

Suffrage at Last

READING FOCUS

- In what ways were Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton a “bridge” to the twentieth-century suffrage effort?
- What two main strategies did suffrage leaders pursue?
- What was the status of the suffrage movement by the turn of the century?
- Why was a new generation of national leaders needed in the suffrage effort?
- What factors led to a final victory for suffrage?

MAIN IDEA

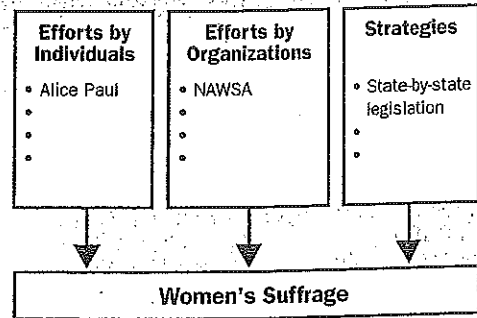
Demonstrating their skills as organizers and activists, women won the right to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

KEY TERMS

civil disobedience
National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)
Congressional Union (CU)

TAKING NOTES

As you read, complete this chart, adding causes that led to the passage of women’s suffrage.



Setting the Scene For roughly 70 years, women’s organizations actively campaigned for the right to vote. As the movement grew, so did resistance to it. Opponents included men and women from all age groups and income levels. Many viewed the idea of women’s suffrage as unnecessary, at best. At worst, they saw it as a threat to the stability of American society and government.

In speeches and articles, anti-suffragists voiced the genuine fears of many Americans: Would women become “too masculine,” as critics suggested? Would they be easily manipulated by politicians? Would politics distract them from their duties in the home?

One of the most persuasive arguments against suffrage was that women simply did not want to vote—a fact that was confirmed by some opinion polls in some areas. Yet note the language this popular magazine used to make generalizations about all women:

“This is the negative reason why woman does not wish the ballot: she does not wish to engage in that conflict of wills which is the essence of politics; she does not wish to assume the responsibility for protecting person and property which is the essence of government. The affirmative reason is that she has other, and in some sense, more important work to do.”

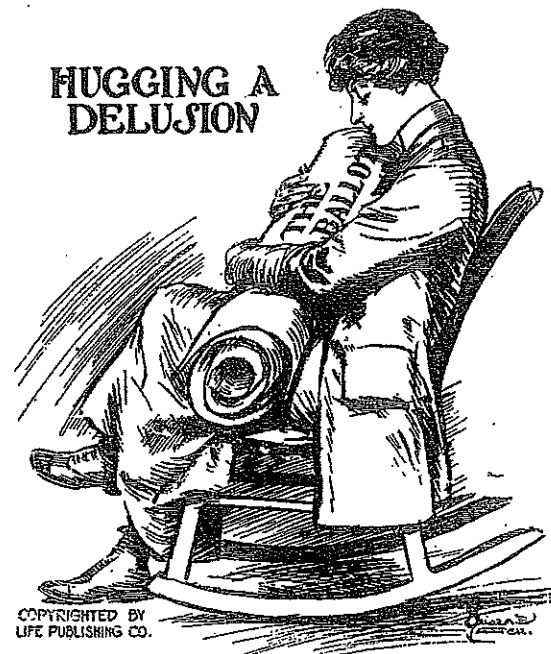
—Lyman Abbott, “Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage,”
The Atlantic Monthly, September 1903

Anthony and Stanton: Preparing the Way

From the beginning, suffragists heard such arguments, and more. In their long struggle, they faced confrontations, ridicule, threats, and even violence.

INTERPRETING CARTOONS

As the women’s suffrage movement gained strength, criticisms grew louder. **Drawing Inferences** Give at least one possible explanation for the word delusion in the title of this cartoon.



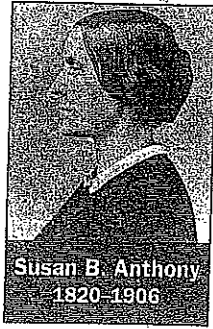
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BIOGRAPHY

Like her father, a Quaker abolitionist, Susan B. Anthony was a crusader. She founded her own temperance group. She campaigned hard to get schools to open their doors to women and former slaves. As an abolitionist, Anthony faced armed mobs and threats. She fought for equal pay and an eight-hour workday for women.

Anthony ran a tireless campaign for women's voting rights as head of the National Woman Suffrage Association. For nearly 40 years, Anthony appeared before every Congress to demand a suffrage amendment. Anthony co-founded the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which she led for eight years, retiring in 1900. Although most suffragists married and raised families, Anthony never did marry and devoted her entire life to many causes.

"Failure is impossible," Anthony declared before her death in 1906. Fourteen years later, her words came true with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.



American women activists first formally demanded the right to vote in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. The meeting made famous the names of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A few years later, a young woman joined their cause: Susan B. Anthony. She, along with Stanton, would become the nation's most celebrated champions of women's suffrage.

Together, Anthony, a tireless strategist and organizer, and Stanton, a skilled speaker and writer, would take the women's suffrage movement into the twentieth century. In 1866, they founded the American Equal Rights Association and soon began publication of a newspaper, *The Revolution*. On its banner was emblazoned ". . . men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."

The movement later split into two groups. Stanton and Anthony continued, as the National Woman Suffrage Association, to fight for a constitutional amendment for suffrage. Meanwhile, the newly formed American Woman Suffrage Association worked on the state level to win voting rights. When Wyoming entered the union in 1890, it became the first state to grant women full suffrage.

In 1872, Anthony led a group of women to the polls in Rochester, New York, where she insisted on voting. Anthony was arrested for this act of **civil disobedience**. Civil disobedience is a nonviolent refusal to obey a law in an effort to change it. While she awaited her trial, Anthony set out on a highly publicized lecture tour. During one of these lectures she asserted:

“The preamble of the Federal Constitution says: ‘We, the people of the United States. . . .’ It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people—women as well as men.”

—Susan B. Anthony

Anthony was convicted at her trial and fined \$100. She refused to pay the fine but was set free anyway. Legal maneuvering by the judge and her court-appointed lawyer prevented her from appealing the conviction and further pursuing her case.

Suffragist Strategies

Suffragists continued to follow two paths toward their goal. One path was to press for a constitutional amendment giving women the vote. The most commonly used method of amending the Constitution required two thirds of each house of Congress to pass a measure. The measure then had to be ratified by three fourths of the state legislatures.

The other path pursued by suffragists was to get individual states to let women vote. At first this approach was more successful, especially in the western states. There, survival on the frontier required the combined efforts of men and women and encouraged a greater sense of equality between them.

Pushing for a federal amendment proved to be the more difficult approach. The first amendment introduced in Congress in 1868 stalled. In 1878, suffragists introduced a new amendment that adopted the wording of

READING CHECK

How did Susan B. Anthony contribute to the suffrage movement?

Focus on CITIZENSHIP

Women in Law Practice Suffrage workers confronted strongly held attitudes about women and their proper social roles. When lawyer Myra Bradwell of Chicago was denied a state license to practice law in 1869, she took her case to the Supreme Court. In *Bradwell v. Illinois* (1873), the Court upheld the denial, reaffirming the “wide difference in the respective spheres and destinies of man and woman.” Although Illinois had given Bradwell her license by 1890, most Americans believed that woman’s proper sphere remained the home, not the workplace.

Susan B. Anthony: “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.”

With this language, the proposed amendment received its first committee hearing. Elizabeth Cady Stanton described the chair of the committee, Senator Bainbridge Wadleigh of New Hampshire, as a picture of “inattention and contempt.” “He stretched, yawned, gazed at the ceiling, cut his nails, sharpened his pencil, changing his occupation and position every two minutes.”

Stalled again, the bill was not debated until 1887. It was then defeated in the Senate by a vote of 16 for, 34 against, and 26 absent. Supporters reintroduced the “Anthony Amendment,” as the bill came to be called, every year until 1896. Then it disappeared, and did not resurface again until 1913.

Suffrage at the Turn of the Century

In 1890, veteran leaders of the suffrage movement, including Anthony, Stanton, and Lucy Stone, were joined by younger leaders in forming the **National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)**. Anthony served as president of NAWSA from 1892 until 1900.

By the time of NAWSA’s founding, women had won many rights. For example, married women could now buy, sell, and will property. By 1900, growing numbers of women were demanding the vote. Some were participating in voluntary organizations that investigated social conditions. These women were publicizing their findings, suggesting reforms, lobbying officials, and monitoring enforcement of new laws. Working women were becoming more active in unions, picketing, and getting arrested. To many of these women, being denied the right to vote seemed ridiculous.

Yet from the late 1890s to 1910, the suffrage movement was in “the doldrums,” as one historian put it. Years of legal efforts to win suffrage had failed. The rise of progressivism brought new political support, but it was not enough to turn the tide. The beloved leaders of the suffrage movement, Stanton and

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

Voting Rights for Women

In the early 1900s, the longtime debate over women’s suffrage entered a heated, final stage prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Analyzing Viewpoints Summarize the arguments made in the two quotations below.

In Favor of Women’s Suffrage

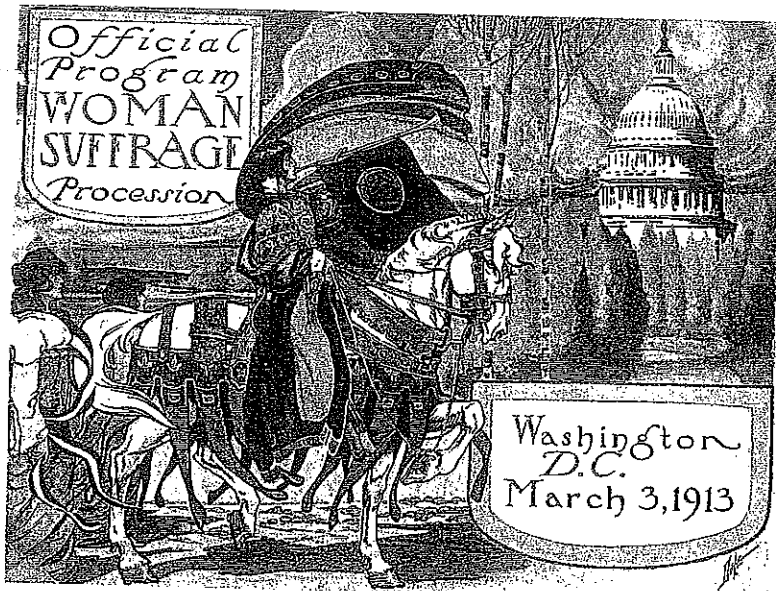
“The great doctrine of the American Republic that all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed justifies the plea of one-half of the people, the women, to exercise the suffrage. The doctrine of the American Revolutionary War that taxation without representation is unendurable justifies women in exercising the suffrage.”

—Robert L. Owen,
senator from Oklahoma, 1910

Opposed to Women’s Suffrage

“In political warfare, it is perfectly fitting that actual strife and battle should be apportioned [given out] to man, and that the influence of woman, radiating from the homes of our land, should inspire to lofty aims and purposes those who struggle for the right. I am thoroughly convinced that woman can in no better way than this usefully serve the cause of political betterment.”

—Grover Cleveland,
Ladies’ Home Journal, October 1905



VIEWING HISTORY At the 1913 suffrage rally hundreds of participants were taunted and injured by opponents, yet the event was considered a success.

Drawing Conclusions What reasons might suffragists have had for viewing the rally as a victory?



This suffrage poster urges parents to consider the future of their daughters.

Anthony, died in 1902 and 1906, respectively—without seeing the realization of their life's work. It was time for a new generation to create momentum and take the cause of suffrage to victory.

A New Generation

One new leader who emerged to re-energize the movement was Carrie Chapman Catt, a former high school principal and superintendent of schools in Mason City, Iowa. A talented speaker and organizer, she headed NAWSA from 1900 to 1904, and then again after 1915. As head of NAWSA, Catt insisted on precinct-by-precinct political work with close coordination among districts.

Alice Paul also rose as a leader in the women's suffrage movement. She had learned tactics from the aggressive English suffrage movement while she was a student in England. In January 1913, she and a friend, Lucy Burns, took over the NAWSA committee that was working on congressional passage of the federal suffrage amendment.

Two months later, the two women had organized a parade of 5,000 women in Washington, D.C. The parade took place on the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. It drew so much attention that few supporters greeted Wilson when he arrived at the train station. After the success of the rally, Paul transformed her committee into a new organization, the **Congressional Union (CU)**.

A Split in the Movement Following Paul's action, a split occurred within the suffrage movement. Paul's CU called for an aggressive, militant campaign for the constitutional amendment. She planned to bypass existing state suffrage organizations and set up new ones in each state.

The leadership of NAWSA opposed Paul's plan, believing it would alienate moderate supporters. In February 1914, they expelled the Congressional Union from the organization. The CU went on to stage militant protests. They demonstrated in front of the White House. They set aflame a life-size dummy of Wilson, who was still refusing to back the suffrage amendment. They burned copies of his speeches. Exasperated authorities arrested CU members and sent them to prison, where they went on hunger strikes to protest horrible prison conditions.

Meanwhile, NAWSA continued to back the state suffrage campaigns. The group focused its efforts on winning the vote in four eastern states: New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. In 1915, the suffrage campaigns failed in all four states. At that point, Carrie Chapman Catt was reinstated as NAWSA president and given free rein to bring about victory. Out of this challenge came her "Winning Plan."

This plan consisted of developing a large group of full-time leaders to work in "red-hot" campaigns for six years. In addition, NAWSA decided to focus on getting Congress to re-introduce the federal suffrage amendment.

By 1917, NAWSA had grown into the largest volunteer organization in the country, with 2 million members. In the fall of that year, it won an important victory when New York State voted for women's suffrage. New York, with its

large number of electoral votes in presidential elections, would now be courted by candidates seeking the support of the state's women voters.

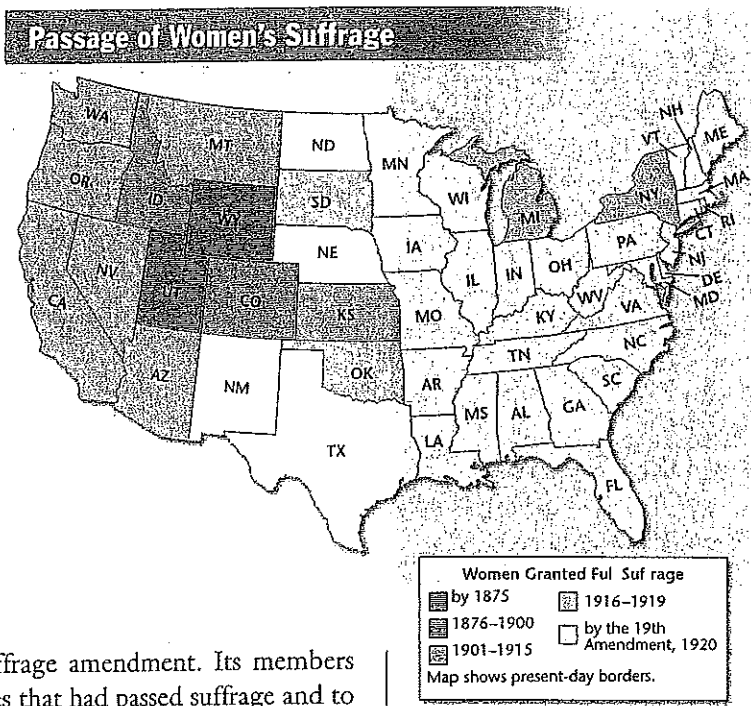
Impact of World War I The United States entered World War I in April 1917. Women across the country hastened to do their patriotic duty by volunteering for ambulance corps and for medical work and by taking on jobs left by men. Arguments of separate spheres for women and men were forgotten during wartime.

In addition, Congress adopted the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the sale of liquor. As a result of this action, liquor interests no longer had reason to fight suffrage.

Victory for Suffrage

In 1919, Congress formally proposed the suffrage amendment. Its members finally succumbed to the political forces of states that had passed suffrage and to the unrelenting work of NAWSA. They also had been keenly embarrassed and disturbed by the treatment that the women of Alice Paul's Congressional Union had received in filthy jails, where some hunger strikers were force-fed. After the amendment was proposed in Congress, the ratification battle began. It would end in August, 1920, when Tennessee became the 36th state necessary to ratify the suffrage amendment.

As suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt commented when the exhausting battle of many decades was finally over, "It is doubtful that any man . . . ever realized what the suffrage struggle came to mean to women. . . . It leaves its mark on one, such a struggle." The Nineteenth Amendment marked the last major reform of the Progressive Era.



MAP SKILLS Women's suffrage was already in place in many states by the time the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. **Analyzing Visual Information** What pattern do you see in the locations of states that did and did not pass suffrage at the state level?

Section 4 Assessment

READING COMPREHENSION

1. Describe how Anthony and Stanton worked together to lead the suffrage movement.
2. Why was the suffrage movement in need of new leadership after the turn of the century?
3. How did the **National American Woman Suffrage Association** and the **Congressional Union** differ in their tactics?
 - a. (a) How did passage of the Nineteenth Amendment come about? (b) Why did the battle take so long?

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

5. **Drawing Inferences** How do you think the state-by-state efforts of suffragists affected the effort to win a constitutional amendment on suffrage?
6. **Writing an Opinion** Identify the goals, strategies, and tactics of two of the suffrage leaders described in this section. Which leader or group do you think was most effective? Why? Write a brief paragraph expressing your opinion.

Take It to the NET

Activity: Writing an Essay Study the suffrage movement online. Write an essay comparing the suffrage movement to other struggles for liberty. Use the links provided in the *America: Pathways to the Present* area of the following Web site for help in completing this activity.
www.phschool.com