

Susan Brownell Anthony's Role in the National Woman
Suffrage Association

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On February 3, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, stating, “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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” This meant that all African American men were allowed to vote; however many people had mixed reactions/opinions on the situation for different reasons. Susan Brownell Anthony was one such person. She was an outspoken, intelligent, teacher, who later became known for her views in favor of women’s suffrage. In particular, she believed that everyone was born equal and that men shouldn’t be the only ones with the freedom to vote. Although this turning point in history helped many slaves and African American men, it did nothing to help women gain their right to vote. It was as if women weren’t even considered citizens of the United States. In 1869, Anthony founded the National Woman Suffrage Association. Their purpose was to fight for women’s voting rights. With Anthony leading the way, eventually others followed, and the Nineteenth Amendment was established. This amendment would ultimately give women the right to vote...but not until 1920.

Before the National Woman Suffrage Association was Formed:

During Anthony’s late teenage years, she was surrounded by inequality, slavery was still in existence, and white men were the only citizens privileged enough to have a say in government leadership. Her father, a sort of businessman who dabbled in many things, such as farming, insurance, and shop-keeping, was a Quaker abolitionist who strongly believed in education for his daughters.¹ Her Quaker upbringing didn’t allow for

¹ Kendall, Martha E. *Susan B. Anthony: Voice for Women's Voting Rights*. Enslow Publishers, 1997

toys, music, or games, and as a result, she learned to read from her grandmother at the age of four within only six weeks. Before she was even sixteen years old, Anthony's father encouraged her to become a teacher. However, she soon lost interest in teaching and grasped for something more for herself. In 1845, her father made a change and moved their family to Rochester, New York. It was here that she became involved in reform and introduced herself to many outstanding abolitionists, such as Frederick Douglass, Parker Pillsbury, William Lloyd, etc.² Soon after, on August 2, 1848, she decided to attend a women's rights assembly titled: The Rochester Women's Rights Convention. At this gathering, she introduced herself to the outspoken, civil rights activist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton was also an abolitionist, and from start, knew that Anthony was an honest person with good intentions. For example, Stanton recalled, "There she stood with her good earnest face and genial smile, dressed in gray silk, hat, and all the same color, relieved with pale blue ribbons, the perfection of neatness and sobriety. I liked her thoroughly, and why I did not at once invite her home with me to dinner, I do not know."³ They both formed a fast friendship and alliance that lasted for over fifty years. Anthony was influenced by her inspiring work and realized how much they had in common. They both had the same belief, that it was truly inconsiderate that the government decided to leave out women in the voting process.

² Kuiper, Kathleen. *The 100 Most Influential Women of All Times*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010.

³ "Susan B. Anthony." *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2015, www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/susan-b-anthony.htm. Accessed 13 Oct. 2017.

Anthony's strong Quaker roots further increased her interest in temperance reform and she organized the Women's New York State Temperance Society. Her new friend, Stanton, became the very first president.⁴ This group pushed Anthony further and further in the direction of women's rights advocacy. Because she was very well-known with regard to women's rights, she became one of the prime targets of public and newspaper abuse from those whose viewpoints differed from hers. For example, there were definitely some men AND women who were anti-suffragists. In the 1860s, opponents of women's suffrage were forming locally. The main location of the leading suffrage advocates was Massachusetts, and it was one of the first states with an organized anti-suffrage association. Around the 1880s, all the anti-activists came together and formed the

Massachusetts Association

Opposed to Woman Suffrage.

Although most women and men

wanted women to vote, the

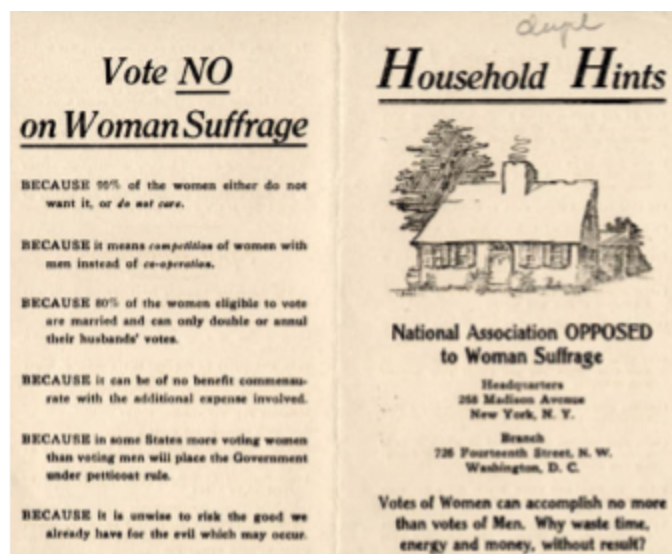
anti-suffragists felt that women

needed to stay home with their

children. They believed women

didn't have the time to stay

updated on politics/voting and



A National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage pamphlet explaining all the reasons why women should not be allowed the right to vote. Eaton, Eliza. "The Journey Towards Women's Suffrage." *Prezi.com*, Jewish Women's Archive, 8 Jan. 2016, prezi.com/x3xcqx8yhgub/the-journey-towards-womens-suffrage/

⁴ Hanson, Ph.D. Prof. David J. "Woman's New York State Temperance Society." *Alcohol Problems & Solutions*, 11 Mar. 2017, www.alcoholproblemsandsolutions.org/womans-new-york-state-temperance-society/

therefore, shouldn't waste their time at the ballot. In addition, they believed women lacked the expertise men had to offer with regard to their opinion on political issues. For instance, in the *Household Hints* pamphlet, it stated; "Votes on women can accomplish no more than votes of men. Why waste time, energy, and money, without result?"⁵ They believed that if women earned the vote, it would cost more money, and no additional value would be gained.

Anthony could not be denied the ballot. Numerous women formed associations and committees to try to stand up for their rights. They put in decades of determination and time into trying to attract as many people as possible to be on their side. Most women were very independent and desperately wanted the ability to vote; they wanted to be involved with the leadership of the country and thought that having a say should be a basic civil right. On the other hand; however, that opposition did nothing to stop her. As a matter of fact, she went on to further serve in 1856 as chief of the New York agent of Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society. Furthermore, in 1868, she and Stanton decided to join forces and established a newspaper titled *The Revolution*. This newspaper's first motto, which was printed on the first edition's head page, claimed, "Principle, not policy; Justice, not favors." The second edition added: "Men, their rights and nothing more; Women, their rights and nothing less." Later editions had this motto: "The True Republic—Men, their rights and nothing more; Women, their rights and nothing less." This newspaper lasted two years: 1868-1870. No one could say that

⁵ Eaton, Eliza. "The Journey Towards Women's Suffrage." *Prezi.com*, Jewish Women's Archive, 8 Jan. 2016, prezi.com/x3xcqx8yhgub/the-journey-towards-womens-suffrage/

Anthony wasn't involved in her country. At the time, if someone heard the words "women's rights," the first name that would pop into their heads would be Susan B. Anthony. In addition, if that wasn't enough, she decided to start up a new association called The National Woman Suffrage Association. (NWSA)⁶

The National Woman Suffrage Association:

This association advocated for a range of reforms to make women equal members of society. Along with Anthony, the association's members were: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Anna Howard Shaw. These women were all brave enough to stand up for what they believed in even though they could have been persecuted for their beliefs. The NWSA felt that the Fifteenth Amendment absolutely excluded women voting. They strongly felt passionate about women's inclusion to vote. For example, Anthony proclaimed: "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."⁷ In 1872, in her effort to challenge suffrage, she and her three sisters voted in the Presidential Election even though women weren't yet allowed to vote at the time. The Anthony women didn't care. They felt strongly about the importance and value of gender equality. Anthony confidently claimed, "My name is Susan B. Anthony and these are my three sisters. We've come here to register for the election, and we intend to vote."⁸ As an outcome of this daring act, she was reported to the police, arrested, and

⁶ "Susan B. Anthony." *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2015, www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/susan-b-anthony.htm. Accessed 13 Oct. 2017.

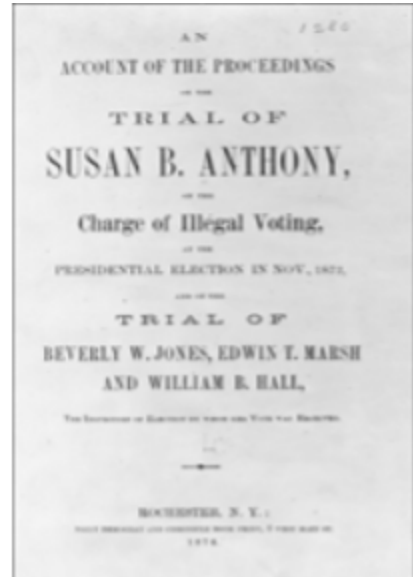
⁷ "National Woman Suffrage Association." *History of U.S. Women's Suffrage*, National Women's History Museum, 2016, www.crusadeforthevote.org/nwsa-organize/. Accessed 13 Oct. 2017

⁸ "Gallant Women." *GRIT Family Section*, 4 May 1969, pp. 1–44.

put on trial at the Ontario Courthouse, Canandaigua, New York. The judge instructed the jury to find her guilty without any considerations and imposed a \$100 fine. Anthony refused to pay the fine/all the court costs, and since the judge did not sentence her to prison time, her chance of an appeal ended. If she were allowed to appeal her case, it could have gone to the Supreme Court, where women's suffrage rights would have been further noticed. That was not to happen. Subsequently, she worked even harder for further years in the NWSA. For instance, along with Stanton, they traveled constantly in support of efforts in various states to win the authorization for women: California (1871), Michigan (1874), Colorado (1877), and much elsewhere.⁹

The Rival Association:

Additionally, the disagreement about whether or not to support the Fifteenth Amendment led to a division of the women's rights movement. In 1869, activists established two competing national organizations focused on winning woman suffrage. While the NWSA was in its early stages, another group was forming as well—the American Woman Suffrage Association. This committee was led by Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry Brown Blackwell. In spite of the fact that, the NWSA specifically advocated for women to be equal members of society, this new group, the AWSA



The document of Susan B. Anthony's trial for attempting to illegally vote. "Browse Collections by Topic." *American Memory from the Library of Congress - Home Page*, Library of Congress, memory.loc.gov/

⁹Anthony, Susan B., et al. *History of Woman Suffrage*. Ayer Co., 1985

focused especially on attracting as many supporters as possible. Both of these groups competed for over two decades.¹⁰ In the beginning, suffragists worked to mend the split of the associations, however they were unsuccessful. For the most part, they operated independently, and with some antagonism. The American Woman Suffrage Association was more gradual and conservative with its tactics. The association argued that once the black man was enfranchised, women would achieve their goals. Although these associations were rivals, in 1890, both groups joined forces to create the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Their goal was to create a new amendment (the Nineteenth Amendment) which would combine each groups ideals.

Anthony largely led the group in her presidency between 1892-1900 and groomed proteges, such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw. Even though as much as the NAWSA wanted African American women to be a part of the association, the national level, state, and local governments chose to exclude them. Conventions held in the southern states were segregated. Furthermore, it required African



Women protesting in a parade for suffrage. "Browse Collections by Topic." *American Memory from the Library of Congress - Home Page*, Library of Congress, memory.loc.gov/

¹⁰ "National Woman Suffrage Association." *History of U.S. Women's Suffrage*, National Women's History Museum , 2016, www.crusadeforthevote.org/nwsa-organize/

American women to march and protest separately in different parades/marches.¹¹

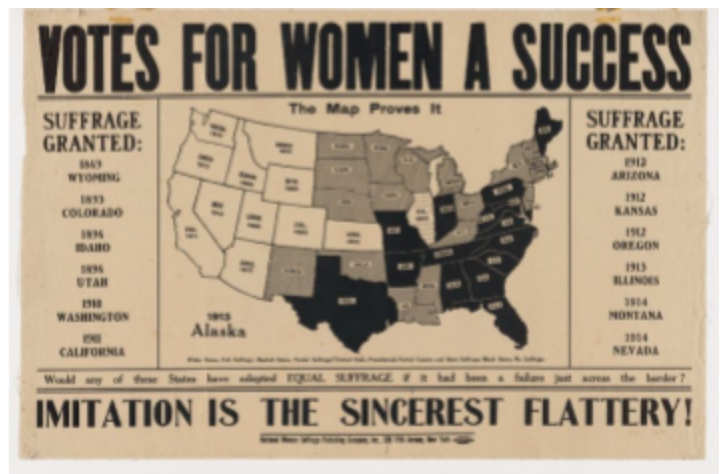
The Outcome of Anthony's Hard Work:

Sadly, on March 13, 1906, at eighty-six years old, Anthony passed away from the deadly illness of pneumonia. Ten thousand people traveled through a heavy, wild snowstorm in order to honor the strong, influential Susan B. Anthony. At her funeral, Mrs. R. Jerome Jeffrey spoke on behalf of the African Americans attending, she proclaimed, "She was our friend for many years—our champion."¹²

Her decades of hard work finally paid off, and in 1919, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed. However, it would not yet be added to the Constitution until at least thirty-six states additionally passed it as well. More suffragists campaigned for

another year until Tennessee, the last, and very needed thirty-sixth vote approved the amendment. In the Senate, the vote was extremely close: forty-nine to forty-seven.¹³ Finally, and thanks in large part to Susan B.

Anthony, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified August 18, 1920. This amendment stated, "The right of



The states throughout the years when suffrage was granted to them. "National Woman Suffrage Association." *History of U.S. Women's Suffrage*, National Women's History Museum , 2016, www.crusadeforthevote.org/nwsa-organize/

¹¹ "National Woman Suffrage Association." *History of U.S. Women's Suffrage*, National Women's History Museum , 2016, www.crusadeforthevote.org/nwsa-organize/

¹² Kendall, Martha E. *Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Women's Voting Rights*. Enslow Publishers, Inc., 2015

¹³ Kendall, Martha E. *Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Women's Voting Rights*. Enslow Publishers, Inc., 2015

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.”

The Significance of the Nineteenth Amendment:

Immediately following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the National American Woman Suffrage Association was transformed into the League of Women Voters. This new group is still functioning today. Their goal is to improve the political process by encouraging the active and informed participation of citizens in the government. Moreover, winning the right to vote didn't just deliver women equality in society. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was created in 1966 in order to work for true equality for women all over America. This comeback of national interest in women's rights prompted the United States Mint member, Dr. Alan Goldman to portray a woman on an American Coin. In 1979 and 1980, the U.S. Mint issued the Susan B. Anthony dollar to honor her legacy and significance.¹⁴ Women today, unlike women back then, no longer have to worry about their say in American leadership. They can vote at every election for any leader whether, at the city, state or national level, and they can even run for office themselves. For example, in 1917, when Representative, Jeannette Rankin (suffragist and peace activist) of Montana started as the first woman to serve in Congress, a total of 327 women later served as U.S. Representatives, Delegates, or Senators.¹⁵ Candidates have to stand up for and address women's issues, such as equality in the workplace, if they want to get their vote.

¹⁴ Kendall, Martha E. *Susan B. Anthony: Voice for Women's Voting Rights*. Enslow Publishers, 1997

¹⁵ “Women in Congress.” *US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives*, history.house.gov/Exhibition-and-Publications/WIC/Women-in-Congress/

To conclude, there was much inequality and slavery that existed during the early to late 1800s. White male citizens were the only ones privileged enough to have a say in the government leadership. However, on February 3, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified granting all male citizens of all races the right to vote. Although this change to the government was indeed incredible, there was one major group forgotten: women. Women were completely left out and pushed to the side of this amendment. It was because of this, in particular, that drove Anthony to fight for women and their right to vote. Her perseverance never weakened, for fifty-eight years she worked as a suffragist, although, it took fourteen years after her death for the Nineteenth Amendment to pass. For instance, in 1902, she declared, "If only I could live another century!"¹⁶ Anthony's determination to proclaim her opinions in print and through public speaking no matter the consequences, her passionate leadership in her suffrage associations, and her unwavering ability to pick herself up after being beaten down by those with opposing opinions, proved that she was truly a forward-thinking, powerful woman.

¹⁶ Kendall, Martha E. *Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Women's Voting Rights*. Enslow Publishers, Inc., 2015

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