

Seneca Falls and Beyond

"What are we next to do?" asked Elizabeth Cady Stanton after the 1848 convention. The women of Seneca Falls had challenged America to social revolution with a list of demands that touched every aspect of life. Testing different approaches, the early women's rights leaders came to view the ballot as the best way to change the system, but they did not limit their efforts to one issue. Fifty years after the convention, women could claim progress in property rights, employment and educational opportunities, divorce and child custody laws, and increased social freedoms. By the early 20th century, a coalition of suffragists, temperance groups, reform-minded politicians, and women's social welfare organizations mustered a successful push for the vote.

Although the ballot was never the primary agent of social reform, as many had hoped, the fight for suffrage expanded the women's influence in the political arena. Again the question arose: What next? Immediately

after 1920 many women worked for reform through groups such as the League of Women Voters and national political parties. Some women asserted their rights on a personal level by attending college, taking jobs, adopting new clothing fashions, and practicing birth control. Then as now, each woman sought her own definition of freedom.

In 1848 the *Seneca County Courier* warned that the convention's resolutions were "of the kind called radical . . . Some will regard them with respect—others with disapprobation and contempt." The story of the women's movement is the story of ideas once controversial, now unremarkable. The chronology below outlines the major events that changed the status quo for women in America. Which of our present efforts will contribute toward a future of equality? What, indeed, are we next to do?

The organizers of the First Women's Rights Convention (left to right): Elizabeth Cady Stanton with daughter Harriot, Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Mary Ann M'Clintock, and Jane Hunt. After the convention, Hunt remained in Waterloo and continued to work with her husband at various reform efforts. No longer active in women's rights, the M'Clintocks moved to Philadelphia in 1856. Wright and two M'Clintock daughters became active suffragists. Mott and Stanton led the movement in its formative years. Library of Congress



"Remember the Ladies"

1776 American Revolution begins. Abigail Adams admonishes husband John and other Revolutionary leaders to "remember the ladies" in the formation of the new government.

1784 Judith Sargent Murray writes essays on women's rights, endorsing women's education. Murray's "On the Equality of the Sexes" appears in *Massachusetts Magazine* in 1790.

1788 U.S. Constitution is ratified. With decisions about voting qualifications left up to states, New Jersey women property owners have full franchise until 1807. Elsewhere women vote in local elections.

Early 1800s Popular literature defines a new middle-class ideal: women dominate the "sphere" of home and family, while men are acknowledged



"If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies," writes Abigail Adams in 1776, "we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

leaders in politics and the workplace.

1830s American Anti-Slavery Society is founded in Philadelphia in 1833 by Quakers seeking immediate emancipation of slaves. AASS's 1600 auxiliaries gather more than 400,000 signatures on antislavery petitions by 1838. As abolition cause escalates, lecturers such

as Sarah and Angelina Grimké promote women's concerns simultaneously with abolition. Sarah draws criticism for her 1837 *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*. AASS splits in 1859 over issue of women's rights.

1840 Newswives Henry and Elizabeth Cady Stanton attend World Anti-



Denied leadership positions in many other abolitionist groups, women sit on the executive committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Lucretia and James Mott are at far right. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College

Slavery Convention in London, where organizers refuse to seat women delegates. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott resolve to hold a convention devoted to women's rights.

1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Quaker abolitionists Jane Hunt, Mary Ann M'Clintock, Lucretia

A Call to Convention

Mott, and Martha Wright hold First Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls. Participants discuss women's social condition and demand full and equal rights with men.

1850 Boston women abolitionists, including Lucy Stone, organize national women's rights convention in Worcester, Mass.; more than 1,000 people attend. Subsequent conventions are held throughout the 1850s.

1851 Stanton meets Quaker teacher Susan B. Anthony in Seneca Falls. They form an activist team and use temperance and abolition gatherings to address women's issues. Stanton writes speeches and devises strategy, while Anthony lectures and circulates petitions.

1860 Stanton and Anthony work successfully to amend Married Women's



Lucy Stone (top), champions reform both in her public life, by leading abolition and women's suffrage efforts, and in her private life by keeping her maiden name after marrying. "We hold women to be justly entitled to all we claim for man," writes Frederick Douglass (above) soon after the 1848 convention. Two decades later Douglass breaks with Stanton over suffrage strategy. Library of Congress

War and Reconstruction

en's Property Act of New York, originally enacted in 1848. Revised law allows wives to hold property, keep earnings and inheritances, make contracts, sue in court, and share child custody.

1861-65 Northern and Southern women take over jobs on farms and in factories, businesses, and government offices during Civil War. Thousands of women work as nurses, opening profession to females.

1862 Morrill Act grants federal land to support coeducational colleges and universities in the West. Homestead Act grants free land to any "head of household," including women.

1863 After Emancipation Proclamation frees some slaves in Confederacy, Stanton and Anthony's National Women's Loyal League presents



400,000 signatures on petition to Congress for a complete end to slavery. Mott and contemporaries yield leadership to rising generation; new women's leaders anticipate that postwar expansion of civil rights will include female suffrage. Thirtieth Amendment outlaws slavery in 1865.

1867 First statewide women's suffrage campaigns in Kansas and New York are defeated.

"Revolution"

Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) to support voting rights first for black males, then women. Wyoming becomes first U.S. territory to enact women's suffrage.

1872 Anthony and colleagues test 14th and 15th Amendments by casting votes in New York. Suffragists are arrested and fined. An 1875 U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholds states' right to deny women the vote. In 1876, Anthony and others crash U.S. Centennial celebration in Philadelphia's Independence Hall, demanding women's vote.

"It has been said," writes Stanton of friend and co-organizer Susan B. Anthony, "that I forged the thunderbolts and she fired them." Beginning in 1868 the two publish the short-lived *Revolution*, advocating "Equal Pay," "Abolition of Standing Armies," "Cold Water not Alcoholic Drinks," and "a new Commercial and Financial Policy." Library of Congress

The Revolution.



Social Reform Movements



1877 Backed by the NWSA, a women's suffrage amendment is first introduced in Congress, but not voted on for ten more years. As Reconstruction era draws to a close, Southern blacks see erosion of their new civil rights.

1879 Frances Willard becomes president of Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), established in 1874 to fight social ills of alcohol. Willard strongly advocates women's suffrage as a means to impose a moral influence on society. More popular than

Temperance societies, first popular in the 1830s, were among the first American women's groups. The crusade made women all the more aware of their legal defenselessness against a drunken husband and the need for property and divorce rights. After the Civil War the movement reemerged, its leaders prescribing female suffrage to reform society. Library of Congress

formal suffrage associations, WCTU becomes nation's largest women's organization by the 1880s.

1881 Knights of Labor organizes housewives, domestics, factory workers, railroad workers; 65,000 women join. Knights disband by 1886 after losing national strike. Women's organized labor recovers by the early 20th century to become an active force in suffragism.

1887 WCTU and suffragists present U.S. Senate with petition of 200,000 signatures supporting suffrage amendment. Amendment is defeated.

1889 Jane Addams and Ellen Starr establish Hull House in Chicago, nation's first settlement house. In following decades an army of educated female reformers, from young single women to

wives, mothers, and grandmothers, investigate labor conditions, promote education and public health, agitate for liberalized birth control laws, and march for suffrage. Increasingly, women activists see vote as a means to improve society.

1890 Wyoming is admitted as first women's suffrage state. Colorado and Idaho follow; campaigns in these states are led by Carrie Chapman Catt. Utah enacts women's suffrage in 1896 to ensure Mormon control of government. NWSA and AWSA merge into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) with Stanton as president, succeeded by Anthony in 1892. Frances Willard sits on executive board. NAWSA strategy shifts from constitutional amendment to state referenda.



Stanton and Anthony flank George Washington in the satirical "Apotheosis of Liberty." By 1892 the two have led the women's rights movement for four decades and have published four volumes of *A History of Woman Suffrage*. Library of Congress

1902 Elizabeth Cady Stanton dies at age 86. Four years later Susan B. Anthony dies at 85. New generation of suffragists are solidly in power, ar-

The Suffrage Bandwagon

guing for vote on basis of female moral superiority rather than equality. NAWSA is led by Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt.

1910 Washington becomes first state in 20th century to extend full franchise to women, inspiring nationwide campaign that soon brings success in several western states. Progressive Party endorses women's suffrage in 1912. Stanton's daughter Harriot Stanton Blatch organizes first suffrage parades in New York City, solicits working women's support through Women's Trade Union League.

1911 Jane Addams, now vice-president of NAWSA, advocates immigrant women's right to suffrage, countering belief by some advocates that vote belongs to native-born, white, educated people.

1913 Alice Paul and newest generation of suffragists revive demand for constitutional amendment. Paul, who worked in England with militant suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst, introduces mass demonstrations, hunger strikes, and constant pressure on political party in power. Paul and several thousand marchers protest Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in March 1913. Paul and others leave NAWSA and form National Women's Party in 1916.

1916 Margaret Sanger and her sister Ethel Byrne open first American birth control clinic in New York City.

1917 U.S. enters World War I. Women take over jobs for men serving in armed forces. Women's Bureau is formed; for next several decades it is the only federal agency dealing with women's concerns.

HEADQUARTERS NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE



Antisuffragist arguments are based mainly on differences between the sexes, while pro-suffrage groups claim that such differences make women better qualified voters. Some antisuffrage groups are opposed as fronts for liquor interests. In the years before the 19th Amendment, suffragists such as these New York women (right) make their cause increasingly visible. Library of Congress



The 19th Amendment



1918 Women's suffrage amendment is introduced by Jeannette Rankin (R-Montana), first woman elected to the U.S. Congress; amendment passes both houses by 1919.

1920 19th Amendment is ratified. Nicknamed the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, it states that "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." National American Woman Suffrage Association becomes League of Women Voters, advocates social reforms and protective laws for working women. National Women's Party opposes protective laws and promotes full social equality.



Seneca Falls, 1848: Costumed as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (center) and her colleagues, pageant participants from National Women's Party celebrate the 1848 convention. Sewall-Belmont House

1923 At the 75th anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention, Alice Paul proposes an Equal Rights Amendment to remedy inequalities not addressed in the 19th Amendment.

Late 1920s Many states continue to bar women from jury duty and pub-

lic office. Widows succeed their husbands as governors of Texas and Wyoming. Middle-class women attend college and enter labor force. Anticipated "women's vote" fails to materialize by end of decade.

1933 Frances Perkins is appointed by President

A New Deal

Franklin D. Roosevelt as first female Secretary of Labor. In the New Deal years, in urging of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Democratic women's leader Molly Dewson, many women gain positions in federal social service bureaus, including Mary McLeod Bethune, director of the Negro Affairs Division of the National Youth Administration.

1936 Federal court rules birth control legal for its own sake, rather than solely for prevention of disease.

1941 United States enters World War II. Millions of women are recruited for defense industry jobs in war years and become significant part of labor force. WAC and WAVE are established as first women's military corps.



Women such as this railroad brake operator take men's jobs for the duration of World War II, permanently changing the makeup of the workforce. Sewall-Belmont House

1947 Percentage of women in the labor force declines as women leave jobs to get married and to make way for returning soldiers. By end of decade, numbers of working women are again on the increase.

"The Feminine Mystique"

1952 Democratic and Republican parties eliminate women's divisions.

1955 Civil Rights movement escalates in the South; Septima Clark and others lead sit-ins and demonstrations, providing models for future protest strategies.

1960 FDA approves birth control pills.

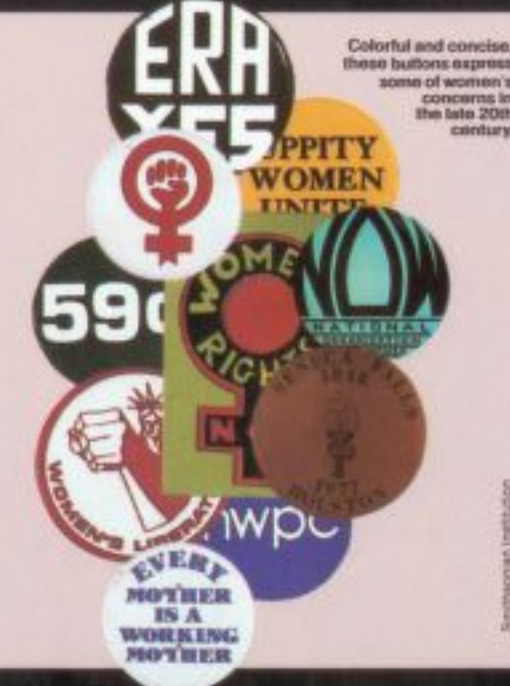
1961 President's Commission on the Status of Women is established, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt. Commission successfully pushes for passage in 1963 of Equal Pay Act, first federal law to require equal compensation for men and women in federal jobs.

1963 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* articulates dissatisfaction about limits on women.

1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits job discrimination on the basis of race or sex and establishes Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to address discrimination claims.

1966 National Organization for Women, founded by Betty Friedan and associates, promotes child care for working mothers, abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, and "full participation in the mainstream of American society now."

1972 After nearly 50 years, Equal Rights Amendment passes both houses and is signed by President Richard Nixon. Civil Rights Act bans sex discrimination in employment and education. Shirley Chisholm is first black American to run for president.



Colorful and concise, these buttons express some of women's concerns in the late 20th century.

"All Rights and Privileges"

1973 In *Roe v. Wade*, U.S. Supreme Court affirms women's right to first trimester abortions without state intervention.

1974 Ella Grasso of Connecticut becomes the first woman Governor elected in her own right.

1981 Sandra Day O'Connor is appointed first woman U.S. Supreme Court justice.

1982 Deadline for ERA ratification expires; final count is three states short of adoption.

1984 Geraldine Ferraro is first woman from a major political party nominated as Vice President.

1991 Senate confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas as U.S. Supreme Court justice and testimony of Anita Hill raise

awareness of sexual harassment.

1992 More women run for and are elected to public office than in any other year in United States history.

Today The fight for equality is waged on many fronts: women are seeking political influence, better education, health reform, job equity, and legal reform. The demands echo those of the movement throughout its history. In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and others claimed on behalf of American women "all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens." What would the reformers from Seneca Falls do today to contribute toward a future of equality? What will you do?

Like many Washington suffragists, Elsie Hill and Katherine Morey are jailed in Boston, Mass., for their activities. Sewall-Belmont House