of women, Seneca Falls, N.Y., July 19, 20, 1848. Woman's rights convention." Pamphlet. 18-- . From Library of Congress, *National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/sm1871.02334>



"Youngest parader in New York City suffragist parade." Photograph. American Press Association, May 6, 1912. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500068/>



Christie, Edwin, composer. "Daughters of Freedom." Sheet music. Boston: Ditson & Co., 1871. From Library of Congress, *Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/sm1871.02334>



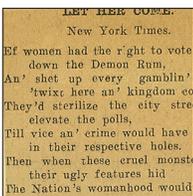
Christie, Edwin, composer. "Daughters of Freedom." Sound file. Recorded at the Library of Congress, September 23, 1998. From Library of Congress, *Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, 1870-1885*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/sm1871.7102334>



"Votes for Women Broadside. Women's Political Union." Broadside. New York City, New York, January 28, 1911. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller002522>



"Let Her Come." *New York Times*, n.d. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001994>



Knobe, Bertha Damaris. "Votes for Women: An Object-Lesson by Bertha Damaris Knobe." Map. *Harper's Weekly*, April 25, 1908. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001165>



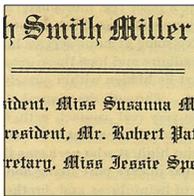
Harris & Ewing, photographer. "WOMAN SUFFRAGE JAIL CELL." Photograph. Between 1916 and 1918. From Library of Congress, *Harris & Ewing Collection*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/hec2008006996/>



"Alice Paul Describes Force Feeding." London, England: December 1909. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller003904>



Miller, Elizabeth Smith. "Elizabeth Smith Miller Study Class Outline of Work for 1909." Leaflet. [Geneva, NY]: Geneva Political Equality Club, 1909. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001209>



Gustin, E. W. "Election Day!" Cartoon. c1909. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500226/>



Harris & Ewing, photographer. "National Anti-Suffrage Association." Photograph. 1911? From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500067/>



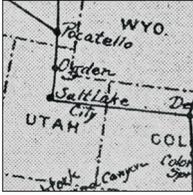
Tulsa Daily World (OK). "Discriminating Against Mother." Nov. 3, 1918. From Library of Congress, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042344/1918-11-03/ed-1/seq-31/>



Mayer, Henry, artist. "The Awakening." Illustration. *Puck*: volume 77, no. 1981, February 20, 1915, pages 14-15. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/98502844/>



[Map of] Route of Envoys Sent from East by the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage, to Appeal to Voting Women of the West. Map. April 1916. From Library of Congress, *Records of the National Woman's Party*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000270>



"Part of the Vast Billboard Campaign of the Woman's Party." Photograph. 1916. From Library of Congress, *Records of the National Woman's Party*.

<http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000345>



Harris & Ewing, photographer. "WOMAN SUFFRAGE. BONFIRE ON SIDEWALK BEFORE WHITE HOUSE." Photograph. 1918. From Library of Congress, *Harris & Ewing Collection*.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/hec2008008277/>



Bushnell. ["The Sky is Now Her Limit."] Cartoon. *New York Times Current History*. New York: New York Times Co., October 1920, Page 142. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2002716769/>