WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

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With help from many local historians
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York
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Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York
Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
ABSTRACT

On August 26, 2020, the nation commemorates passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the one hundredth anniversary of women’s suffrage in the United States. As part of the suffrage centennial commemoration, the Ontario County Historical Society sponsored this reconnaissance-level survey of historic sites relating to the suffrage movement in central New York, funded by Preserve New York (a program of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Preservation League of New York State).

The purpose is two-fold: 1) to highlight the importance of central New York and its diverse people in generating and sustaining movements for equal rights, including movements for women’s rights and women’s suffrage; and 2) to identify historic sites relating to these movements, with special attention to those sites that may be eligible for National Register listing. This project pulls together previous work on this topic. In turn, it contributes to two national projects: 1) database of suffragists identified by Tom Dublin for Women and Social Movements, and 2) the National Votes for Women Trail, sponsored by the National Collaborative of Women’s History Sites (www.ncwhs.org).

Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator, Historical New York Research Associates, conducted this survey. She worked with Ed Varno, Director, Ontario County Historical Society; Dana Teets, Database Manager; a wide variety of county and local historians across the region; and Kathy Howe and Erin Czernecki from the New York State Historic Preservation Office.

Part I highlights people, events, and places in central New York in the context of New York State and national suffrage movements. Part II identifies key themes relating to this movement, with a list of sample historic suffrage sites with photographs that may be eligible for the National Register. This report incorporates two databases. The first is a database of more than two hundred sites relating to central New York suffrage. The second is an expanded list of suffrage names from central New York, building on Tom Dublin's original database. Format for this report is modeled on that of

Susan Goodier, Carol Kammen, and Elaine Engst read the manuscript in its entirety. I am very grateful to them and to all who contributed to this amazing project.
Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York

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INTRODUCTION

Importance of Central New York in Women’s Suffrage Movement

Central New York, along with several other regions of the U.S., was a hotspot of activism for equal rights, especially for people of color and for women. Completion of turnpikes, the Erie Canal in 1825, and railroads brought rapid in-migration into central New York. New York State led the nation in changes so large that historians, known for their careful use of language, called them revolutions—in transportation, industrialization, and urbanization.

Along with these dramatic economic and social dislocations came powerful cultural changes, as Americans worked to understand their position in the new American democracy. What did “all men are created equal” really mean, as Americans created new communities, integrating their past with their future, their own values with those of their neighbors from different places of origin, different racial/ethnic groups, different religions, different levels of wealth?

Such questions struck with particular force in central New York before the Civil War. The struggle of Americans in this region to understand themselves in this new Republic brought major reform initiatives, including movements for women’s rights and women’s suffrage. Rooted in revolutionary ideals, efforts in New York State for the abolition of slavery, the legal rights of married women, constitutional revisions, women’s education, political rights for African American men, freedom of conscience in religion, moral reform, temperance, and the rights of working people acted as incubators for ideas about women’s rights, including the right of women to vote.

Women’s suffrage ultimately became a national issue, the largest nonviolent mass movement in U.S. history before the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Often, people view the suffrage movement as one cohesive organization, dominated by European American women. This was the image projected by the largest single history of the movement, the six-volume History of Woman Suffrage. Beginning in the 1880s, Susan B. Anthony, with help from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Ida Husted Harper and dozens of other researchers around the country, did an amazing job of documenting the work of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Although volunteers, their work paralleled the development of professional standards for historians. Influenced by German scholars, they relied on primary sources to tell historical stories. As they claimed in the preface to Volume VI, “accounts of the annual conventions of the National American Suffrage Association demonstrate as nothing else could do the commanding force of that organization, for fifty years the foundation and bulwark of the movement.”

So powerful was their work that it overshadowed suffrage efforts that emerged outside NAWSA. Suffrage, however, was not monolithic. Instead, it formed a complicated network that involved organized groups of women and men in rural and urban areas all over the nation. They came from various geographic, economic, cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds. This study recognizes the powerful impetus that NAWSA exerted over suffrage activities in central New York and nationwide. But it also supports the conclusion that suffrage in fact formed, in David Hacket Fisher’s words, a
“braided narrative,” stronger because it involved people from many different walks of life, sometimes coordinating their efforts and sometimes competing with each other.

As these historic sites so graphically illustrate, suffragists in central New York represented various geographic areas and economic bases. They came from farms, small towns, and cities. They worked in agricultural, commercial, and industrial sectors of the economy. Nor was suffrage a class-based movement. Suffragists spanned large difference in wealth. Some came from poor families; most represented middling economic groups; some were extremely wealthy. Neither was support for suffrage confined to one particular racial, ethnic, or cultural group. Nationally, suffragists included Americans of European, African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native backgrounds, recent immigrants as well as native-born people, with a wide variety of religious and cultural affiliations. Finally, suffragists included both women and men.

These groups, as Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello pointed out, often “disagreed with each other over specific strategies, tactics, and whom to include, but they unfailingly agreed that women needed the vote.” Women were citizens, as suffragists pointed out, and many were also taxpayers. There should be, as Americans argued during the Revolution, “No taxation without representation.”

While united on the goal of votes for women, their motivations varied. One principal and consistent argument was based on a focused commitment to universal suffrage. Since women were citizens, they deserved all citizenship rights. A second argument, widely developed by the 1890s and used effectively by both European American and African American suffragists, was a pragmatic one: women needed the vote to influence public policy, whether to promote public morality, counter political corruption, clean up cities, protect women from exploitation and violence, or defend the rights of women (and men) of color.

As Martha Jones and others have suggested, it might be more accurate to speak of “suffrage movements” rather than one monolithic entity. The many strands of the women’s suffrage movement in fact created several different movements, linked together in an uneven network. Tensions within and among specific groups and individuals, between ideals of principles and pragmatism, between an emphasis on states’ rights vs. national citizenship, among people of various races, classes, and genders stretched and stressed the fabric of the overall suffrage movement. But such tensions also energized the suffrage dialogue, spread the debate widely among Americans of various backgrounds, and spawned a variety of methodologies to appeal to a variety of audiences. Sprawling and often ungainly, this network of grassroots groups ultimately created what we know as the national movement for women’s suffrage.

National suffrage organizations eventually provided direction. But grassroots energy, based on state and local organizing, sustained the suffrage movement. As the History of Woman Suffrage noted, “It was . . . the evolution of the movement in the States that gave it national strength and compelled the action by Congress which always was the ultimate goal.” State movements, in turn, relied in local organizing, as people held meetings, gave speeches, gathered names on petitions, organized exhibits at county fairs, participated in parades, publicized the cause, raised money, and made personal

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contacts. In this age of the internet, it is startling to recognize the extent of face-to-face interaction that formed the basic identity and crucial functioning of local communities in the suffrage movement. 2

Central New York was particularly important for the influence it exerted on state and national work through its early organizing, its model goals and strategies, and the leaders it produced who crisscrossed the United States carrying the suffrage message. Local suffrage groups, such as the Geneva Political Equality Club or the Women’s Civic Club in Lyons, New York, were well integrated into state and national organizations. They also overlapped with other groups—such as the WCTU, Grange, NAACP, and religious organizations—who focused on different goals but who included suffrage as part of their overall commitments.

On July 19-20, 1848, Central New York produced the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, the beginning of a grassroots movement that influenced the entire nation. Building especially on abolitionist organizing and debates about women’s legal equality, Seneca Falls focused disparate ideas about women’s rights into a clarion call for an organized women’s rights movement. Women’s suffrage was one part of their larger agenda.

About 300 people attended the Seneca Falls convention. One hundred of them—sixty-eight women and thirty-two men—signed a Declaration of Sentiments, patterned after the Declaration of Independence. This new Declaration affirmed not that “all men are created equal” but that “all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed.” Based on this premise, they asked for nothing less than total equality between women and men in every area of life—politics, the law, work, family, education, religion, and personal respect—and voting. They insisted “that they [women] have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.” And they laid out a plan for attaining these rights: “We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.”

This Declaration of Sentiments powerfully linked women’s rights to the founding ideals of the United States. The country listened. Newspapers across the land reported the story of Seneca Falls. Some of them supported its ideals as a second “flag of independence.” Some scorned them as a “dreadful revolt.” But whatever their viewpoint, people noticed. And women’s rights advocates began to implement the plan outlined at Seneca Falls—hiring agents, printing tracts, gathering

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2 History of Woman Suffrage, V, Preface, https://books.google.com/books?id=m2dODwAAQBAJ&pg=PT3751&lpg=PT3751&dq=%22evolution+of+the+movement+in+the+states%22&source=bl&ots=I8FyLi9qaT&sig=ACfU3U3afFiYygfF8X4P74wjlMFwNTeRPQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjdybnU3-7jAhUpWN8KHAs_ClqQ6AEwAWoECAEFAQ#v=onepage&q=%22evolution%20of%20the%20movement%20in%20the%20states%22&f=false.
names on petitions to state and federal governments, working with religious leaders and editors, and holding conventions.  

This study illustrates how coordinated local, state, and national suffrage efforts worked in central New York. Local energy sustained statewide and national movements and in turn received direction and purpose from those larger organizations. Local action drove statewide movements for suffrage referenda and constitutional amendments. These in turn gave support for a federal suffrage amendment. Like many streams running down all sides of the same mountain, local action contributed everywhere to filling the ocean that became women’s suffrage.

New York State remained especially important throughout the whole suffrage movement. It ultimately created the largest suffrage organization of any state in the U.S. The History of Woman Suffrage noted that “the State of New York, home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, may be justly described as the great battleground for the rights of women.” “It is far more difficult to write the history of a State where so much has been done than where the tale may be quickly told,” they concluded. It was impossible to describe “the efforts made from year to year, the meetings held, the memorials presented to political conventions, the debates, the parliamentary drills, the lecture courses, the millions of pages of literature distributed, the struggles to place women on the school boards, the special efforts of the standing committees on legislation, press, industries, work among children, etc.” In 1917, over one million people signed a petition for women’s suffrage before the statewide referendum.

Within New York State, upstate New York remained the driving force behind the suffrage movement until the beginning of the twentieth century. Suffragists in central and western New York were extraordinarily well-organized, with key communities as special hotspots for women’s rights. As Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello noted in Women Will Vote, “For the most part, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, suffrage activism remained concentrated in the central and western counties of the state.” In his 1987 dissertation, David McDonald found that only fifteen percent of members of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association lived in New York City.

As New York City took the lead in national and international banking and economic development in the early twentieth century, state and national suffrage leadership gravitated to the downstate area. But even after suffrage leadership shifted to New York City in 1909, Central New York continued to provide not only supporters but also many state and national leaders who influenced the national suffrage movement for decades. As first-generation national leaders from central New York (Matilda

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3 Timothy Terpstra, “The 1848 Seneca Falls Woman’s Rights Convention: Initial American Public Reaction” (M.A., Mississippi State University, 1975), reviewed seventy-nine newspapers across the country. Of 58 articles about Seneca Falls, 29 percent gave positive reports, 42 percent were negative, and 28 percent were neutral. For further discussion of the importance of Seneca Falls as the first women’s rights convention, see Judith Wellman, “I: The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention and the Origin of the Women’s Rights Movement,” in Historic Resource Study, Women’s Rights National Historical Park, Seneca Falls, New York (Seneca Falls: Women’s Rights National Historical Park, 2008).

4 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, 377, 381.

Joslyn Gage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Paulina Wright Kellogg Davis, Susan B. Anthony, and others) died, the next generation took their places. People with roots in upstate New York, such as Max Eastman, Crystal Eastman, Harriot Stanton Blatch, Nora Blatch DeForest, and Inez Milholland Bossevain, often moved to New York City, where they connected central New York to the burgeoning suffrage movement all across the country. Many important leaders, including Cornell graduates Isabel Howland and Harriet May Mills, continued their work from their homes in central New York. Meanwhile, grassroots support for women’s suffrage in central New York continued to be well-organized and well-connected to state and national efforts. Central New York women worked both with the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the new and more radical Congressional Union, which became the National Women’s Party.

Controlling key newspapers and legislative seats in central New York and elsewhere, anti-suffragists were able to defeat the proposed suffrage amendment in both upstate and downstate areas in 1915. New York State suffragists re-grouped quickly. Their remarkable organization formed the model for Carrie Chapman Catt’s “Winning Plan,” endorsed by the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1916.

Although central New Yorkers narrowly defeated the measure, strong support from New York City finally passed the amendment for women’s suffrage in New York State on November 6, 1917. New York State’s forty-five electoral votes helped ensure congressional approval of the Nineteenth Amendment in Congress. After Tennessee became the thirty-fifth state to ratify, the Nineteenth Amendment formally became part of the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920.

Voting rights, however, remained a contentious statewide and national issue. After 1920, central New Yorkers, like Americans across the country, continued to deal with limitations on suffrage for women and men of Native, African, and Asian descent, those with prison backgrounds, those who were poor, and those in rural areas.

Connecting Suffrage to Historic Sites: Background

This project emerged from several earlier site-based initiatives relating to historic sites and women’s rights in New York State. In 2007-2008, Women’s Rights National Historical Park commissioned Judith Wellman to do a Historic Resource Study, documenting buildings that were part of the Park. In conjunction with this effort, Tanya Warren, database manager, helped identify 295 historic sites relating to the women’s rights movement up to 1873, including 250 of them from New York State.

This database included four buildings related to nationally and regionally important woman’s rights meetings, 1848-1873. Only one of these, the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse, was located in central New York; twenty homes (we now know of twenty-one) of people who attended the Seneca Falls woman’s rights convention, as well as thirteen workplaces, meetinghouse, churches, childhood homes, or post-Civil War houses associated with Seneca Falls participants; and dozens of sites associated with other woman’s rights supporters in upstate New York.

In 2008, Judith Wellman and Joanne Silverstein from the School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, co-directed a web-based project called Roads from Seneca Falls, funded by the U.S. Office of Digital Humanities.
Department of Education, designed to link teachers and students to key resources in women’s history. As part of that project, they included links to women’s historic sites listed in Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas, *Susan B. Anthony Slept Here.*

In 2012, Judith Wellman combined these two lists, with the addition of material that Pam Elam prepared for women’s history sites in New York City, for use as part of a class assignment in a class at Colgate University. This new database identified 355 sites relating to women’s history within New York State. In 2015, the New York Cultural and Heritage Tourism Network added this list into its website. This database also formed the initial New York State entries for the National Votes for Women Trail database, sponsored by the National Collaborative of Women’s History Sites (https://newhs.org/).

Only about fifty of the sites found to that point were in central New York. As a result of this study, we now have a database of more than two hundred suffrage sites in this region. For the current database, see https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1F46xk6GQttbKuU3XbxOfJh3hajR_d8mkC0AssQ4K MRA/edit#gid=778040137.

This Project

In 2018, Preserve New York (a project of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Preservation League of New York State) funded a cultural resource survey to pull together much of this information, with a focus on historic sites, sponsored by the Ontario County Historical Society, under the direction of Ed Varno.

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Methods

For this current project, we began with the existing database of women's history sites across New York State. Because of the importance of an area extending from Rochester east to Farmington, Canandaigua, Waterloo, Seneca Falls, Auburn, Oswego, and Syracuse, we included ten central New York counties (Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Oswego, Seneca, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates) that incorporated this territory. To be sure that we could tell the whole story, and responding to inquiries from the field, we later added seven more counties to our project study area (Cortland, Genesee, Madison, Oneida, Orleans, Schuyler, and Wyoming).

Central New York Counties that form the area for this survey are outlined in red. Charles Colton, New York (1856).

We invited county historians, local historians, and interested citizens to a day-long workshop sponsored by the Ontario County Historical Society at Wood Library, Canandaigua, on October 9, 2018. This was a stellar group. Many people had already done extensive and amazing research in women’s history in their local areas. Dr. Susan Goodier joined the project as historical consultant. Dana Teets, public history student at Nazareth College, acted as our database manager. We are grateful to two students (Jennifer McCane and Jacqueline Ellis) from Professor Timothy Kneeland’s class in public history at Nazareth College, who made substantial contributions to our database of names. We also invited crowd-sourced submissions from the general public.

It has been an honor to work with such a remarkable group of people. Individuals who were involved in one way or another included: Cayuga County—Ruth Bradley, Linda Frank, Karen Hill, Mike Long, Tanya Warren, Steve Zabriskie, Pat White; Livingston County—Amie Alden, Cindy Arhein; Monroe County—Matthew Urtz, Dot Willecy; Monroe County—Christine Ridarsky, Deborah Hughes, Carolyn Vella, Mary Huth, Marilyn Tedeschi; Onondaga County—Sue Boland, Sally Ruesch Wagner; Ontario County—Preston Pierce, Ed Varno, Wilma Townsend, Beth Thomas, Donna Hill-Herendeen, Diane Robinson; Charles Lenhart, Meg Joseph; Oswego County—Justin
For purposes of this study, we defined the women’s suffrage movement to include precursors before 1848, organized efforts from 1848-1920; and implementation from 1920 to the present.

We identified several steps toward our goal:

A. find people and events related to women’s suffrage;
B. find sites relating to those people and events;
C. add sites to our database; and
D. select sites for future nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

We passed out a brief research guide to help potential researchers find people, events, and sites relating to suffrage in central New York. The Ontario County Historical Society put copies of all this material, with access to our database on Google Docs, on the Historical Society’s website: https://www.ochs.org/suffragists/.

Sources

Several historians have recently focused on scholarly studies of women’s suffrage in New York State. Most important for any overview of suffrage in New York State was Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello, *Women Will Vote: Winning Suffrage in New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017). This is the first major published work on New York State suffrage since the *History of Woman Suffrage*, and it is an indispensable source for all subsequent work. David McDonald’s 1987 Ph.D. dissertation, never published, is also an excellent source. Several recent books included New York State as they dealt with men in the movement, wealthy suffragists, national support for suffrage, and other topics. Recent suffrage articles published online by the National Park Service also provide useful background (https://www.nps.gov/articles/).

Local and regional historians also began to produce new works. Most important for this project were those by Wilma Townsend, *Votes for Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Ontario County, New York*.
York (Canandaigua: Ontario County Historical Society, 2018) and Carol Kammen and Elaine Engst, Achieving Beulah Land: The Long Struggle for Suffrage in Tompkins County, New York (Ithaca, 2019). A local project in Wayne County identified several sites and events. A National Register nomination for the Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District provided examples of local action in that village. Several county-wide studies of the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life (done by Judith Wellman with support from Preserve New York and local agencies all across New York State) helped connect the early women’s rights movement with abolitionism.

To find people related to suffrage in this area, we were fortunate to have the help of Tom Dublin, who shared with us three databases that he had prepared for the Woman and Social Movements website. One database focused on leaders of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, derived from History of Woman Suffrage, volume 6; one covered women who picketed the White House with the National Woman’s Party, beginning in 1917, listed in Doris Stevens, Jailed for Freedom (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), and one highlighted African American suffragists. While this project was being completed, Dublin posted initial suffrage biographies at https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/VOTESforWOMEN.

We added more names to these databases from central New York, primarily from secondary materials, including Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello, Women Will Vote, and also some primary sources, mostly newspapers. We also added names supplied by Carol Kammen of people from each county who submitted petitions to the New York State legislature in 1894. Finally, we added suffragist names from Ontario County and Tompkins County, noted in Carol Kammen and Elaine Engst, Achieving Beulah Land and Wilma Townsend, Votes for Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Ontario County, New York.


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used these as references but did not comb them systematically for names. We combined all central New York names into a consolidated database of regional suffragists.

To find sites relating to these people, our second step, we matched names from the people database to sites we had compiled from our earlier site databases. We also added many new sites from basic research in a variety of sources. We consulted with county and local historians to identify specific sites in their own localities. And we used Tom Flynn’s Freethought Trail, https://freethought-trail.org/, which dealt with many of the same sites we had identified as suffrage sites. We added these sites to the National Votes for Women Trail database.

Finally, we worked with Kathy Howe and Erin Czernicki of the New York State Historic Preservation Office to review our database of sites, identifying themes and historic sites that are a) standing; b) currently on the National Register; and c) eligible for nomination to the National Register.

Results

Results include:

I. Historic Context Statement
II. Themes: Historic Sites Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
III. Bibliography
IV. Appendices
   A. Database of suffrage sites in central New York
   B. Database of suffrage names

The Historic Context Statement provides a chronological overview of suffrage work as it developed from the early nineteenth century to 1920 and beyond, relating work in central New York to state and national efforts. When possible, we have given examples of how national and state themes played out in a local context. The vast number of examples come from Ontario and Tompkins Counties, reflecting the two most complete county-wide suffrage surveys in this area. Many other examples come from Monroe and Cayuga Counties, where considerable work has already been. Finally, we have used examples from throughout the region, as they have emerged in secondary research. We have tried to give enough detail in this section so that local people can use references to people, events, and times to pursue further research in their own areas.

After this introduction, the historic context statement is divided into six sections:

A. The First Seventy-two Years: Race, Sex, Property, and the Meaning of “Created Equal,” 1776-1848.
B. Seed-Sowing Time: From Women’s Rights to Universal Suffrage and Back Again, 1848-1869
C. National and State Suffrage: Intertwined Networks, 1869-1890
D. High Point or “the Doldrums”? 1890-1908
E. On to Victory: New Faces, New Allies, New Methods, 1908-1920
F. Implementing Suffrage: Accomplishments and Limitations, 1920 and Beyond

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Themes include:

A. Context of Reform

1. Native American Models
2. Health and Dress Reform
3. Education

B. Suffrage Activism

1. Petitions
2. Conventions
3. Parades
4. Organizations
5. Legislative Action

C. Suffrage Activists

a. Homes
b. Churches

D. Implementing Suffrage: Post-1920

Recommendations

Several recommendations emerge from this study:

A. Continue research to add historic suffrage sites to this database. This project, based primarily on secondary sources, is only the beginning of what can be done to understand suffrage in central New York.

Primary sources, virtually unexploited, offer amazing opportunities for academics, local historians, graduate students, genealogists, and interested citizens. Research will be particularly useful in:

1. Books. The History of Woman Suffrage remains a key source, but it should be considered in the context of many other sources. One especially important (and underused) work is 1894 Constitutional Amendment Campaign Year Report of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association: Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention. Ithaca, N.Y., November 12-15 (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, Printer, 1895). Biographies and autobiographies remain another key source for suffrage leaders.

2. Newspapers. So many newspapers are being added to online databases that it is worth checking them regularly. For a list of free newspapers, see The Ancestor Hunt (www.theancestorthunt.com/). Fultonhistory.com has a special focus on New York State.
Chronicling America includes many New York State newspapers. Both the *New York Times* and the *Brooklyn Eagle* are easily searchable and often contain news from the rest of New York State and the nation. Especially useful subscription sites include Newspapers.com, GenealogyBank, Ancestry.com, and Accessible Archives. Many women’s suffrage newspapers remain unexplored: *Una, Revolution, Woman Citizen, Woman’s Journal, National Citizen and Ballot Box, Woman’s Tribune,* and more. Kenneth Florey has a good overview of suffrage journals: [http://womansuffragememorabilia.com/woman-suffrage-memorabilia/suffrage-journals/](http://womansuffragememorabilia.com/woman-suffrage-memorabilia/suffrage-journals/). Some of these are online; some are not.

3. **Manuscripts.** Many manuscript collections contain significant suffrage material. The Stanton-Anthony Papers, on microfilm, remain an invaluable source. Many of these have been printed in Ann Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony,* six volumes (Rutgers University Press, 1997-2013). Minutes books of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, 1869-1919, and the Woman Suffrage Party of New York City at Columbia University are key to new research. The seven scrapbooks kept by Anne Fitzhugh Miller (National American Woman Suffrage Association collection, Library of Congress) contain much unexplored material. The New York Public Library has New York State Woman Suffrage Party records, 1915-1917, as well as NAWSA records on microfilm. Cornell University has a New York Woman Suffrage Collection, 1914-1915. Smith College has nine individual collections plus several smaller ones in its collection of materials on the U.S. woman suffrage movement. These include more than five hundred letters from suffrage leaders and other activists in the Isabel Howland Papers (1888-1903). Mt. Holyoke College and Harvard University also have collections of suffrage material (including the papers of Maude Nathan in the Schlesinger Library). Many local historical societies contain unexplored material about suffrage and suffragists, including records of local Political Equality Clubs and other local suffrage groups.

C. **Using this basic model, expand this study to include all of New York State.** New York State’s suffrage movement encompassed all areas of New York State. Although central New York was particularly important, especially in generating the suffrage movements in its early years and in influencing state and national movements, it cannot be understood in isolation from coordinated statewide and national efforts.

D. **Work with the National Historic Landmarks program to create a theme study specifically highlighting suffrage across the nation.** This would follow the model of *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites.* Although the civil rights study does mention Susan B. Anthony and lists fifteen National Historic Landmarks and two National Park Service units identified with women, it does not deal in the narrative specifically with either women’s suffrage or the larger women’s rights movement. This is a major omission. The study did note, however, that it “examined topics related to the history of other minority groups within the United States, including . . . . women.” It concludes with several recommendations. One of them suggests undertaking “civil rights studies related to other minority groups.” A
theme study relating to women’s rights and women’s suffrage would be an appropriate next step.\(^8\)

E. **Create a Multiple Property Documentation Form (NPS 10-900-b) based on this study for suffrage sites either in central New York or in all of New York State.** The National Park Service notes that an MPDF “nominates groups of related significant properties. On it, the themes, trends, and patterns of history shared by the properties are organized into historic contexts and the property types that represent those historic contexts are defined.”\(^9\)

F. **Create a Multiple Property Documentation Form for historic sites relating to Seneca Falls.** Another possibility would be to highlight historic sites relating specifically to the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention and those who signed the Declaration of Sentiments, similar to *Signers of the Declaration: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Declaration of Independence.*\(^10\)

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Historic Context Statement for Women's Suffrage in Central New York
Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
I. HISTORIC SITES RELATING TO WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK: CONTEXT

A. The First Seventy-two Years: Race, Sex, Property, and the Meaning of “Created Equal,” 1776-1848.

Revolutionary Ideals

The United States began as a nation state with a bloody revolution, fought for ideals of equality. The war generated considerable discussion about the meaning of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” for poor people, enslaved people, and women. In 1790, Massachusetts author Judith Sargent Murray published an essay, "On the Equality of the Sexes." Men and women were not inherently unequal, she argued. Existing inequalities between women and men arose because women were denied an education. English author Mary Wollstonecraft, in Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) echoed this view. These ideas were in the air among educated Americans, and future women’s rights leaders quoted Wollstonecraft often.

Voting rights were, however, another matter. The 1788 U.S. Constitution gave states the right to define voting qualifications. In the late eighteenth century, state legislatures acted from a world-view that emphasized civic virtue, i.e. the vote should belong only to citizens who gave up something of their own self-interest for the greater good of the community. That could include paying taxes or serving in the militia. Since no married women could own property and no women were expected to serve in the militia, neither did women vote.

This had not always been true. In the Colony of New York, for example, all freeholders voted—and that included single women who owned property. Lady Deborah Moody, freeholder in Gravesend, Long Island, voted for town officials from 1654. When New York State adopted its Constitution in 1777, however, it inserted the word “male,” identifying voters as free male citizens who paid taxes on property worth at least 20 British pounds or were listed as freemen in the cities of Albany and New York. Nineteenth century legal historian Charles B. Waite argued that this was the first example of using sex to define voting rights in any state constitution.11

In 1790 most states limited voting to property-owning free men (ten percent or less of the population). In its 1777 Constitution, for example, That included free men of color. Only one state made an exception. New Jersey’s first constitution in 1776 allowed “all inhabitants of this colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds” to vote, including both single women and free men of color. Not until 1807 was this clause rescinded. 12

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12 Jan Ellen Lewis, “Rethinking Women’s Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776-1807,” Rutgers Law Review 63:3, 1017-1035; Constitution of New York, 1777, Section VII. “That every male inhabitant of full age, who shall have personally resided within one of the counties of this State for six months immediately preceding the day of election, shall, at such election, be entitled to vote for representatives of the said county in assembly; if, during the time aforesaid, he shall have been a freeholder, possessing a freehold of the value of twenty pounds, within the said county, or have rented a tenement therein of the yearly value of forty shillings, and been rated and actually paid taxes to this State: Provided always, That...
In revolutionary American women might play a political role as “republican mothers,” educating their sons to become informed citizens and their daughters to become mothers of voters. But no woman had any legal role to play in the new Republic. Only “virtuous citizens,” i.e. men who paid taxes or joined the militia, were deemed worthy of voting.  

At least one American, Charles Brockden Brown, objected. Brown, considered the first American novelist, wrote a short fictional dialogue called *Alcuin*, published in 1793, about political rights of men and women. Alcuin, an inquisitive young man, asked Mrs. Carter whether or not she was a federalist. “What have I, as a woman, to do with politics?” she replied. “Even the government of our country, which is said to be the freest in the world, passes over women as if they were not . . . . Law-makers thought as little of comprehending us in their code of liberty, as if we were pigs, or sheep . . . No, I am no federalist.”

Mrs. Carter, once started, had plenty more to say. “The maxims of constitution-makers sound well,” she agreed. “All power is derived from the people. Liberty is everyone’s birthright. . . Plausible and specious maxims! but fallacious.” If I were standing in line, waiting to vote, she thought, people in front of me might be turned away because they were not yet twenty-one years old or they had not lived in the state long enough in the community or they did not own property or they were black. Ah, she said to herself,

I am not a minor, I was born in the state, and cannot, therefore, be stigmatized as a foreigner. I pay taxes, for I have no father or husband to pay them for me. Luckily my complexion is white. Surely my vote will be received. But, no, I am a woman.”

Her conclusion? “I cannot celebrate the equity of that scheme of government which classes me with dogs and swine.”

A. Central New York, 1780-1860

None of this eighteenth century intellectual debate had any immediate impact on people in central New York. Before the 1780s, settlers of European descent in the Colony of New York remained primarily in New York City, Long Island, and farms and villages along the Hudson River north to Albany and west along the Mohawk River to Wood Creek, just east of Oneida Lake. Haudenosaunee people dominated the rest of what became New York State. In this territory, they held the balance of power between England and France, the two superpowers of the eighteenth century.

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Between the Revolution and the Civil War, settlers of European descent poured into former Haudenosaunee lands in upstate New York. Inspired by Indian villages and bountiful fields of corn, beans, squash, apples, and peaches and lured by waterways, they spilled out of the eastern U.S. and western Europe like bees from a hive. African Americans, too, came to the area from the Chesapeake Bay and upper South, many along the Susquehanna River valley.

In the early nineteenth century, water routes connected New York State to the rest of the continents. They were enhanced first by turnpikes (beginning with the Seneca Turnpike west from Utica in 1800, now Route 5), then by canals (most importantly the Erie Canal, completed in 1825), and then, beginning in the 1830s, by railroads. By the early 1850s, these railroads were integrated into a national rail system, with the Erie Railroad running west from New York City in 1851 and the New York Central, with a consolidation of several shorter lines, running north along the Hudson and west along the Mohawk, paralleling the Genesee Road and today’s New York State Thruway. The Williamsport-Elmira Railroad linked the Erie and New York Central lines with southeastern Pennsylvania.
These new settlers came primarily from four different culture hearths. New England’s overcrowded farms sent farmers and small manufacturers west along the Mohawk River valley, looking for cheap land and abundant waterpower. Eastern New York sent tenants from Hudson Valley farms and city people from New York City, traveling north along the Hudson River and then west along the Mohawk. From southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and the Chesapeake came farmers and shopkeepers, many of them Quakers, along with a few African Americans, often traveling up the Susquehanna River valley. Finally, immigrants from western Europe—England and then Ireland and Germany—joined people born in colonial America. In the late nineteenth century, immigrants from Poland, Italy, and Russia—predominately Jews or Catholics—added to the influx.

Before the Civil War, people from these four different cultural areas confronted each other, as well as their Haudenosaunee neighbors. They all shared a desire for economic opportunities and places of safety for themselves, their families, and their communities. Their physical proximity bound them together. But they brought with them very different values. Congregationalists from New England often found it hard to get along with Presbyterians from Pennsylvania, not to mention Catholics from Ireland, Quakers from southeastern Pennsylvania (or, later in the century, Jews from eastern and southern Europe).

They could all agree, however, that they were Americans. They belonged to the only country in the world founded on an ideal of equality. Every year on the Fourth of July, they recited the Declaration of Independence. They knew by heart its key phrases:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. -- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.
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Around that ideal, they created local communities that made up the building blocks of the new democratic republic. But what “created equal” meant engendered a constant debate—as it still does today. Did that ideal relate to everyone—citizens and immigrants? People of every ethnicity or race? Rich, poor, and in between? Young and old? And, of course, men and women?

European American settlers, helped by federal and state action, took over the homelands of Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Tuscarora, and Seneca people all across what became New York State, confining Native people to ten reservations.

John Thompson, Geography of New York State (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966)

Haudenosaunee people structured their lives very differently than did European Americans. Men were warriors, hunters, and diplomats, often traveling far outside upstate New York to administer a far-flung trading empire. Women were farmers and heads of households, and they appointed the forty-nine chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy. Misunderstanding of these gender roles would cause conflicts, even among those who tried to bridge cultural gaps. But a renewed awareness of Haudenosaunee cultural patterns would also infuse the European American-dominated women’s suffrage movement with renewed energy in the late nineteenth century.

Among European Americans, ideas of equality between women and men, common among educated Americans in the late 18th century, began to be debated publicly and widely in the 1820s. These discussions related to politics, education, religion, and many reform movements, including legal reform and abolitionism.

B. Women’s rights, 1820-35

By the early nineteenth century, state after state revised its constitution. As they debated the essential basis of political power in their new democratic republic, they raised the question of women’s rights. In New York State, the 1821 constitutional convention set the tone. Following the trend that swept all states in the early nineteenth century, the 1821 New York State constitution defined voting rights based on race and sex rather than property ownership alone. It extended suffrage to all male citizens
of European descent over the age of twenty-one who had lived in the state for at least six months and paid road taxes or served in the militia. Free men of African descent, however, had to live in the state at least three years and pay taxes on property worth $250 or more.

This decision did not come easily. Debates over equality and race consumed days of tedious arguing. In the process, delegates also raised the issue of equal rights for women and Native Americans. And they touched on every major argument that would later emerge in the debate over women’s right to vote.  

Supporters of voting rights for African American men argued that voting was a natural right. To deny suffrage to African Americans would be "repugnant to all the principles and notions of liberty. . .and to our declaration of independence," said R. Clarke. The Constitution itself included all colours and complexions,” not simply “free ‘white’ persons.” Daniel D. Tompkins, president of the convention, agreed. “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'--not of property--are set forth in the declaration of independence. Property is not even named." Jonas Platt, delegate from Oneida County, was clear in his support for African American suffrage: "The obligations of justice are eternal and indispensable," he asserted. "Our republican text is, that all men are born equal, in civil and political rights."  

Opponents of African American suffrage argued, on the other hand, that voting was a question of expediency. And they used the exclusion of women from voting to buttress their argument. Government’s role was to protect “life, liberty, and property,” Judge William Van Ness asserted. People without property— including married women—“should not have a voice in government, because they will forever be the creature of the one who feeds, shelters, clothes, and protects him [sic]." If voting were a natural right, to be extended to men of African as well as European descent, why did not white women, children, and Indians have the right to vote? “All are entitled to civil and religious liberty,” noted Elisha Williams, “the minor as extensively as the adult--the female as extensively as the male--yet they have not all a voice in choosing their rulers; many a female, as well as many a legal infant, is in possession of large estates, but they cannot vote." In fact, nine-tenths of the population had no political voice. And that, for Williams, was as it should be. Mr. Ross, chair of the suffrage committee, noted that "even the better part of creation [women] . . . are not permitted to participate in this right. No sympathies seem to be awakened in their behalf, nor in behalf of the aborigines, the original and only rightful proprietors of our soil."  

Excluding women, children, and Indians from voting provided a powerful precedent for limiting African American suffrage. Yet many New Yorkers continued to believe that voting was a natural right, inherent in citizenship itself. If so, why should not women as well as men of every ethnic background have the right to vote? In Auburn, New York, poet William Ray asked that question in a "Petition to the Convention in Behalf of the Ladies":

That ev'ry one must have a vote,

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17 Carter and Stone, Reports, 180-181, 189, 190-91, 248-9, 266, 278.
Who does not wear a petticoat,
   Is generally admitted;
But why should women be denied,
And have their tongues completely tied,
   For party broils well fitted.  

Ray’s challenge found no known printed response. But it echoed in debates about the meaning of democracy. In 1821, English immigrant Frances Wright published her *Views of Society and Manners in America*, based on a trip she took to the U.S. in 1818, in which she spoke out for the rights of enslaved people, working people, and women. Wright did not advocate political rights for women but rather supported increased access to education and social freedom. “The condition of women affords, in all countries, the best criterion by which to judge of the character of men,” Wright noted. “It would be impossible for women to stand in higher estimation than they do here.” In the late 1820s, Wright became a U.S. citizen and worked with Robert Dale Owen to organize the Workingmen’s Party in New York City and to set up an anti-slavery utopian community in Tennessee. But her views on women were so influential for later suffragists that Stanton, Anthony, and Gage included her portrait as the frontispiece of their first volume of the *History of Woman Suffrage*.  


In 1832, Maria W. Stewart, an African American woman who lived on Beacon Hill in Boston, became the first American-born woman to speak to mixed (or “promiscuous”) audiences of men and women, people of both African and European descent. Advocating respect and quality for people of color, both women and men, Stewart was powerfully influenced by Christian ideals,

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19 Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America* (New York, 1821), 312-313.
rooted in the Bible. “Let our girls possess what amiable qualities of soul they may; let their characters be fair and spotless as innocence itself; let their natural taste and ingenuity be what they may; it is impossible for scarce an individual of them to rise above the condition of servants. Ah! why is this cruel and unfeeling distinction?” “How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?” Stewart gave four public speeches in 1832 and 1833, all of them published by The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist newspaper. 20

Both of these strands—one secular, represented by Fanny Wright, and one Christian, represented by Maria W. Stewart—acted as incubators for ideals of equal rights for all women.

C. Women’s Education

As people asked questions about women’s proper place in society, they also began to consider the importance of women’s education. Some schools were for women only. In 1821, Emma Willard organized the Troy Female Seminary. In 1837, Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, eventually the first four-year college exclusively for women in the United States. In 1855, Elmira College was founded as a women’s college, equal in its classes to men’s college.

In the 1830s, co-educational institutions also emerged, often with a Protestant base. Some were academies, essentially high schools. In 1831, Methodists founded Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in Lima, New York. In 1841, Macedon Academy opened in Macedon, Wayne County, as an academy for both men and women, African Americans and European Americans. Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, was organized in 1833, the first co-educational and inter-racial college. Alfred University opened in 1836, first as an academy and then as a college, the second co-educational institution in the U.S. Organized by Seventh Day Baptists of modest means, it was founded “by the poor and for the poor,” noted one college historian. Within religious institutions, women began to organize and be recognized. Jarena Lee, for example, was ordained as a deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1836. 21

These academies and colleges became seedbeds for women’s rights advocates. Elizabeth Cady Stanton attended Troy Female Seminary in 1830-31. So did Frances Seward. Both European American activists (including Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown Blackwell) and African American leaders (Mary Talbert and Mary Church Terrell) attended Oberlin. Abigail Allen, wife of Alfred’s president, passionately advocated women’s rights and became an early suffragist. “Be radical, radical to the core,” she advised her students. Belva Lockwood from Lockport, New York, first women to


21 E.P. Larkin, “History of Alfred University,” c. 1879, https://aura.alfred.edu › bitstream › handle › History of Alfred University, ...
practice law before the Supreme Court, attended Genesee Wesleyan Seminary. Olympia Brown, early Universalist minister, was a student at St. Lawrence. 22

D. Upstate New York: Revivalism and Reform in the Burned-over District

In the early nineteenth century, religious revivals swept the United States. Often called the Second Great Awakening, these movements hit with particular force in upstate New York. The rapid influx of settlers from different parts of the country into this region offered fertile ground for challenging traditional religious values. Religious revivals transformed older Protestant denominations and promoted new ones.

One result of these revivals was to generate recruits for reform movements. Some joined conservative reform efforts, converting individuals to moral behavior and creating stable community institutions. Moral reform (the effort to eradicate prostitution) and temperance (the movement to limit or abolish the consumption of alcoholic beverages) represent this kind of reform. So does the organization of institutions such as orphan asylums, poorhouses, and Bible societies, Sunday Schools, and missionary societies.

Alcoholic husbands brought poverty and domestic violence to many households, and the temperance movement appealed especially to many women. In 1840, many temperance advocates adopted a teetotal stance, advocating a complete ban on the consumption of alcohol. Often, the first time a woman spoke in public was on behalf of temperance. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, e.g., gave her first talk in Johnstown in 1841 at a temperance rally. She infused her talk, she remembered, with “a strong dose of women’s rights.” In Ithaca, local residents heard a group of temperance women speak in 1853. “We were the first women who had ever spoken publicly in Ithaca,” reported one woman. Often the temperance movement took over entire villages. In Seneca Falls in 1842, e.g., almost 800 men, women, and children marched up one side of the river and down the other in a huge temperance parade to celebrate a new law banishing the sale of alcoholic beverages throughout the town. This pre-Civil War temperance movement was a precursor to the post-Civil War Women’s Christian Temperance Union. 23

Some reformers created entirely new utopian communities. Shakers, followers of Mother Ann Lee, built communities at Watervliet, New Lebanon, and Hancock in eastern New York and at Sodus Bay in Wayne County and Groveland in Genesee County. John Humphrey Noyes and his followers built the Oneida Community in Sherrill, New York, near Utica. These communities were constructed around gender roles that were very different from those in the dominant culture. Shakers were celibate, and Oneida Community members practiced a family form built around the idea of complex marriage, with partners chosen to help develop spiritual growth. Neither of these communities took a leadership role before the Civil War in movements for women’s rights and women’s suffrage outside their own boundaries, however.

Followers of French utopian Charles Fourier built two communities in central New York that were closely tied to the early women’s rights movement. The Sodus Bay Phalanx took over the former Shaker community at Sodus Bay. Members included Catharine Fish Stebbins and Eliab W. Capron, both of whom would sign the Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention. Community Place in Skaneateles attracted others who would become signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, including George W. Pryor and Margaret Pryor. Both the Sodus Bay and Skaneateles communities attracted Quakers affiliated with the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse.  

Two reforms in particular emphasized not the development of new institutions but the liberation of individuals from institutional constraints. One was legal reform, focused on the right of married women to own property, and the other was abolitionism, advocating the immediate and total abolition of slavery and deriving its arguments from both the Declaration of Independence and the Bible. These two movements acted as incubators for the emerging movement for women’s rights.

E. Legal Reform, 1835-1848

Women’s rights activism in the 1830s and early 1840s emerged in two arenas. First was the effort to gain property rights for married women, rooted in a secular tradition of legal reform. Second was the demand to take an equal part in the movement to abolish slavery, rooted both in American political ideals of natural rights and in religious values.

As far as we know, Mary Ayers was the first woman to send a petition to the New York State legislature, in 1834, demanding property rights for married women. The History of Woman Suffrage, volume III, noted that the petition “was ten or fifteen feet long when unrolled, and is still buried in the vaults of the capitol at Albany.” We do not know where Mary Ayers lived, but the petition itself most likely burned in the capitol fire in 1911.

Better known as an early advocate of women’s property rights was Ernestine Potoski Rose, born in Poland. When her father, a rabbi, tried to mold his daughter into a model Jewish woman, Rose left Poland, went to England, married William Rose, and in 1836 immigrated to New York City, where she became part of a circle of reformers influenced by Fanny Wright. Among their goals was an act that would allow married women to control their own property. In 1836, Rose gathered five signatures on a petition to the New York State legislature, supporting legislation introduced by Assemblyman Thomas Herttell. Herttell rewrote his bill in 1837, with the help of lawyer and legislator John C. Spencer from Canandaigua. The new bill was very clear: “Its primary principle,” wrote Herttell, is to preserve to married women the title, possession, and control of their estate, both real and personal after as before marriage;--and that no part of it shall inure to their husbands, solely


by virtue of their *marriage.*" Many wealthy families supported this effort as a way to prevent profligate sons-in-law from consuming wealth inherited by their wives.  

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was profoundly influenced by this legal reform movement. Cady Stanton grew up in Johnstown, New York. Early in life, her father, an influential lawyer in New York State, taught her the importance of the law. She spent days of her childhood watching court cases develop in the Johnstown Courthouse. And she worked as a clerk in her father’s law office, becoming in effect a lawyer herself. But, as a woman, she could not work in that capacity. In the early 1840s, Stanton worked with Ernestine Rose and Paulina Kellogg Wright (later Davis), gathering signatures on petitions to the New York State legislature on behalf of the married women’s property act.

Paulina Kellogg Wright was born in 1813 in Bloomfield, Ontario County. When she was twenty years old, she married Francis Wright, a wealthy merchant in Utica, New York. She went on to lecture of women’s physiology, to become president of the first and second national women’s rights conventions in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850 and 1851, and to publish an early women’s rights magazine, *The Una.*

Through the efforts of Rose, Stanton, Wright and many others, debates about the married women’s property act spread throughout New York State. Central New Yorkers joined in. By the 1840s, remembered Elizabeth Cady Stanton, people talked about the married women’s property act "around many fashionable dinner-tables, and at many humble firesides. In this way all phases of the question were touched upon, involving the relations of the sexes, and gradually widening to all human interests--political, religious, civil and social."  

“All phases of the question” included the right of women to vote. For those who believed in the idea of civic virtue, if women own property and paid taxes on it, then they contributed economically to the government. There was no logical reason, then, why they should not vote. In Seneca Falls, the *Seneca Observer*[sic] advocated "that the right of voting should be extended to females in common with males, and . . . it is a violation of the great doctrine of equal rights that such is not the case."  

Advocates of the married women’s property act based their arguments on the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Herttell led the way: “‘That ‘all men are born free and with equal rights,’ is an admitted maxim in the moral and political creed of all advocates and friends of free government. That this truth is meant to apply exclusively to the *male* sex, will not be urged by any who have a due regard for their reputation for common sense." The Constitution preserved “the rights of private property equally to all— . . . female, equally with *male* citizens.”

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28 History of Woman Suffrage, I: 51-52.

29 *Seneca Falls Democrat,* September 14, 1843, commenting on its rival the *Seneca Observer.*

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John Fine, lawyer and Congressman from Ogdensburg, St. Lawrence County, echoed Herttell’s arguments:

THAT ALL ARE CREATED FREE AND EQUAL; THAT THEY ARE ENDOwed
BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS; THAT AMONG
THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS—is acknowledged
to be the fundamental doctrine upon which this Republic is founded," Fine asserted. This
idea "is freedom's golden rule. . . . None should ever be allowed to restrict its universality.
Women, as well as men, are entitled to the full enjoyment of its practical blessings. 31

We know that at least some central New Yorkers read Fine’s pamphlet, because Frances Seward,
wife of then Governor William Henry Seward, kept a copy in her own library, complete with
penciled notes. When she, her sister Lazette Worden, Martha Coffin Wright, and others discussed
the issue over tea one afternoon, Martha Wright reported to her sister Lucretia Mott:

The conversation at tea was on women having the property that their parents had
accumulated for them, secured to them before marriage. A measure which Mrs. Satterlee and
Mrs. Governor Seward advocated and David [Martha Wright’s husband] and Mrs. Worden
opposed. I agreed with the former. 32

The issue came to a head in 1846, when New York State held another constitutional convention.
Delegates initially supported a married women’s property act. When the issue first came to a vote, it
passed 58 to 44. But Charles O’Connor, a bachelor from New York City, turned the tide against the
measure. He praised current New York State law, rooted in English common law, for its recognition
of the husband as head of the household. English common law, he noted, was modeled on the
biblical precept that when a man and woman married “the twain shall be one flesh.” It “merged in
him [the husband] the legal being of the wife so thoroughly, that in contemplation of law she could
scarcely be said to exist.” Nothing should be allowed to overturn that biblical injunction. Delegates
agreed and voted 59 to 50 against a married women’s property act. 33

Not to be intimated, residents of at least three communities in upstate New York (Albany;
Covington, Wyoming County; and Depauville, Jefferson County) sent petitions to the
convention asking for women’s suffrage. From Jefferson County, six women (Eleanor Vincent, Lydia A.
Williams, Lydia Osborn, Susan Ormsby, Amy Ormsby, and Anna Bishop) argued that since “all
governments must derive their just powers from the consent of the governed” and that women
currently paid taxes without representation, then the convention should “extend to women equal. . .

31 [John Fine], Lecture Delivered Before the Ogdensburgh Lyceum, on the Political Rights of Women (Ogdensburgh, N.Y.: Tyler and
James, n.d.), 2-3. Fine ran unsuccessfully for the New York State Supreme Court in 1847 against Daniel Cady, Elizabeth
Cady Stanton’s father.
32 Martha Wright to Lucretia Mott, March 11, 1841, Garrison Papers, Smith College. Thanks to curator at the Seward
House for pointing out Judge Fine’s pamphlet in the Seward Library.
civil and political rights with men.” Delegates referred these petitions to the committee on elective franchise, where nothing more happened. 34

In 1846, as in 1821, debates in the constitutional convention about women’s right to vote were intertwined with the question of equal voting rights for African American men. Ansel Bascom, delegate from Seneca County, introduced a resolution to support African American suffrage: “Men are by nature free and independent, and in their social and political relations entitled to equal rights.” Bascom’s amendment provoked “much sensation.” Central New Yorkers spoke strongly in favor of the resolution, including George A.S. Crooker from Cattaraugus County and Benjamin F. Bruce and Federal Dana from Madison County. Levi S. Chatfield from Otsego County suggested another amendment, to make the intent perfectly clear: “All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, without regard to color, among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This was too much for Charles O’Conor, who had so successfully opposed a married women’s property act. O’Conor rose and asked sarcastically, "Will the gentleman accept an amendment to that or an addition," he asked, "viz the words 'age or sex!'" Without missing a beat, Chatfield replied, “Oh, certainly.” 35

In both conventions, opponents of equal suffrage for African American men drew parallels with women’s suffrage. If voting was a natural right, asked John A. Kennedy from New York City, “to whom would it belong? . . . Not male citizens of natural age and diverse colors only. No, sir; natural rights recognized no more distinctions in age or sex, than in color or condition.” “Civilized society throughout the world,” he concluded, "limited political privilege, to mature age and the male sex.” Some delegates were disgusted with such talk. “If Thomas Jefferson could only witness their conduct and hear their language,” said A.W. Young of Wyoming County, “he would disown all such democrats.” 36

Outside the convention, others took up the call. Samuel J. May, Unitarian minister in Syracuse, New York, gave a sermon on “The Rights and Condition of Woman.” Excluding women from voting, he asserted, was “all unequal, all unrighteous,” an “utter annihilation, politically considered, of more than one half of the whole community. . . . This entire disfranchisement of females is as unjust as the disfranchisement of the males would be.” Elisha P. Hurlbut, a New York City lawyer, claimed that “Woman’s rights are as sacred to the law as man’s.” If woman’s nature is the same as man’s, then "she can claim to exercise the elective franchise of

34 Petition dated August 8, 1846, in Bishop and Attree, Report, 646. A petition "numerously and respectfully signed by some of the first citizens of Albany" was referred to the committee on the elective franchise on July 11. Another from women in Covington, Wyoming County, was received on August 27. Bishop and Attree, 284, 763. For more on the Jefferson County petition, see Jacob Katz and Lori D. Ginzberg, Signs 22 (1997): 427-439. Lori D. Ginzberg, Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman’s Rights in Antebellum New York (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Diane Turo-Hughes and Karen Lago have identified these women as farm women from the area of Depauville, Town of Clayton.

35 Bishop and Attree, Report, 539-40. This tactic is the same one employed by Howard W. Smith, Representative from Virginia, when he inserted the word “sex” along with race and religion in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ban employment discrimination, thinking it would ensure the bill's defeat. He was wrong.

common right." If her nature was different, then men "cannot properly represent her . . . . This would entitle women not only to vote, but by their votes to elect a separate branch of the Legislature." 37

After twelve years of statewide discussion, John Fine introduced a married women’s property bill to the New York State legislature in January 1848. On February 23, 1848, George Geddes, Senator from Onondaga County, submitted a petition of support with names of 300 Syracuse voters. "The measure was so radical, so extreme," noted Geddes, "that even its friends had doubts; but the moment any important amendment was offered, up rose the whole question of woman's proper place in society, in the family, and everywhere." 38

In March, forty-four married ladies, mistresses of sarcasm, in the towns of Darien (Genesee County) and Covington (Wyoming County) sent a petition of support for this bill:

That your Declaration of Independence declares, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. And as women have never consented to, been represented in, or recognized by this government, it is evident that in justice no allegiance can be claimed from them.

Your laws after depriving us of property, of the means of acquiring it, and even of individuality, require the same obedience from us as from free citizens.

We therefore think, common justice and humanity would dictate, that when you class us and our privileges with those of idiots, and lunatics, you should do the same with regard to our responsibilities; and as our husbands assume responsibility for our debts and trespasses, they should also for our misdemeanors and crimes; for justice can never hold lunatics, idiots, infants, or married women, (as the law now is,) accountable for their conduct.

When women are allowed the privilege of rational and accountable beings, it will be soon enough to expect from them the duties of such.

Our numerous and yearly petitions for this most desirable object having been disregarded, we now ask your august body, to abolish all laws which hold married women more accountable for their acts than infants, idiots, and lunatics. 39

The New York State legislature bought their argument. This bill, radical as it was, passed the New York State Senate on March 29, 1848, and the whole legislature approved it on April 7, 1848.

37 Samuel J. May, "The Rights and Condition of Women," in Woman's Rights Tract No. 1: Commensurate with her capacities and obligations, are Woman's Rights (Syracuse, N.M.D. Lathrop, 1853); Elisha P. Hurlbut, Essays on Human Rights, and Their Political Guaranties (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1848), 117, 123.
Although legislation for married women’s property rights had passed earlier in Mississippi, New York State’s 1848 law became the model for other states.  

F. Abolitionism and women’s rights, 1835-48

Abolitionism—the immediate and total abolition of slavery—was the other major movement that nurtured women’s rights advocates. Rooted in a religious and moral values, as well as in American ideals of equality, abolitionism appealed to women as well as men. Their commitment to freeing enslaved people trained women in arguments and strategies, and it gave them experience in political organizing, petitioning, and public speaking. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote that “the anti-slavery platform was the best school the American people ever had on which to learn republican principles and ethics.”

William Lloyd Garrison’s publication of The Liberator, beginning in 1831 in Boston, initiated the movement for the immediate abolition of slavery. Garrison’s support of Maria W. Stewart also welcomed women into the movement. The American Anti-Slavery Society, formed in Philadelphia by male abolitionists from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, included no women among its founding members. But Lucretia Mott, Quaker minister, attended the meeting and was clearly heard to tell her husband to sign its Declaration of Sentiments. Mott called herself “a radical of radicals and a heretic among heretics.” She lived by the motto “Truth for authority and not authority for truth.” Three days later, she and a group of women of both African and European descent formed the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. She would later play a major role in women’s rights in central New York, reflecting Quaker migration into upstate New York from the Philadelphia area.

Formation of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society on October 21, 1835, included more than four hundred male supporters and brought Gerrit Smith, wealthy landowner from Peterboro, Madison County, New York, and his wife Ann Smith, born to a slaveholding family in Maryland, into the movement. By the mid-1830s, reported Smith’s cousin Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Every member of their household is an abolitionist even to the coachman." The Smiths sent their daughter Elizabeth to school in Philadelphia, where the whole family became part of the bi-racial circle of reformers around James and Lucretia Mott, the Douglasses, and the Fortens. Elizabeth Cady spent many summers with the Smiths in Peterboro, and there she met her future husband Henry Brewster Stanton, an abolitionist agent.

Among the abolitionists that Elizabeth Cady Stanton met through Gerrit Smith were two sisters, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, born in in Charleston, South Carolina in a slaveholding family. The Grimkes moved to Philadelphia, converted to Quakerism, and became ardent abolitionists. After Angelina sent a letter to the Liberator in 1836, she and Sarah began speaking to small groups of women. When men entered the back of the hall in Poughkeepsie, New York, the Grimkes found

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41 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eighty Years and More (New York, 1898), 59.
42 Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Peter Smith, January 27 [1836-37], Smith Family Papers, Syracuse University.
themselves speaking, as Maria W. Stewart had spoken earlier, to mixed audiences of women and men.

The American Anti-Slavery Society operated from the perspective of moral suasion, i.e. persuading slaveholders to free enslaved people based on appeals to conscience. They adopted methods consistent with this view: sending pamphlets to the South, organizing local anti-slavery societies in the North, and sending petitions asking Congress for modest actions consistent with the existing U.S. Constitution, such as keeping slavery out of the territories and abolishing the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Women across New York State sent petitions along with the men. Of the four hundred-odd petitions sent to Congress from upstate New York between 1837 and 1839, seventy percent of them were signed by women, either alone or with men. 43

At the same time, women began to form separate female anti-slavery societies. By 1837, there were seventy-five such auxiliaries across the North; sixteen of them in upstate New York. Among them was one in Farmington, New York, formed by Phebe Hathaway and thirty-two other women in 1837. In July 1838, they published an address, explicitly linking slavery to the position of women: Women certainly had duties in domestic life, they argued, but “have we no other object to claim our affections? . . . he who would chain you exclusively to the daily round of household duties, is at least in some degree actuated by the dark spirit of slavery.” 44

These female anti-slavery societies supported three national bi-racial women’s anti-slavery meetings. New York City hosted the first on May 9-12, 1837. Lucretia Mott considered this to be the beginning of the women’s rights movement: “From the time of the 1st. convention of women -- in New Y 1837,” she wrote to Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1855, “-- the battle began. A resolution was there warmly discussed & at length adopted by a majority -- many members dissenting, ‘that it was time that woman should move in the sphere Providence assigned her.’” Seventy-one delegates from twelve states attended this convention, including Lucretia Mott. Central New York delegates included Ann C. Smith from Peterboro, Madison County (one of six vice-presidents), and Mary Howland from “Ledyard Society, Cayuga County, New York.” Margaret Prior, listed as from New York City, may have been the Margaret Pryor who signed the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments in 1848. 45

In February 1838, the Grimkes became the first women to speak before the Massachusetts legislature. But they received considerable criticism. "Our womanhood–it is as great offense to some as our abolitionism," noted Angelina. When conservative clergymen in New England publicly protested their speeches, Sarah Grimke produced a clarion call for women’s rights. Called Letters on the Condition of Women and the Equality of the Sexes, the pamphlet used both the Declaration of Independence and the Bible to issue a clarion call for women’s right to speak to mixed audiences on

43 Judith Wellman, “Women and Radical Reform,” in Clio Was a Woman, 118.
45 Lucretia Mott to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, March 16, 1855, Stanton Papers, Library of Congress.

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behalf of enslaved people: “Men and women were CREATED EQUAL,” argued Grimke. “they are both moral and accountable beings; and whatever is right for man to do, is right for woman.”  

Philadelphia hosted the second women’s anti-slavery convention on May 15-18, 1838. Lucretia Mott was a vice-president, as were Martha W. Storrs from Utica and Margaret Prior from New York City (probably the same Margaret Prior who later moved to Waterloo). Elizabeth M’Clintock also attended from Waterloo. Angelina Grimke gave her last public speech at this convention, the day after she married Theodore Weld in a ceremony that included people of both European and African descent. Attacked by rioters who jeered and threw stones, Angelina Grimke used their disruptions to make a point: “Do you ask, "what has the North to do with slavery?" Hear it -- hear it. Those voices without tell us that the spirit of slavery is here.” Meeting in the brand-new Pennsylvania Hall, built at a cost of $40,000 and dedicated to liberty, convention delegates were forced to leave by rioters and arsonists, who burned the new building down. To protect women of color, they walked arm-in-arm, white and black linked together.  

Abby Kelley, young Quaker woman from Lynn, Massachusetts, gave her first speech at this convention. Theodore Weld, eloquent abolitionist lecturer from Manlius, New York, newly-married to Angelina Grimke, told her that if she did not join the ranks of abolitionist speakers, “God will smite you!” Kelley joined. Her lectures across upstate New York in 1841, 1843, and 1852 would create a clear bridge between abolitionism and women’s rights.  

A third women’s antislavery society convention met again in Philadelphia on May 1-3, 1839. Lucretia Mott and Martha W. Storrs (now listed as living in New York City rather than Utica) were among the vice-presidents and business committee members. Corresponding members from New York State were Ann M. Moore (Rochester), Almira Barnes (Troy), Mary Ann M’Clintock (Waterloo), and Sarah Hunt (Waterloo). The convention published An Address to the Society of Friends on the Subject of Slavery, An Appeal to American Women on Prejudice Against Color, and Circular of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women.  

Elizabeth Cady Stanton called these conventions "the initiative steps to organized public action and the Woman Suffrage Movement per se." But separate women’s conventions were not to be repeated. Abby Kelley was a harbinger of a new effort to hold mixed male and female meetings.  

Abby Kelley did not attend the 1839 women’s anti-slavery meeting, held in Philadelphia. Instead, she and other women began to infiltrate the leadership of existing male-dominated anti-slavery societies. In 1838, Kelley accepted a position on the Executive Committee of the New England Anti-Slavery

47 Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women Held in Philadelphia, May 15th, 16th, and 17th, 1838 (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838); Letter from Elizabeth M’Clintock to . . ., WRNHP.
49 14 ff.

Some male abolitionists approved. William Lloyd Garrison was one of them. “As our object is universal emancipation,” he declared, “to redeem women as well as men from a servile to an equal condition,—we shall go for the RIGHTS OF WOMAN to their utmost extent.” Garrisonians packed the 1839 meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society and appointed Abby Kelley to its executive committee. That proved too much for those who saw women’s rights as too radical a cause. Many of them were also beginning to organize politically against slavery. They feared that inviting women—who could not vote—into leadership positions would compromise their efforts to send anti-slavery politicians to Congress. At the May 1840 meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, about half the convention attendees walked out to form the new American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Convention. Among them was Charles Stuart, Theodore Weld’s mentor. He could not support women’s public speaking, he said, without “trampling my conscience in the dust.”

Another of those who walked out of the American Anti-Slavery Society in May 1840 was Henry B. Stanton, newly-married to Elizabeth Cady. They had met in October 1839 at the home of Elizabeth’s cousin, Gerrit Smith. Although Elizabeth’s father strongly opposed their wedding, they married on May 1, 1840, without the word “obey” in their vows. Elizabeth Cady Stanton had an immediate and very personal introduction to the issues that divided abolitionists. On their honeymoon, they sailed to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London.

Delegates to the convention spent the whole first day debating whether or not to allow women delegates from America to sit on the floor of the convention. Although Henry B. Stanton supported the women, the decision of the convention as a whole was against them. Forced to sit together, women at the convention began to share their own stories. Cady Stanton was enthralled with one delegate, Lucretia Mott, whose own life reflected Quaker ideals about equality between men and women, a life that Cady Stanton had only imagined.

In 1840, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society also split into western and eastern societies. The eastern society organized in the Albany-Troy area. The Western New York Anti-Slavery Society organized first in Penn Yan and then in Farmington. This organization became a major incubator for the emerging women’s rights movement. From the beginning, they encouraged both women and men to join. Meeting first at Penn Yan in February 1839, they invited "every Abolitionist, whether male or female, who shall be in regular attendance at this convention . . . to enrol his or her name." They formally organized and adopted a new Constitution in Farmington, New York, in 1840. Its constitution read, “all persons, male and female, may join the society, and be entitled to all the privileges of membership.” Women as well as men served on committees.

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Henry C. Wright, Garrisonian abolitionist, attended this meeting. He was mightily impressed with the potential for abolitionist action in this region. This field, he exclaimed, “is the best in the country.”

Here mind is free to act—is not bound down by the trammels which bind it in New-England. I have never come in contact with mind better prepared to receive truth. Western New York, in moral and intellectual power, will, ere long, become the Eden of American. A company of nobler spirits I never met than I have met here.  

In spite of Henry C. Wright’s enthusiasm, the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society was no unthinking supporter of Garrison, Wright, and moral suasion. They welcomed women, but they also embraced political abolitionists. In so doing, they nurtured ideas about women’s right to vote, which would come to fruition in Seneca Falls in 1848.

In 1842, in an attempt to keep local societies under Garrison’s influence, the American Anti-Slavery Society sent Abby Kelley and Frederick Douglass on a lecture tour of central and western New York. Abby Kelley again toured central New York in 1843. With Kelley’s help, five Quaker women (Abby Kelley plus Amy Post and Sarah A. Burris from Rochester, Phebe Hathaway from Farmington, and Elizabeth M’Clintock from Waterloo) organized the very first women’s anti-slavery fair in central New York, held in Rochester on February 22, 1843, George Washington’s birthday. Both women of color and white women in Rochester organized sewing circles to produce crafts for the fair, and other items came from Utica and Boston, Ireland and England. It was “quite a magnificent affair,” wrote John C. Hathaway from Farmington, raising $300 for the cause. Through the 1840s, these women’s anti-slavery fairs would be held annually throughout central and western New York. They would be the major fund-raisers for abolitionist activity in that region. They were also a seedbed for women’s rights.  

This central New York abolitionist network expanded during the 1840s, gaining leadership experience and refining their arguments for equal rights. It was this group who would come to the aid of Elizabeth Cady Stanton in organizing the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls. Without this group, mostly Quaker women, there would have been no 1848 convention.

Others also began their careers in women’s rights. Lucy Stone, a graduate of Oberlin College, began her speaking career on behalf of women’s rights in 1847. That same year Antoinette Brown delivered a speech on woman’s rights at the Baptist church in Henrietta, New York.

In 1848, revolution was in the air. In Europe, France, Germany, and the Italian states all experienced liberal upheavals against conservative governments. In the U.S., the end of the Mexican War brought renewed debates about the extension of slavery into the territory acquired from Mexico. In

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55 Margaret Hope Bacon, Valiant Friend, 79-80; John C Hathaway to Abby Kelley, February 16, 1843, Abby Kelley Foster Papers, American Antiquarian Society.
Seneca Falls itself, at least one merchant advertised a revolution in merchandizing, with new goods arriving regularly from New York City.

Seneca people also were in a non-violent revolution, as they debated whether or not to form a new Seneca Nation. Some advocated a new constitution, patterned after the U.S. Constitution, with male adults as voters; others retained their traditional clan system, with leaders appointed by clan mothers. This debate had emerged in response to the disastrous Treaty of Buffalo Creek in 1838. By fraud, deceit, and bribery, the U.S. government persuaded some Haudenosaunee to sign this Treaty. The U.S. Senate accepted it by a tie vote, broken only by the vice-president. Seneca leaders took charge and organized a clear and dramatic response; they refused to leave their ancestral homelands. They found support from Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends (meeting in Farmington, New York), along with Quakers from the Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore Yearly Meetings. Senecas and Quakers held several joint councils at Farmington and Cattaraugus. One result was the Supplementary Treaty of 1841, crafted in part by John C. Spencer, U.S. Secretary of War from Canandaigua, by which Seneca people lost both Buffalo Creek and Tonawanda homelands but kept Cattaraugus, Allegany, and later Oil Creek. Tonawanda Seneca people made a separate treat in 1857 to keep their lands.

Part of this debate revolved around the roles of women and men. In traditional Seneca and Haudenosaunee culture, women were heads of matrilineal families; they appointed chiefs of the Confederacy; and they were farmers, providing most of the food. Men were leaders, warriors, and diplomats.

In an effort to defend themselves against further encroachment by federal and state governments, Seneca people debated in the 1840s the merits of changing traditional social and political structures to resemble European American gender roles and political organization. As part of this transition, many Senecas attended schools supported by Presbyterians or Quakers. These schools emphasized changing gender roles. They taught methods of farming to boys and domestic skills to girls. Some Seneca women also followed the model of Quaker women. In 1843, a Seneca woman spoke, for the first time, in public council.

One result was the decision by a majority of Seneca people to form an official Seneca Nation in 1848, with a new Constitution, so that dealings with U.S. and New York State governments would be on a footing that dominant culture people understood. Tonawanda Seneca, however, continued to maintain their traditional system of leaders appointed by clan mother.

This atmosphere of deep change across Europe and the U.S. in structures of transportation, industry, families, and politics set the stage for the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention. In the spring of 1848, four events crystallized issues relating to women’s equality in the dominant culture. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was connected to each event by an important person in her own life. Her

58 Joint Committee on Indian Affairs, Manuscripts, Minutes of Council at Cattaraugus, 1843, Swarthmore College.
lawyer father Daniel Cady connected her directly with passage of the Married Women’s Property Act in April 1848. Cady Stanton’s husband Henry Brewster Stanton tied her to political abolitionism, as he became a major organizer for the new Free Soil Party, formed to keep slavery out of the territories acquired from Mexico at the end of the Mexican War in May 1848. Her friend Lucretia Mott symbolized Garrisonian abolitionism, as debates about equality within the Society of Friends split apart Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends at Farmington in June 1848. Finally, on June 2, her own cousin Gerrit Smith was nominated for President of the U.S. by the new Liberty League, meeting in Rochester. The following week, at the National Liberty Convention in Buffalo, Smith demanded "universal suffrage in its broadest sense, females as well as males being entitled to vote."

The Married Women’s Property Act changed traditional property laws for women and left many wondering how this new system would work. Breakup of traditional party affiliations over the issue of slavery left many wondering where their new political homes would lie. Similarly, breakup of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends left many Quakers unsure about their spiritual home.

These institutional changes all raised questions about the meaning of equal rights. All of them forced people to ask what their next steps—as men and women, as citizens, and as members of political and religious groups—should be. All of them led directly to the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the catalyst. Invited to meet Lucretia Mott at the home of Jane and Richard P. Hunt in Waterloo on June 9, Cady Stanton found four Quaker women there. Lucretia Mott still lived near Philadelphia, but every summer, she visited her sister Martha Wright in Auburn, New York. Wright’s husband David worked closely with William Henry Seward. Mott and Wright came together to the Hunt house. Jane Hunt hosted the meeting while she tended her two-week-old daughter. Hunt’s husband Richard P. Hunt was Seneca County’s wealthiest resident. He had also been an officer in the Western New York Anti-slavery Society. Mary Ann M’Clintock was Hunt’s Waterloo neighbor. She and husband Thomas M’Clintock rented their house from the Hunts. Both M’Clintocks were abolitionists and supporters of Seneca Indians and women’s rights. Until he left in 1843 to become a manger of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Thomas had been Clerk of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends. Inspired by these Quaker women, Stanton “poured forth her long-standing discontent and challenged the rest of the party to do and dare anything.”

What they dared to do was prepare a call for a convention solely to discuss the rights of women. They needed to act quickly, before Lucretia Mott returned to Philadelphia. Under the heading “Women’s Rights Convention,” the following call appeared on Tuesday, July 11, 1848, in the Seneca County Courier:

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60 Report on the Liberty League convention from the Liberator, June 23, 1848, copied from the New York Commercial Advertiser; Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th and 15th, 1848 (Utica: S.W. Green, 1848), 14.

61 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eighty Years and More (New York: 1898). For further details on organizing this convention, see Wellman, Road to Seneca Falls, Chapter 7: Declaring Woman’s Rights, July 1848.

Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York
Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of Woman, will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N.Y., on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current, commencing at 10 o’clock A.M.

During the first day, the meeting will be exclusively for Women, which all are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when Lucretia Mott, of Philadelphia, and other both ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention.

On the following Friday, July 14, 1848, Stanton took the train to arrive at the M’Clintock house by 10:00 a.m. She had notes, she said, about what they might say at the convention, but they needed to create a document that people could discuss. For models, they looked at statement from peace, temperance, and anti-slavery conventions. “All alike,” remembered Stanton, seemed “too tame and pacific for the inauguration of a rebellion such as the world had never seen.”

Finally, “one of the company” read the Declaration of Independence. They decided that document was exactly what they needed, “with some slight changes.” The most important change was in the preamble. Instead of saying “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” they expanded that sentiment to say “that all men and women are created equal.” They called their new document the Declaration of Sentiments, echoing the document approved at the 1833 American Anti-Slavery Society.

Instead of the grievances of the colonists against King George in the Declaration of Independence, they wrote grievances of women against a patriarchal establishment. They began with a grievance

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62 Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Elizabeth M’Clintock, July 12?, 1848; Stanton, Eighty Years.
about voting rights: “He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.” They continued with grievances about equal rights in politics, the law, family, property, wages, work, taxation, education, religion, morality, and personal respect. To sum up their case, they argued that “He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.”

The ninth resolution, introduced by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and supported by Frederick Douglass, endorsed women’s suffrage. It passed with only a slight majority, since many conference attendees were Quakers, who did not advocate voting for anyone. Both contemporaries and scholars recognized that the Seneca Falls convention was the beginning of the organized movement for women’s rights. They also recognized that its arguments and alliances were rooted in earlier reforms, particularly abolitionism and legal rights for married women.

One hundred people (68 women and 32 men) signed the Declaration of Sentiments. Many were linked by family ties. The largest political group were abolitionists affiliated with the new Free Soil Party. The largest religious group were Garrisonian Quakers connected with Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends and the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse.

The Seneca Falls convention crystallized ideas about women’s rights. Rooted in the rapidly changing economic, social, and cultural environment of upstate New York, the convention changed women’s rights from a discussion to a movement. In its natural rights philosophy, its leaders, and its proposed strategies, the convention emerged directly from movements for legal reform and the abolition of slavery. After Seneca Falls, women’s rights advocates formed, for the first time, a cause and a movement of their own. Suffrage became a persistent demand of that movement.

B. Seed-sowing Time: From Women’s Rights to Universal Suffrage and Back Again, 1848-1869

Overview

The Seneca Falls convention turned a widespread concern for woman’s rights into an organized woman’s rights movement. Part of that movement was a demand for women’s suffrage as an essential part of the American democratic experiment. But people at Seneca Falls looked at voting as only one of many rights for women. Conventions in the 1850s followed that pattern. They did not focus primarily on women’s suffrage but looked at women’s rights in every area of life. Women’s rights issues intersected with other movements in this decade, both influencing and finding support from movements for African American rights, temperance, religion, and education. To implement women’s rights ideas, they worked at a state-by-state level.

The Civil War shifted the attention of women’s rights advocates to the war effort as an abolitionist crusade. In the North, Stanton and Anthony formed the Women’s Loyal National League and gathered almost 400,000 names on a petition to abolish slavery. In so doing, they contributed directly to passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. Secretary of State William Henry Seward made the amendment official on December 18, 1865: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

In 1866, as part of the effort to make full citizenship a reality for formerly enslaved people, a biracial group of women’s rights and abolitionist leaders formed a coalition called the American Equal Rights Association, electing Lucretia Mott as President. They advocated universal suffrage for all American citizens, no matter what ethnic/racial background or gender.

Advocates for universal suffrage faced two obstacles at the federal level. First, radical Republicans in Congress successfully passed the Fourteenth Amendment, granting citizenship to formerly enslaved people: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” Using this definition, many women also tried to vote, beginning in 1868. This strategy became known as the “New Departure.” But the Fourteenth Amendment also, for the first time, introduced the word “male” into the Constitution.

Second, Congress and the states accepted the Fifteenth Amendment, granting voting rights to African American men but not to women of any race. In 1869, debate over this Amendment split the American Equal Rights Party into two and generated a shift from women’s rights to women’s suffrage. Two national woman suffrage organizations emerged in 1869. The American Woman Suffrage Association continued to work on suffrage at a state-by-state level. The National Woman Suffrage Association advocated a federal amendment.

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64 “It has frequently been said that the first three volumes of the History of Woman Suffrage, which bring the record to twenty years ago, represent the seed-sowing time of the movement.” History of Woman Suffrage, III: xiii.
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Conventions, 1848-1860

Seneca Falls was certainly not the first evidence of American concern with women’s rights. As historian Carolyn Vacca noted,

like all other political and social movements, its conception predates its public appearance by decades. The suffrage movement was an expression of an incipient feminism that required a sense of collective identity among women, access to resources, and a re-conceptualization of the role of women for it to flourish. 65

All of these—a collective identity, access to resources, and a new sense of women’s roles were nourished in the burned-over district soil of religious change, legal reform, and abolitionism. In addition, these earlier reforms offered experience in public action, an argument based on natural rights, and strategic models. And all of them came together at Seneca Falls in July 1848.

Seneca Falls acted as a nucleating agent. Like changing water into ice, it crystallized existing ideas about woman’s rights into an identifiable movement, different from the sum of its parts. Seneca Falls offered a rationale, a set of goals, a cadre of leaders, and a plan of action for the new movement. 66

The Declaration of Sentiments was key. By linking women’s rights directly to the country’s founding document, asserting that “all men and women are created equal,” it captured the whole country’s attention. Newspapers east and west, north and south reacted immediately. Some scoffed at the whole idea as a “dreadful revolt.” Philadelphia Ledger. Others remained neutral. Still others lauded the new movement as a second “flag of independence.” Many followed the lead of Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune. Greeley was skeptical but recognized the inherent logic of women’s suffrage. 67

The agenda included a whole panorama of equal rights for women in politics, the law, family, work, education, religion, and morality. Leaders at Seneca Falls—including Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martha Wright, Frederick Douglass, and Amy Post—would become leaders of state and national suffrage movements until their deaths.

To carry out these goals, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments outlined a plan of action. “We shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object,” it noted. “We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.” These strategies dominated the woman’s movement for generations. Central New Yorkers—and women’s rights advocates across the country—would employ all of them, beginning immediately. Subsequent conventions recognized their debt to Seneca

66 Thanks to James Livingston for suggesting the concept of Seneca Falls as a “nucleating agent.”
67 Timothy Terpstra, quoted in Wellman, Road to Seneca Falls, 210. Thanks to James Livingston, descendant of Martha Wright, for suggesting the idea of Seneca Falls as a nucleating agent.
Fall.

From 1850-1858, six state and national conventions directly mentioned Seneca Falls as the first woman’s rights convention.68

Conventions became a major generating force for spreading the movement. Two weeks after Seneca Falls, on August 2, 1848, Amy Post organized a second women’s rights convention in Rochester, New York. Susan B. Anthony’s parents and sister Mary attended that convention, although Susan B. herself was teaching in Canajoharie, New York. That convention specifically raised issues of working women. It nominated a woman, Abigail Bush, as President. And it adopted the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. The same day the convention met in Rochester, Lucretia Mott received five votes for President of the U.S. at the Liberty Party meeting in Buffalo, New York. Women’s rights activists must have been encouraged.69

But what to do next? Stanton wrote to Amy Post that “our conventions both went off so well that we have great encouragement to go on. What are we next to do?—We have declared our right to vote—The question now is how shall we get possession of what rightfully belongs to us? Do you think we ought to have an agent to travel all over the country & lecture on this subject?” From South Bristol, Emily Collins had the same idea. “A lecturer in the field would be most desirable,” she wrote, “but how to raise funds to sustain one is the question. I never really wished for Aladdin’s lamp till now. Would to Heaven that women could be persuaded to use the funds they acquire by their sewing-circles and fairs, in trying to raise their own condition above that of “infants, idiots, and lunatics.” 70

Lucy Stone, newly-graduated from Oberlin College and working as a paid lecturer for the New England Anti-Slavery Society, was the obvious choice. Phoebe Hathaway, a Quaker from Farmington, wrote to Stone and reported to Stanton that “Thou wilt be glad to hear she [Stone] can come to this state so much sooner than she expected.” As far as we know, Lucy Stone never did come to central New York, but other lecturers would fill the gap.71

Elizabeth Cady Stanton led the way. In September, she spoke at the Quaker Meetinghouse in the Town of Junius, just west of Seneca Falls. Lucretia Mott wrote to Stanton on October 3, noting “I rejoiced . . . that thou wast willing to deliver that lecture—& hope thy talents in that way will be well exercised by reason of use.” Stanton followed her advice. On October 6, 1848, she gave the same speech at the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse. There, reform-minded Quakers who had withdrawn in June from Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends organized an entirely new group, the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends (later known as Progressive Friends and still later as Friends of Human Progress). Thomas M’Clintock wrote a statement summarizing their ideals. They

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70 Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Amy Post, September 24, 1848, Gordon, Selected Papers, 1:123–24; Emily Collins, “Reminiscences,” History of Woman Suffrage, 1:92.

71 Phoebe Hathaway to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, November 11, 1848, in Gordon, Selected Papers, 1:132.
organized on a congregational system, with no hierarchy of meetings. Men and women met together, not in separate meetings, as traditional Quakers had. They embraced respect for all people, no matter what their background. This group would meet annually until 1887 at the Quaker Meetinghouse in Junius, attracting abolitionists, women’s rights advocates, and free thinkers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, and Charles Lenox Remond.  

This group would be connected to similar organizations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, all of which became major centers of women’s rights activism. And they became a precursor for liberal Friends in the twentieth century, including Friends General Conference, the annual meeting of liberal Friends in the U.S., founded in 1900.

At that organizational meeting of the Congregational Friends in Farmington, Stanton passed around a petition for women’s suffrage. Benjamin Gue, a local student, noted in his diary that he had attended a women’s rights meeting held “in the large meeting house, . . . attended by Elizabeth C. Stanton of Seneca Falls, she circulated a petition praying the Legislature to allow women of legal age to exercise the right of the Elective Franchise, which I signed.”

Others heard about the petition effort. In South Bristol, Emily Collins wrote to Sarah C. Owen in Rochester, asking for copies of the suffrage petition. “The elective franchise is now the one object for which we must labor,” she wrote on October 23, 1848. “Please forward me a copy of the petition for suffrage. We will engage to do all we can, not only in our own town, but in the adjoining ones of Richmond, East Bloomfield, Canandaigua, and Naples. I have promises of aid from people of influence in obtaining signatures.” Sixty-two people, both men and women, signed the South Bristol petition. When they sent it to Albany, “it was received by the Legislature as something absurdly ridiculous, and laid upon the table.”

On April 19-20, 1850, Ohio women’s rights advocates held the first state women’s rights convention in the U.S., in the Second Baptist Church and Friends Meetinghouse in Salem, Ohio. Many of its organizers were Congregational Friends allied with those who had organized at Farmington in 1848. Five hundred people attended. They organized to promote universal suffrage as “the question most sacred to a free people—EQUAL SUFFRAGE to adults, without regard to sex, COLOR or CONDITION.” The convention sent a petition with 8000 signatures to the Ohio Constitutional Convention that met the following month:

Believing that woman does not suffer alone when subject to oppressive and unequal laws, but that whatever affects injuriously her interests, is subversive of the highest good of the race, we earnestly request that in the New Constitution you are about to form for the state of


74 Ann Gordon, ed., Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, 1:94–95. Gue, Diary of Benjamin F. Gue, 40; Stanton, Eighty Years and More, 151; Benjamin Gue, Diary, 54.


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Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
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Ohio, women should be secured, not only the right of suffrage, but all the political and legal rights that are guaranteed to men.

One attender captured the spirit of the convention in his diary: “The Womans Convention was a perfect jam—all enthusiasm; they did honor to their sex; cursed be the pittifull whining politicians that still persist in withholding from her, her political rights.” 76

Central New Yorkers influenced this convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton sent a letter from her home in Seneca Falls. Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock Jones, born in Vernon, New York, read Lucretia Mott’s Discourse on Women, and gave an impassioned speech herself, arguing that the term “women’s rights” was too narrow and that everyone should be working for full human rights for all people. Jones had worked as an abolitionist lecturer with Abby Kelley before she moved to Salem, Ohio, where she and her husband edited the Anti-Slavery Bugle. She corresponded with upstate New Yorkers, including Amy Post in Rochester, New York. 77

A second Ohio convention met in Akron, Ohio, the following year, where Sojourner Truth, born in Ulster County, New York, gave her famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” And in 1852, Pennsylvania held its first state convention in Horticultural Hall in West Chester. This convention was heavily influenced by Quakers organized as Progressive Friends. Mary Ann M’Clintock (now Truman), who had been secretary of the Seneca Falls convention, attended. 78

Meanwhile, on October 16-17, 1850, the first national women’s rights convention met in Brinley Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, “to consider the Rights, Duties, and Relations of Women.” It attracted 1000 people from eleven states. Central New Yorkers were well represented. Paulina Wright Kellogg Davis, the major organizer and president of the convention, Davis had been born in Bloomfield, New York. She moved to an area near Niagara Falls when she was four years old. After her parents’ deaths in 1820, she lived with an aunt in LeRoy, New York, before her marriage and move to Utica in 1833. Her husband’s death and her re-marriage to Thomas Davis led to a move to Providence, Rhode Island, where she continued her commitment to abolitionism and women’s rights, editing a woman’s rights newspaper, The Una, from 1853-55. 79

Other central New Yorkers also supported and attended the convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton signed the call for the convention and sent a letter advocating political rights for women. Others who had been at the Seneca Falls convention also went to Worcester, including Lucretia Mott, who gave her lecture on the “condition of woman.” Frederick Douglass arrived from Rochester and

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spoke. Eliab W. Capron, then living in Auburn, also came. Orthodox Quaker John C. Hathaway from Farmington served as secretary and president pro tem of the convention. Hicksite Quaker Pliny Sexton came from Palmyra. Samuel J. May from Syracuse and William Henry Channing from Rochester, both Unitarian ministers, participated, as did Antoinette Brown Blackwell, from South Butler, New York, the first woman ordained as a Congregational minister.80

Many women’s rights advocates expressed reluctance to create another formal organization, so the Worcester convention set up a set of committees. The task of the central committee was “to call other Conventions, at such times and places as they shall see fit.” Other committees were directed to “hold meetings in their respective neighborhoods, gather statistics, facts, and illustrations, raise funds for purposes of publication; and through the press, tracts, books, and the living agent, guide public opinion upward and onward in the grand social reform of establishing woman’s co-sovereignty with man.” 81

Worcester held a second national convention in 1851. The third national convention met in central New York. On September 8-10, 1852, the convention opened at the City Hall in Syracuse, New York. Members almost unanimously elected Lucretia Mott as president. Only James Mott, her husband, cast a dissenting “nay.” Many people who had attended the Seneca Falls convention came to the Syracuse meeting, including Martha Wright, Elizabeth M’Clintock Phillips, Catharine Fish Stebbins, and Amy Post, Thomas and Mary Ann M’Clintock, Mary Hallowell, and Sarah Hallowell. All were affiliated with the Congregational Friends. Stanton herself wrote a letter advocating tax resistance and co-educational schools, on the model of the new People’s College in Havana (now Montour Falls), New York, organized. By the Mechanics Mutual Protective Association to give equal education to working class women as well as men. Other stalwarts from central New York were Rev. Antoinette Brown from South Butler, Gerrit Smith from Peterboro; Griffith M. Cooper from Williamson, Pliny Sexton from Palmyra, and Syracuse residents Rev. Samuel J. May, Rosa Smith, Joseph Savage, and Lydia P. Savage. From New York City came Ernestine Rose, “an example,” she said, “of the universality of our claims; for not American women only, but a daughter of poor, crushed Poland, and the down-trodden and persecuted people called the Jews, ‘a child of Israel,’ pleads for the equal rights of her sex.”82

This convention was noted for several firsts. It was the first women’s rights convention that Susan B. Anthony had ever attended and also the first one for Matilda Joslyn Gage from Fayetteville, who gave her maiden speech here. Like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, both Anthony and Gage would become stalwarts, leaders of state and national suffrage organizations until their deaths (Gage in 1898 and Anthony in 1906). Lesser known women’s rights activists, such as Rev. Lydia Jenkins (who lived at

80 The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October, 23d & 24th, 1850 (Boston: Prentiss & Sawyer, 1851).
81 Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October, 23d & 24th, 1850, 16.
82 Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, 63; Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, History of Woman Suffrage, I. Thanks to Elaine Engst for information about the People’s College.
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Although the call for the convention had stated a goal of forming “a thorough and efficient organization—a well-digested plan of operation,” to secure their goals, the convention soundly rejected that idea. Angelina Grimke sent a letter protesting such an “artificial” organization, which would not honor “the sacredness of the individual.” “All we need,” she suggested “is freedom to think our own thoughts, and act out the promptings of our own inner being.” Lucy Stone compared women’s rights advocates to “a burnt child that dreads the fire” and reform organizations to a “thumb screw and soul screw.” She, for one, had had enough of them. Ernestine Rose thought that organizations were like “Chinese bandages,” hindering growth. Such arguments won the day. Until the Civil War, the central committee system, chaired by Paulina Wright Davis from 1850-1858, guided the women’s rights movement. They viewed the movement as a coalition of local and state actions. No formal organization devoted specifically to women’s rights emerged until 1869.

Activists held a national women’s rights convention every year except one until 1860. After Syracuse, these meetings were held in cities outside central New York. But central New Yorkers continued to play key roles in all of them. Most of these conventions opened with a review of the history of the women’s rights movement. Six of them referred specially to Seneca Falls as the movement’s beginning.

In 1853, 1500 people met in the fourth national women’s rights convention in Melodean Hall, Cleveland, Ohio. As in Syracuse, they began with a history of the women’s movement, starting at Seneca Falls. Lucretia Mott, seconded by Ernestine Rose, suggested that the convention adopt the Declaration of Sentiments “a fitting honor to her who initiated these movements in behalf of woman in our country, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, of Seneca Falls.” William Lloyd Garrison argued that “the Declaration of Independence as put forth at Seneca Falls. ... was measuring the people of this country by their own standard. It was taking their own words and applying their own principles to women, as they have been applied to men.” Delegates sent the Seneca Falls Declaration, along with a newly-prepared one, to the central committee, but they took no action.

Meeting in Philadelphia on October 18-20, 1854, the convention elected Ernestine Rose as president. People who had played key roles in the Seneca Falls convention continued in leadership positions, including Lucretia and James Mott, Martha Wright, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The convention re-affirmed the 1852 decision not to create a national organization but to continue under

83 Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, . . . 1852, 8, 76.
84 Proceedings of the National Women’s Rights Convention, Held at Cleveland, Ohio, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1853 (Cleveland, Ohio: Gray, Beardsley, Spear and Co., 1854), 188.
the guidance of a central committee to coordinate work at local and state levels. Stanton was part of a committee to publish tracts and newspaper articles.

Martha Wright presided over the convention in Nixon’s Hall, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 17-18, in 1855, comparing progress of women’s rights nationally since the Seneca Falls conventions.

In 1856, the convention met at Broadway at Broadway Tabernacle in New York City. Lucy Stone presided. Martha Wright took minutes. James and Lucretia Mott served as officers. The convention was pleased to learn that nine states had already passed women’s property laws, and that Kentucky allowed widows to vote in school elections. Noting that states, rather than the federal government, controlled suffrage, Antoinette Brown Blackwell asked the convention, “Would it not be wholly appropriate, then, for this National Convention to demand the right of suffrage for her from the Legislature of each State in the Nation? We can not petition the General Government on this point.” The convention agreed. 85

They held no convention in 1857. Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Antoinette Brown Blackwell were all pregnant, and Anthony, frustrated, could find no one to help organize it.

In 1858, the women’s rights convention met at Mozart Hall in New York City. For the first time, they met in conjunction with the May meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Susan B. Anthony presided; Martha Wright was secretary. Anthony opened the meeting by emphasizing the congruence between abolitionism and women’s rights. The object of the anti-slavery convention was to show that “the color of the skin made no difference to that principle [of equal rights],” while the women’s rights convention was organized “to tell people that sex does not rob human beings of their inalienable rights.” In 1859, the convention again met at Mozart Hall in New York City. This time, Lucretia Mott presided. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martha Wright, and seven others signed an appeal, asking legislatures in each state to guarantee women rights to a jury trial of women, to vote (if taxed), to keep her own wages, as well as the right to “person, property, children, and home.” 86

Meeting at Cooper Union in New York City in May 1860, the six to eight hundred-person convention chose the Martha Wright as president. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, finally recovered after the birth of her seventh and last child, served on the executive committee. Susan B. Anthony also took a leading role. Five of the six members of this committee came from central New York (including Stanton, Anthony, Martha Wright, Mary Hallowell, and Samuel J. May). Four of these five had also attended the Seneca Falls convention. Stanton, along with Antoinette Brown Blackwell, proposed a resolution approving divorce for women with husbands who deserted them, abused them, or suffered from alcoholism or insanity. "Can a woman be said to have a right to life, if all means of self-protection are denied her?" Stanton challenged. “Can she be said to have a right to liberty, when another citizen may have the legal custody of her person … Can any citizen be said to have the right to the pursuit of happiness, whose inalienable rights are denied; who is

85 Antoinette Brown Blackwell to Seventh National Women’s Rights Convention, November 25, 1856, History of Woman Suffrage, I.
disenfranchised from all the privileges of citizenship…?" The topic of divorce would divide Stanton from many reformers, including Wendell Phillips, then president of the American Anti-Slavery Society. 87

In terms of issues and strategies, New York State’s own women’s rights society followed closely in step with suggestions from these national conventions to lobby state legislatures. The New York State Woman Suffrage Association adopted a system of two annual meetings, one in Albany, when the legislature was in session, to allow women to lobby, and the second in Saratoga Springs in August, to attract southern women who came with their families for the racing season.

In 1853, William Henry Channing, Unitarian minister in Rochester, New York, proposed to the fourth national women’s rights convention, meeting in Cleveland, that women’s rights advocates petition state legislatures, asking for equality for women in suffrage, inheritance laws, guardianship of children, divorce, taxation, and jury trials. In the fall and winter of 1853-54, Susan B. Anthony followed this suggestion. Through snow and cold, she traveled through sixty of New York State’s sixty-two counties, getting 10,000 signatures on petitions for the right of married women to keep their own wages, to keep guardianship of their children in case of divorce, and to vote. 88

For the Albany meeting of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association on February 14-15, 1854, Stanton prepared a speech directed to the New York State legislature, presenting these petitions. “We demand the full recognition of all our rights as citizens of the Empire State,” Stanton asserted. “We are persons; native, free-born citizens; property-holders, tax-payers; yet we are denied the exercise of our right to the elective franchise. . . . Now, gentlemen, we would fain know by what authority you have disfranchised one-half the people of this state?” The Albany convention endorsed this speech and placed copies of it on the desk of every state legislator. Legislators did nothing. 89

In 1860, some of this work finally paid off, however. The legislature passed a second married women’s property act, giving women joint custody of their children in case of separation or divorce and allowing women to control both personal property and wages (in addition to real property, covered in the 1848 legislation). This was the high point of legislative victories before the Civil War. And just two years later, the legislature rescinded this act. Anthony was "sick at heart," but by that time, the Civil War overshadowed any effective resistance. 90

87 Proceedings of the Tenth National Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at the Cooper Institute, New York City, May 10th and 11th, 1860 (Boston: Yerrington & Garrison, 1860), 6–7.
Central New York: A Supportive Region for Suffrage

During the 1850s, women’s rights advocates found allies in other major movements and institutions. As historian Robyn Muncy noted, “American women’s struggle for the vote, a profoundly important chapter in the story of American democracy, did not unfold as an independent plot. Instead, the woman suffrage movement emerged from and was continually fed by other social movements and political causes. . . .The suffrage movement owed its existence and much of its gradually increasing strength to other reform movements.” In antebellum central New York, movements for African American rights, political abolitionism, temperance, dress reform, religion, and education all reflected growing sentiment for women’s rights, including women’s suffrage. In turn, all fed their own energies into the growing women’s rights movement.  

By the late 1840s, key African American leaders took public stands for the rights of women. Meeting in Cleveland in September 1848, the National Convention of Colored Freedmen voted affirmatively on a resolution offered by Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany: “We fully believe in the equality of the sexes, therefore, Resolved, That we hereby invite females hereafter to take part in our deliberations.” Douglass may have been influenced by his attendance at the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention two months earlier. But, as Martha Jones suggested, African American women had assumed public roles within churches and community groups since the 1830s. By the 1840s, “female influence was giving way to women’s rights,” and the Cleveland convention looked “typical rather than novel.”

African American men asserted the rights of women in many public venues. William C. Nell, who lived with the Post family while he worked with Douglass on The North Star, attended the August 1848 women’s rights convention in Rochester and continued to advocate for women’s rights after he moved to Boston, where he worked with The Liberator and promoted education for African Americans. Jeremiah B. Sanderson, friend of Amy Post, advocated women’s rights while he was in Rochester, before he moved to California to become editor of an African American newspaper. When the Colored National Convention met in Rochester in 1853, Frederick Douglass, sponsored the only woman delegate, Mary Jeffrey from Syracuse. In 1854, AME Zion minister Rev. Jermain Loguen, known in Syracuse as the “king of the Underground Railroad,” gave a speech at the New York State Council of Colored People on “Woman’s Rights.” Junius C. Morel, principal of a school in Weeksville, New York, praised this speech, saying “Human rights were not to be defined either by sex or by complexion.” But William Rich, convention chair ruled that the whole question of women’s rights was “irrelevant.” Also in 1854, Rev. Loguen was elected vice-president of the New

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92 Martha Jones, All Bound Up Together, 59-61.
York State Woman’s Rights convention meeting in Rochester. And one-third of the delegates who meet in Cleveland that year to discuss emigration were women. 93

African American women also took leadership roles in women’s rights conventions outside New York State before the Civil War. Christine Ridarsky has noted that two daughters of James and Charlotte Forten (Margaretta Forten and Harriet Forten Purvis) helped organize the fifth National Women’s Rights Convention in Philadelphia in 1854, for example, and Sojourner Truth gave her famous “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech at the women’s rights convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. Forten, Purvis, and Truth would continue their women’s rights activity after the Civil War, when they were joined by many more women of color. So far, however, we have no record of women of color as leaders in women’s rights conventions within New York State. 94

At the same time, two major African American women leaders had roots in upstate New York. Sojourner Truth, born in Ulster County, New York, began her lifelong career as a spiritual leader, abolitionist, women’s rights activist, and traveling lecturer when she left slavery in 1826. She published her autobiography in 1850. In 1864, she began to sell her famous carte de visite when she gave her lectures. “I sell the shadow to support the substance,” the caption read. 95

Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1849 and purchased land in Auburn, New York, from William Henry Seward and Frances Seward in 1859. In 1860, Tubman brought her last group of freedom seekers through Auburn, aided by Martha Wright and others. 96

Finally, Louisa Jacobs, born in slavery in Edenton, North Carolina, and brought North by her European American father, became a lecturer with the American Equal Rights Association after the Civil War. Louisa’s mother Harriet Jacobs had escaped on the Underground Railroad to become part of the circle of abolitionists, including Amy Post and Frederick Douglass, in Rochester. She ran the anti-slavery reading room and published her autobiography, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, in 1861.

Political abolitionists, too, began to welcome women. While the Liberty League and Gerrit Smith had officially endorsed women’s voting rights in June 1848, the Liberty Party had not taken the same stance. At the third national women’s rights held in Syracuse in 1852, the Liberty Party for the first time aligned itself with women’s rights. Buffalonian G.W. Johnson sent $10 toward the cause with a

Along with political parties, other mainline institutions began to debate ideas of women’s rights. Religious organizations were particularly important. Groups that supported the idea of women as religious leaders tended to be on the fringes of mainstream Protestant groups. When Antoinette Brown was ordained as a Congregational minister in South Butler, New York, in 1853, the ceremony took place in the Baptist Church across the street, Rev. Luther Lee, a Wesleyan Methodist minister, officiated, and nationally-known reformer Gerrit Smith, then serving in Congress, spoke at the service. In 1841, this South Butler church had been the first European American-dominated congregation in the nation to call a freedom seeker, Samuel R. Ward, as its pastor. Both the Congregational Church (now a home) and the home where Brown boarded still stand, as does Brown’s childhood home in Henrietta. 

One of the most important but least known spiritual gatherings to embrace women’s rights were the Congregational Friends (called Friends of Human Progress or Progressive Friends, after 1854). Organized at Farmington in October 1848 (where Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave the main speech), they met annually from 1849-1887 at Junius Meetinghouse near Waterloo, New York. Published minutes exist sporadically from 1848 to 1884. In the 1850s, Elizabeth Cady Stanton regularly attended meetings of the Congregational Friends. They became her spiritual home, and she often gave speeches or proposed resolutions relating to women’s rights. In 1850, she helped prepare (and likely was the principal author) of “An Address to the Women of the State of New York.” In 1857, she gave a paper on marriage, and in 1858, she proposed a resolution on marriage. In these meetings, Stanton honed her arguments in favor of divorce, which she would introduce at the national women’s rights convention in New York City in 1860. In 1852, Stanton wrote to Martha Wright that she considered herself a member of the Congregational Friends.

By the early 1850s, temperance, too, had become a powerful grassroots movement. On April 20-21, 1852, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others formed a statewide Women’s State Temperance Society in Rochester. Over five hundred women attended this meeting. They collected 28,000 signatures on a petition to New York State legislature. Three people (Anthony, Gerrit Smith, and Amelia Bloomer) went as delegates to the New York State Temperance Society (all men) in Syracuse on July 17, 1852. When the men’s society refused to allow women to speak, the women adjourned to the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, where Anthony gave a talk, published in The Lily, July 1852.

97 Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, . . . 1852, 8, 76.
The statewide women’s temperance society met again at the Wesleyan Chapel on October 14, 1852. This temperance convention intersected with movements for African American rights and women’s rights. Issues of divorce, religion, and women’s suffrage intertwined with temperance. The convention welcomed men as well as women, African Americans as well as European Americans. Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Amelia Bloomer played key roles. So did several African Americans. William G. Allen, a professor of classics at New York Central College in McGraw, gave a speech. J.R. Johnson, an African American anti-slavery agent from Syracuse, sent a letter. E.W. Capron and George W. Pryor, both signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, also participated.

A so-called World’s Temperance Convention met sporadically in Great Britain and the U.S. during the 1840s and 1850s. In May 1853, a meeting to organize the fall convention met in New York City. When two women tried to speak, the chair shut them down, saying that “he would never sanction ladies leaving their legitimate position in society.” When the whole convention met in September, central New York women were ready. Antoinette Brown, Susan B. Anthony, and others organized a competing “Whole World’s Temperance Convention,” dubbing men’s convention only a half world’s convention. That convention, attracting both women and men, became virtually a women’s rights convention.

A persistent goal of these reformers was to create educational institutions that reflected values of equality. In the 1830s, Beriah Green’s Oneida Institute had enrolled both black and white male students. And Alfred Academy welcomed women as well as men of both races. In 1849, the American Baptist Free Mission Society organized New York Central College in McGrawville (now McGraw), New York. Faculty and students included both African Americans and European Americans. Black faculty included Charles L. Reason, George Boyer Vashon (first Black lawyer to practice in New York State) and William G. Allen. Allen had been born in Virginia of mixed-race parents. He attended Beriah Green’s Oneida Institute, which accepted male students of all races and helped them pay their expenses through work on the farm. He worked for a time as an abolitionist editor in Troy, New York, before moving to Boston as an anti-slavery lecturer. In 1849, he was hired as a professor of Greek and classical literature at New York Central College.

Students of all races and both sexes attended New York Central College. Mary and Emily Edmondson, who had tried to escape from slavery in Washington, D.C., in April 1848 on the Pearl, attended this college. So did Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, brought in slavery from West Africa to Brazil. He escaped, came to New York in 1847, and became a student at New York Central College.

100 Frederick Douglass Paper, October 29, 1852.
So did Mary King, daughter of a minister in Fulton, New York. She and Professor Allen fell in love, married against her family’s wishes, and lived the rest of their lives in England. 103n

Main College Building, New York Central College, McGrawville, New York, 1850

New York Central College lasted only until 1860. Another co-educational college organized in the 1850s, however, still exists. St. Lawrence University began in 1856 as a preparatory department for a Universalist theological seminary. In 1866, J.S. Lee, Principal of the Collegiate Department of St. Lawrence, reported to Susan B. Anthony that “we receive ladies and gentlemen on the same terms and conditions; take them together into the recitation-room, where they recite side by side; require them to pursue the same course of study; and, when satisfactorily completed, give them degrees of the same rank and honor.” Olympia Brown attended St. Lawrence before her ordination in 1863 at Malone, New York, as the first officially ordained Universalist woman minister. Brown devoted her life both to religion and to women’s suffrage. She was one of the few first-generation suffragists to survive long enough to vote. She died in 1926, aged 91.104

In 1848, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to receive an official degree in medicine. She graduated from Geneva Medical College, along with Peter Wilson (Cayuga), the first Native American to receive a medical degree. Geneva Medical College, organized in 1834, became part of the Central Medical College of Syracuse. Dr. Mary Walker from Oswego graduated from this college in 1855. Other early women doctors from central New York included Sarah R. A. Dolley, Rochester; Anna H. Searing, Sherwood; Fannie F. Hamilton, Rochester; Amanda B. Sanford, Auburn; Eveline P. Ballintine, Le Roy; and Rachel E. Gleason, Elmira. After a brief move to

103 Mary Kay Ricks, Escape on the Pearl: Passage to Freedom from Washington, D.C. (William Morrow, 2007); The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America (Detroit: George E. Pomeroy, 1854), https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/baquaqua/baquaqua.html.
104 J.S. Lee to Susan B. Anthony, May 4, 1866, History of Woman Suffrage, II: 909.
Rochester, the Central Medical College became part of the co-educational Syracuse University’s medical school in 1871. Sarah Loguen, daughter of Rev. Jermain Loguen and Caroline Storum Loguen, who kept the main Underground Railroad station in Syracuse in the 1850s, graduated from this school in 1876, the second African American woman in New York State to earn a medical degree. In 1855, Elmira College also opened as a school for women. Today, Elmira College is co-educational, known world-wide for its Mark Twain conferences, organized around Mark Twain’s original study.

Other New York State colleges also organized as separate women’s institutions. When Vassar opened as a women’s college in 1868, it modelled its program on that of Elmira College. Although Vassar’s administration maintained a lengthy opposition to suffrage groups on campus, students such as Harriet Stanton Blatch and Inez Milholland became major suffrage leaders.

Other institutions of higher education followed a co-educational model. In 1863, Edward Austin Sheldon opened the Oswego Primary Teachers’ Training School. This became the Oswego Normal School, then the Oswego State Teachers’ College in 1942, and finally, in 1948, one of the charter members of the State University of New York. Other Normal Schools in central New York, including Brockport, Cortland, and Oneonta, followed the same pattern, and many of their students and teachers supported women’s suffrage.

One of the most significant co-educational institutions in central New York was Cornell University, chartered in 1865 and opened in 1868. Influenced by his friend Samuel J. May (and perhaps by his Quaker wife Helen Magill, the first woman to wind a Ph.D. in the U.S., also), Andrew Dickson White, Cornell’s first president, was committed to educating women as well as men. Important suffragists such as Isabel Howland, Harriet May Mills, and Nora Stanton Blatch were all Cornell graduates.

New York City, too, reflected efforts for women’s education. In 1854, Peter Cooper established Cooper Union, where both girls and boys had free access to classes and library. Catharine Beecher founded the American Women’s Educational Association. The Ladies Art Association of New York was organized in 1867.

Dress reform occupied the attention of women’s rights advocates from the late 1840s until the 20th century. Dress reform emerged as part of a larger concern with women’s health. Reformers often embraced water cures, exercise, Grahamite diets, homeopathy, and increased knowledge about women’s bodies, along with more comfortable dress. Elizabeth Smith Miller introduced what she called “the short dress” to her cousin Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the late 1840s. When Amelia Bloomer included a drawing of the short dress in The Lily, the temperance and women’s rights newspaper she published in Seneca Falls, people began to call this dress the Bloomer costume.

106 Morris Bishop, A History of Cornell; Carol Kammen, Glorious to View; Carl Becker, Cornell: Founders and the Founding.
107 History of Woman Suffrage, III: 399-401.
Water cure spas began in central New York in the 1840s and were closely associated with dress reform and women’s rights. Glen Haven, in Cayuga County, for example, hosted a dress reform convention that Stanton attended in 1852. James Caleb Jackson, his wife Lucretia Brewster Chaplin, and later William Chaplin and Theodosia Gilbert Chaplin, operated Glen Haven as a water cure on the south end of Skaneateles Lake, Cayuga County. Once an anti-slavery agent, Jackson invented the breakfast cereal he called granula. Jackson had once edited the abolitionist newspaper, The Albany Patriot, as had William Chaplin. Jackson, then moved to Dansville, where they kept “Our Home on the Hillside.” When the main 1854 building burned in 1882, they re-built an “absolutely Fire-Proof” structure of brick and iron. Although the sanitorium went bankrupt in 1914, it re-opened until 1971. In 2008, New York State appropriated $2.5 to restore the building. Clara Barton stayed here often when she was working setting up and managing the American Red Cross, as well as working on national suffrage activities.

Health enthusiasts, many of them women, built water cures elsewhere in central New York, also, including at Castile, Clifton Springs, Dryden, Elmira, Ithaca, and Wyoming, New York. In Castile, Dr. Cordelia Greene, first student to receive a medical degree from the Women’s Medical College of Philadelphia and a strong suffragist, kept the Castile Sanitarium until her death in 1905. Dr. Samantha Nivison, also a graduate of the Women’s Medical College of Philadelphia, set up a water first in Dryden and then in Ithaca. She established Cascadilla Place in Ithaca (now Cascadilla Hall of Cornell University) as a water cure and a college to train women as doctors and nurses.

Karen J. Kriebl has argued that dress reform was “an evolution rather than a revolution.” And these water cures continued to be popular with women’s rights advocates and supporters of natural health remedies until the mid-20th century. Jackson Sanatorium in Dansville, New York, for example, constructed a huge building in 1883, abandoned in 1971.


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Class and Ethnic Diversity in Central New York Suffrage

Class and ethnic diversity in the suffrage movement before the Civil War was most notable at national suffrage conventions in New York City. But class and working-women’s issues ran like a silver thread through the whole movement, in upstate as well as downstate, before and after the Civil War.

European-born immigrants often brought with them a vision of class as well as gender equality. Fanny Wright and Ernestine Rose are two early examples. Rose worked from 1836 on and often spoke in conjunction with Stanton and Anthony. In 1851, she shared her vision of universal suffrage: “We are not contending for the rights of women in New England, or of old England, but of the world.” After the failure of the 1848 revolution in Germany, many German immigrants came to the U.S., sharing socialist as well as women’s rights ideals. Several took up the cause of suffrage, including Mathilde Anneke, who published a German-language newspaper, the Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung.111

Issues of working women were a major topic at the Rochester women’s rights convention in August 1848. Mrs. Roberts was tasked with setting up a committee to investigate working women in Rochester. The late Blake McKelvey, Rochester city historian, identified her as Ruth Roberts, widow of the publisher of The Rochester Craftsman, which had promoted Fanny Wright’s ideas about the rights of working people. After the convention, Mrs. Roberts set up an organization called the Women’s Protection Union.112

In 1853, Anthony organized women teachers to ask for equal pay and professional status. That same year, she organized a group of seamstresses. One of her main demands in her tours of New York State in the winter of 1853-54 was that working women be allowed to keep their own wages and personal effects, a demand enacted into New York State law in 1860 but rescinded in 1862.113

Speaking for the American Equal Rights Association on behalf of universal suffrage in 1867, Anthony traveled to Cohoes. There she spoke to two hundred factory women. She “showed them,” she reported, “how speedily they could compel their employers to conceded to them the 10 hour system—to say nothing of the 8—and also equal place & pay—the moment they should hold the allot in their hands—the Working Women are the point and power of the ballot and respond most heartily to our demand for it—.”114

After the Civil War, Anthony and Stanton hired women as printers for the Revolution. When Anthony organized the Workingwomen’s Central Association, they elected her president.115

113 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 51-52.
114 Anthony to Anna E. Dickinson, February 18, 1867, History of Woman Suffrage, II: 20.
Women’s Suffrage during the Civil War

On April 15, 1861, the Civil War officially began when Confederate troops fired on Ft. Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. The world changed forever for Americans of all races and both sexes, North and South. The war brought an end to annual women’s rights conventions. Some women turned their attention to support for soldiers, organizing the national U.S. Sanitary Commission in the North. Some volunteered as nurses. Many put their energies into basic survival on farms, plantations, and factories when male relatives who left to fight.

Stanton and Anthony, however, saw an opportunity to help transform the Civil War into a war against slavery and, at the same time, to make women’s voices count politically. On May 14, 1863, in Room 20 of the Cooper Institute, New York City, they organized the Women’s Loyal National League. The League adopted an address to soldiers by Angelina Grimke Weld, a platform, and a plan of action. Stanton at first declined the presidency, saying that “many might object to her on account of what they called her isms, her radical Anti-Slavery and Woman’s Rights, her demand for liberty and equality for women and negroes.” Anthony declined to be secretary because she could not pledge “unconditional loyalty to the Government, until the Government was pledged to unconditional Loyalty for freedom.” Both eventually took these offices.

Anthony offered the text of a pledge: “We, the undersigned women of the nation, do hereby pledge ourselves loyal to justice and humanity, and to the Government in so far as it makes the war a war for freedom.” They also adopted wording for a women’s petition, with a similar one for men:

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States: The undersigned, women of the United States, above the age of eighteen years, earnestly pray that your honorable body will pass, at the earliest practicable day, an act emancipating all persons of African descent held to involuntary service or labor in the United States.”

Newspapers called this a “mammoth petition.” And it was. The Women’s Loyal National League collected almost 400,000 names on this petition (although they had hoped to get one million signatures). Their work lent support to Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, effective on January 1, 1863. And it led directly to passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, making slavery illegal throughout the U.S. As Susan Goodier noted, support for the end of slavery was a major political act, and “women’s rights activists expected to be rewarded for their efforts with full citizenship rights, which they believed should include the right to vote.”

Women’s Suffrage after the Civil War: American Equal Rights Association

Buoyed by the end of the Civil War, the second American revolution, and the promise of including women in America’s founding ideals of equal rights, women’s rights activists held their eleventh

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116 History of Woman Suffrage, II: 888-899.
annual convention on May 10, 1866, in the Church of the Puritans in New York City. The next three years were a heady time for suffragists, the closest they would come to full suffrage before 1919.

Caroline Dall presented a report to the eleventh convention, summarizing changes in women’s position since the 1850s. The Civil War, she argued, led to increased respect for women.

Nothing ever had done, nothing ever will do again, so great a service to woman in so short a time, as this dreadful war out of which we are so slowly emerging. Respect for woman came only with the absolute need of her, and so many women of distinguished ability made themselves of service to the Government, that . . . with us, her name was legion.  

Dall reported on the status of women in education, the pulpit, labor (“reports on the general question will not read very differently from those published ten years ago”), the law, suffrage, and progress around the world. The convention received letters from sympathizers all across the Northeast and Midwest, including one from Charles C.D. Mills of Syracuse, whose daughter Harriet May Mills would become a major leader of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association in the late nineteenth century. Financial supporters included Gerrit and Nancy Smith from Peterboro, Martha Wright from Auburn, Wright’s daughter Eliza Wright Osborn from Auburn, African American Charles Lenox Remond, who had traversed central New York as an anti-slavery lecturer, James and Lucretia Mott, Samuel J. May and Joseph Savage from Syracuse, James C. Jackson from Dansville, and Matilda Joslyn Gage from Fayetteville.  

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, an African American woman from Baltimore and a graduate of Oberlin College, gave a powerful no-nonsense speech:

I say then that justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law. We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. . . . You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs. . . . I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America."  

The May 1866 convention formed an entirely new organization, the American Equal Rights Association. On May 31, the AERA held its first independent convention in Boston. In a speech at an Equal Rights Convention at Cooper Institute on December 6, 1866, Anthony outlined the AERA’s purpose: to remind “the American nation that women form a part of the people” and to secure “an amendment to the Constitution, which shall allow the right of equal suffrage to all, men and women.” “We believe,” she said, “that this is the hour to establish the equality of every


individual who is subject to the government of the United States—not the hour for the races, but the hour for human beings to be established in equality.” The convention adopted a series of resolutions.

Resolved, That, in a representative government, professedly based upon consent, every citizen, man or woman, white or black, being of mature age and sound mind, and not legally convicted of crime, is rightfully entitled to a vote; and, in behalf of the disfranchised majority of the American people, we demand that they may be allowed to participate in State and National elections.”

Suffragists felt special urgency because in June 1866, after considering seventy different drafts, Congress sent a Fourteenth Amendment to the states for ratification. Intended to guarantee the right to citizenship of formerly enslaved people, the Amendment included a clause defined citizens: “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” Although it guaranteed equal rights under the law for all citizens, it also added, for the first time, the word “male” to the Constitution, limiting congressional representation from southern states that tried to exclude formerly enslaved men from citizenship rights.

Anthony expressed the fury of women’s rights advocates at this “cruel injustice to the women of this nation,” “a desecration of the last will and testament of the Fathers, a violation of the spirit of republicanism, and cruel injustice to the women of this nation.” She also advocated a plan for “one grand, distinctive, national idea—Universal Suffrage.” We will “bury the black man and the woman,” said Stanton, “in the citizen.”

In 1867, the AERA held its annual convention at the Church of the Puritans. Stanton, Anthony, and Rev. Samuel J. May from Syracuse took leading roles. Robert Purvis chaired the opening session, giving President Lucretia Mott a rest. Sojourner Truth spoke twice.

Stanton and Anthony, as citizens of New York State, had an urgent opportunity to promote universal suffrage. A state constitutional convention was to meet in June 1867, and advocates of universal suffrage intended to bring the issue to the forefront. Anthony announced a plan. “We


123 Proceedings of the first anniversary of the American equal rights association, held at the Church of the Puritans, New York, May 9 and 10, 1867. Phonographic report by H.M. Parkhurst, pdf online from Library of Congress.

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mean to visit every county with conventions and tracts,” she announced in December, “also to
circulate a petition to go up to the Constitutional Convention urging our demands.” 124

They began immediately. On December 11-12, they held a meeting in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, that
attracted as many as six hundred people, including working women, who received free passes. Speakers
included Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Charles Lenox Remond. On December 14,
they held a meeting in Wieting Hall in Syracuse. On December 23, Stanton lectured in Penn Yan. They
met in Auburn on January 7, 1867, Rome on February 11, Herkimer on February 12, Amsterdam/Cohoes on February 14, Schenectady on February 15, Troy on February 18, and
Brooklyn on February 19. On March 22, Anthony was scheduled to speak at Sayles’ Hall in
Canajoharie. On March 25, both Stanton and Anthony spoke at Diefendorf Hall (still standing) in
Fort Plain. Anthony reported that Stanton “really is doing wonderfully well—when you remember
how very little practice she has had...” 125

Notably, this was a bi-racial effort, involving women and men of both European American and
African descent. Parker Pillsbury, Rev. Olympia Brown, and Bessie Bisbee, all European Americans,
joined Stanton and Anthony. So did Charles Lenox Remond, a dynamic African American anti-
slavery lecturer, and Louisa Jacobs, born in slavery in Edenton, North Carolina. Anthony wrote in
February that “she is everything proper & right in matter and manner.” Stanton hoped that
Douglass himself would join her in speaking to the New York State legislature in January, but he did
not do so. 126

125 Dates come from Selected Papers, II:6-10 and from Canajoharie Radii, March 14, 1867, Utica Daily Observer, February
6,1866, and Laura E. Free, “‘To Bury the Black Man and the Woman in the Citizen’: The American Equal Rights
Association and the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1867,” In Ridarsky and Huth, Susan B. Anthony and the
Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820-1880 (Canajoharies: Montgomery
County Historian’s Office, 2011); Susan B. Anthony to Anna Dickinson, March 24, 1867, in Selected Papers of Elizabeth
2000), 45-47.
126 Anthony to Amy Kirby Post, February 17, 1867, History of Woman Suffrage, II:16; Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Frederick
Douglass, January 8, 1867, Selected Letters, II: 11-12; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Address in Favor of Universal Suffrage...;
January 23, 1867, fn, History of Woman Suffrage, II:18-19; published in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, February 2, 1867,
History of Woman Suffrage, II:14.
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Their message was clear. They tied the cause of universal suffrage directly to American revolutionary ideals. Anthony argued, for example:

At the close of a second revolution [the Civil War], it will be wise for us not to perpetrate the same blunder into which our fathers fell at the close of the old Revolution. They fought for the principle that all mankind are entitled to equal rights, and that just governments derive their power from the consent of the governed, and yet they founded a government denying to certain subjects their rights, and fixing laws for their control to which they had not consented. 127

Stanton declared that “the essential element of government is equality; an idea that came not to bring peace on earth but a sword; an idea at war with its antagonist, caste or class; from the beginning, one ceaseless protest of the human soul against all authority and oppression, against all inequalities of rank, against despotisms, and monarchies and slaveholding Republics.” 128

Advocates of universal suffrage found energy from giving all of these speeches. Positive responses from central New York raised their hopes. The Penn Yan Chronicle, reported, for example, that “the influence of women will be as salutary, as constitutional and as legitimate at the polls as at the fireside.” 129

The New York State constitutional convention met in Albany from June 4-September 23, 1867, and November 12, 1867-February 1868. Suffrage was one of the first items on their agenda. George William Curtis, a delegate from Richmond County, submitted the first suffrage petition on June 19. When Horace Greeley, influential editor of the New York Tribune, was appointed chair of the suffrage committee, women rejoiced. They were heartened when Greeley granted them a hearing before the committee. Stanton, however, could not resist sarcasm. When asked whether women would be willing to serve in the military if they had the vote, Stanton replied, “Yes, we are willing to fight, sir, just as you did in the late war, by sending our substitutes.” The committee was not impressed. Their report endorsed manhood suffrage, irrespective of race, but refused to support women’s suffrage as too radical.

Again, Stanton and her allies could not resist a jab at Greeley himself. On July 16, George William Curtis submitted another petition, this one signed by “Mrs. Horace Greeley and other citizens of Westchester County, asking for equal suffrage for men and women.” As Laura Free noted, “Stanton and Anthony (through Curtis) were effectively challenging the suffrage committee’s manhood. Unlike their challenge to the link between manhood and military service, this was decidedly personal.”

Two days later, on July 18, Curtis proposed an amendment to the suffrage provision in New York State’s constitution, omitting the word “male.” The battle was on. What side delegates from central New York took on this question remains to be studied. But the result was a resounding defeat for

universal suffrage. The final vote Curtis's amendment on July 25 was 19 ayes to 125 nays. Voters in New York State rejected this constitution in 1869. Stanton, Anthony, along with Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, took their arguments for universal suffrage to Kansas in 1867, with the same result. African American men in New York State would not vote equally with European American men until passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870.  

Meanwhile, women took matters into their own hands. In a strategy that came to be known as the “New Departure,” they took literally the definition of citizenship and the equal protection clause of Section I of the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified on July 9, 1868:

> All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Arguing that voting was one of the privileges and immunities of U.S. citizens, hundreds of women—both African American and European American—went to the polls in villages and cities all over the country. Sojourner Truth was one of them. The earliest documented case in New York State was in Schenectady, where tax-paying women voted on a waterworks proposal in May 1868. Other towns in New York State where women tried to vote included Brooklyn, Fayetteville, Ithaca, Mt. Vernon, Newport, New York City, Nyack, Oswego, and Rochester. Some women, when they were refused voter registration, voted anyway, using their own separate ballot boxes. This happened in Fayetteville, New York, in November 1868, when Matilda Joslyn Gage and 171 other women, both African American and European American, tried to vote.  

Supporters of universal suffrage also shifted the struggle directly to Congress. In December 1868, George W. Julian, Quaker-born Indiana Republican, submitted the following resolution to the House of Representatives:

> The right of suffrage in the United States shall be based on citizenship, and shall be regulated by Congress, and all citizens of the United States, whether native or naturalized, shall enjoy this right equally, without any distinction or discrimination whatever founded on race, color, or sex.

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130 The account of this debate in the 1867 constitutional convention follows Laura Free.

131 Amendment XIV, Section I.


Congress rejected the idea. Instead, they passed the Fifteenth Amendment, granting voting rights to all men, regardless of color: “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.”

On January 19, 1869, women’s rights advocates held the twelfth national women’s rights convention in Washington, D.C. This was to be the very last women’s rights convention before formation of national suffrage associations. Sixty delegates elected Lucretia Mott as president, with Martha Wright, Robert Purvis, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton among the vice-presidents. This was the first convention for Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, from Oswego, New York. For her service as a doctor in the Civil War, Walker became the first women to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. As part of her women’s rights testimony, she began to dress as a man, adopting trousers and topcoat. She and a Mrs. Harmon, “dressed in male attire, were quite active in passing back and forth from the audience-room to the stage,” reported the *New York Times*. Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave her famous speech on the “aristocracy of sex.”

In New York City, the American Equal Rights Association also held its last convention. Bitter debate over the Fifteenth Amendment split former allies. Frederick Douglass, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Lucy Stone, and Henry Blackwell argued that radical Republicans were ready to enfranchise formerly enslaved men but not women. They agreed with Wendall Phillips, that it was the “Negro’s hour.” Stanton and Anthony felt betrayed. Their main chance for universal suffrage, including voting rights for women, was about to be demolished.

Stanton and Anthony struck back. First, they took financial support from a Democratic racist crank named George Francis Train. Train opposed values of racial equality that Stanton and Anthony had espoused all their lives. But he supported women’s suffrage, and he was willing to give money to finance a newspaper, *The Revolution*, which Stanton and Anthony published from 1868-1870. Its motto? “Justice, Not Favors. Men, their Rights and Nothing More; Women, Their Rights and Nothing Less.” “Some denounced it, some ridiculed it, but all read it,” noted the *History of Woman Suffrage*.

After the last AERA meeting, regular women’s rights conventions were gone, transformed into the first women’s suffrage associations. Stanton and Anthony organized the National Woman Suffrage Association, committed to universal suffrage, opposed to the Fifteenth Amendment, and dedicated to a federal women’s suffrage amendment. In March 1869, George W. Julian introduced what they hoped would be the Sixteenth Amendment. His wording followed the earlier universal suffrage

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resolution, but it mentioned only no distinction based on sex, omitting race and color. Congress took no action.  

Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, Julia Ward Howe, Ellen Watkins Harper, and others organized the American Woman Suffrage Association, dedicated to promoting state-by-state action on suffrage. Beginning in 1870, they also published *The Woman’s Journal*, the longest-lived suffrage newspaper. Some African American women, such as Sojourner Truth, joined the NWSA. Harriet Tubman attended at least one NWSA convention. Charlotte Forten and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper maintained an allegiance to the AWSA. For twenty-one years, these two rival organizations worked at these two different levels, sometimes supporting each other but often at odds.  

On July 13-14, 1869, women’s rights advocates in New York State held a convention at Congress Hall and Hawthorne Hall in Saratoga Springs “to effect a permanent organization for the State of New York.” “Fashionable ladies from all parts of the country” attended to listen to debates about taxation, equal pay for working women, and the effort by the New York State legislature to license prostitution in 1868.  

As Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello noted in *Votes for Women*, these suffragists included in their first minute book a rational for their existence. It focused directly on woman suffrage.  

> Whereas the denial of the right of the ballot to woman is in direct opposition to the genius of our institutions and the Declaration of Independence, which says that “all just governments derive their power from the consent of the governed,” and that taxation without representation is base injustice; therefore we the citizens of the State of New York, believing that the ballot is the legalized voice of the people [and] is the right of every law abiding citizen in the state, do associate ourselves together for the purpose of securing it to every woman of the state.  

Although they would continue to celebrate gains for women in all areas of life, their main objective as an organization was to achieve voting rights for women.  

The convention urged activists in each county to establish auxiliaries to the state society, while those in each town or village could establish local societies affiliated with the county societies. To begin this process, Matilda Joslyn Gage visited several counties in central and western New York that summer, including Wayne, Orleans, Niagara, Erie, Genesee, Chemung, Tioga, Tompkins, and

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139 History of Woman Suffrage, III:397.  
Broome. Goodier and Pastorello were not able to determine how many organizations resulted from Gage’s tour, but they did note that two women from Tompkins County (Calista Andrews from McLean and Lucy Hawley Calkins from Ithaca) attended state conventions in 1878 and 1902.  

This first convention elected Martha Wright as president, a position she held until her death in 1875. Six of the ten presidents of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association came from central New York: Martha Wright, Auburn, 1869-1875; Matilda Joslyn Gage, Fayetteville, 1875-75, 1878; Susan B. Anthony, Rochester (1876-77); Jean Brooks Greenleaf, Rochester (1890-1896); Ella Hawley Crossett, Warsaw (1902-1910), and Harriet May Mills, Syracuse (1910-1913). Martha Wright’s house has been demolished, but homes still stand for all the others.

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association allied itself almost entirely with the National Woman Suffrage Association. “Lack of cohesion . . . at the national level,” noted Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello, “allowed New York suffragists to dominate the national movement.” Other states, such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania, supported the AWSA. Still others maintained affiliates of both organizations.

The two decades following 1869 saw increasing advances for women in major areas, with new colleges, expanding work opportunities, and increased debates about women’s rights in churches, newspapers, and public arenas. But one area—women’s suffrage—saw intense organizing but resulted in little change in the status quo.

141 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 14-16, 207.
G. National and State Suffrage: Intertwined Networks, 1869-1890

Overview: The two decades after the formation of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869 saw a two-track policy. While both groups worked for suffrage for all citizens, including women, the NWSA concentrated on federal action, while the AWSA focused on state-by-state campaigns. NWSA held its annual conventions in Washington, D.C., in order to lobby Congress.

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association allied itself directly with the NWSA, and New York State suffragists carried out some of the most dramatic and nationally important suffrage actions, including Susan B. Anthony’s trial in 1873 for voting, a Declaration of Rights for Women at the 1876 centennial, a demonstration at the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in 1883, and Belva Lockwood’s run for President of the U.S. in 1884 and 1888.

Failure of a federal suffrage amendment in 1887 led to the merger of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890.

New York State Suffragists Work for National Suffrage, 1869-1887

When the American Equal Rights Association split apart in 1869 to form the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, activists in both organizations had reasons to be hopeful. The Territory of Wyoming organized in 1870 with a provision for women’s suffrage. Esther Hobart Morris, who had migrated to Wyoming from Tioga County, New York, was appointed justice of the peace, the first woman in the country to hold that office.143

In 1869, George W. Julian submitted a proposal to Congress for a Sixteenth Amendment, guaranteeing the right of women to vote. Elizabeth Cady Stanton greeted this resolution ecstatically: “March the 15th, 1869,” she wrote, “will be held memorable in all coming time as the day when the Hon. George W. Julian submitted a “Joint Resolution” to Congress to enfranchise the women of the republic.”144

Julian’s proposal went nowhere. Euphoria gave way to grassroots action. Women all across the Northeast took matters into their own hands. Beginning in 1868, hundreds of women went to the polls and voted or tried to vote. Using the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, they argued that voting rights belonged to women as well as men, since all were citizens of the U.S. In Washington, D.C., Frederick Douglass marched to the polls with dozens of women, both African American and European American. In Fayetteville, Matilda Joslyn Gage led women to the voting


Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York
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booth, where they ended up voting in a separate ballot box. Both women of color and white women did the same in Vineland, New Jersey, voting year after year in their own box. In Ithaca, New York, tax-paying women voted on waterworks. Someone even nominated Elizabeth Cady Stanton to run for office in the Third District of Brooklyn. As a resident of New Jersey, she declined.145

All of this effort for women’s suffrage took place against a backdrop of African American men voting for the first time, electing men of color as Congressmen, Senators, and state officials. To prevent such political action, former Confederates in southern states began to take vigilante action. Founded in 1865, the Ku Klux Klan had invaded every southern state by 1870. The federal government, under the control of radical Republicans, acted to protect African Americans. On April 20, 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law the Ku Klux Klan Act. This law authorized the President to use military force or “other means” in former Confederate states if they did not protect the rights of any person entitled by the Fourteenth Amendment to equal protection under the law. Central New York Congressmen such as William E. Lansing (who studied law in Utica and practiced in Chittenango and Syracuse) supported the federal government in this action.146

If the federal government was willing to implement the Fourteenth Amendment for freed people as citizens, might it not also be willing to protect the rights of women as citizens? Women were willing to test that idea in court. In central New York, Dr. Mary Walker tried to vote in Oswego, New York, but, as far as we know, she never came to trial. State courts elsewhere tried at least six test cases against women who tried to vote. All of them lost. 147

Susan B. Anthony’s trial was different. Although she lost spectacularly, she did not lose quietly. Because she was so well-known and so eloquent, her trial and her arguments reached a national audience.

On November 5, 1872, Anthony, with fourteen other women, voted “the Republican ticket—straight” in Rochester, New York. “We are in for a fine agitation in Rochester on the question,” she wrote later that day to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. And indeed they were. On November 18, 1872, a federal marshal arrested Anthony, taking her downtown on the trolley at his own expense, as she insisted he must. 148

Beginning in December 1872, Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage spoke in twenty-nine towns and villages in Monroe County. Over and over, Anthony gave her talk to receptive audiences: “Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?” In May, her trial was moved from a district court in Monroe County to

148http://www.famous-trials.com/anthony/441-voteletters;
a circuit court in neighboring Ontario County, Anthony and Gage were not deterred. Again, they spoke in twenty-one towns in Ontario County, with the same message: “Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?” Their answer was a resounding “No!” Voting was a natural right of every citizen, protected by the U.S. Constitution. “It was we, the people,” she asserted, “not we, the white male citizens, nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed this 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.”

In June 1873, Anthony appeared before Judge Ward Hunt in the courthouse (still standing) in Canandaigua, New York. Hunt was a graduate of Union College in Schenectady and a lawyer in Utica before being appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Public opinion was strongly on Anthony’s side, and in Henry Selden, she found a skillful and sympathetic lawyer. But she also faced Judge Hunt, and Hunt was determined to find Anthony guilty. Hunt came to Anthony’s trial with his mind made up, his decision already written. Hunt directed to jury to return a guilty verdict, based not on fact but on Hunt’s interpretation of the law. Voting was not inherent in citizenship rights. It was a question to be determined by the states, not by the federal government.

Before announcing his decision, Hunt asked Anthony if she had anything to say. She had plenty. In a speech that became known across the country, echoing down to our own time, Anthony stated, “Your denial of my citizen’s right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law, therefore, the denial of my sacred rights to life, liberty, property.” And she went on.

When Judge Hunt fined her $100, she responded:

May it please your honor, I shall never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty. All the stock in trade I possess is a $10,000 debt, incurred by publishing my paper—The Revolution—four years ago, the sole object of which was to educate all women to do precisely as I have done, rebel against your man-made, unjust, unconstitutional forms of law, that tax, fine, imprison and hang women, while they deny them the right of representation in the government; and I shall work on with might and main to pay every dollar of that honest debt, but not a penny shall go to this unjust claim. And I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women to the practical

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recognition of the old revolutionary maxim, that “Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.” 151

Anthony’s plan was to appeal this case to the Supreme Court. Her lawyer, however, paid her fine, and she lost the foundation for an appeal. 152

Not so Virginia Minor, who had voted in St. Louis, Missouri. Her case Minor v. Happersett came before the Supreme Court in October 1874. The Supreme Court agreed with Ward Hunt: voting was not a natural right, inherent in citizenship. Voting was controlled by states, who could define voter qualifications in whatever way they wanted. Period.

This decision led to two separate strategies. On the one hand, the NWSA began to work once more for a federal amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing women’s right to vote. George W. Julian’s proposed amendments for universal suffrage in 1868 and women’s suffrage in 1869 had died a quiet death. But women revived this plan in the 1870s. In 1871, Victoria Woodhull became the first woman to testify before a congressional committee. She spoke to the House Judiciary Committee, advocating women’s suffrage, based on the Fourteenth Amendment. Stanton, Anthony, and others were impressed, even more so when Woodhull, then working as a stockbroker on Wall Street as a protégé of Commodore Vanderbilt, declared herself a candidate for President of the U.S. No action resulted from Woodhull’s testimony, however. And her career was tainted when she reported in her newspaper, Woodhull and Claflin’s Weekly, that America’s most famous minister, Henry Ward Beecher, was having an affair with one of his parishioners, Elizabeth Tilton, wife of NWSA supporter Theodore Tilton. People all over the nation were mesmerized by the Beecher-Tilton affair, but it led many people to withdraw support from women’s suffrage. 153

After the Minor v. Happersett decision ruled that states, not the federal government, controlled suffrage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton tried once more to introduce a women’s suffrage amendment to the Constitution. On January 11, 1878, Stanton spoke before the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, asking them to approve voting rights based on citizenship, the same resolution that George W. Julian had introduced a decade earlier:

The right of suffrage in the United States shall be based on citizenship, and shall be regulated by Congress, and all citizens of the United States, whether native or naturalized, shall enjoy this right equally, without any distinction or discrimination whatever founded on sex.154

But Aaron A. Sargent, Senator from California, introduced a less radical version:

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.

Sargent’s resolution would be introduced annually into Congress for the next forty years. The Senate voted it down in 1887 and again in 1914. The House voted it down in 1915. It was finally approved as the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. 155

After Anthony lost her own case in June 1873, she warned the country about the dangers of moving away from total equality in voting rights for all citizens:

If we once establish the false principle that United States citizenship does not carry with it the right to vote in every state in this Union, there is no end to the petty freaks and cunning devices that will be resorted to exclude one and another class of citizens from suffrage.

She was right. The Supreme Court’s decision on women’s rights offered a direct rationale for restrictions on suffrage for African American men. With the official end of Reconstruction in 1877, southern states were left to impose whatever “petty freaks and cunning devices” they wished to restrict voting rights for African Americans.

Stalled in both courts and Congress, suffragists in the National Woman Suffrage Association turned in other directions: creating public events connecting women’s suffrage directly to history and America’s founding ideals, running for president, developing networks of international suffragists, and state-level action. In these efforts, they found support from interlocking networks of clubs organized for other reasons, who saw women’s voting rights as a way to implement their own goals.

In terms of publicity, leaders from New York State creatively exploited national events. In 1876, when the nation celebrated its centennial in Philadelphia, women were pointedly excluded from participation. Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and three others took direct action. On July 4, 1876, they charged the speaker’s rostrum and presented Vice-President Thomas W. Ferry with a copy of a new Declaration, the Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States. As they left, they distributed copies to the audience. “We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation,” they wrote. “We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.” 156

156 For a copy of this Declaration with text, see the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.16000300/?sp=4&st=text.
With Lucretia Mott at the head of the list, the twenty-eight signers of the Declaration included eight people with ties to central New York. Some had lived in central New York but moved away (including Sara Andrews Spencer, born in Savona, Steuben County, New York but then a resident of Washington, D.C.; Belva Lockwood, born in Royalton, Niagara County, then living in Washington, D.C.; Mary Ann M’Clintock, who had moved from Waterloo to Philadelphia; Olympia Brown, who had been ordained in Malone, New York, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who moved to New York City from Seneca Falls. Some still lived in central New York, including Susan B. Anthony and Amy Post from Rochester, and Matilda Joslyn Gage from Fayetteville. Many others came from New York City. Two women of color signed this petition, Harriet Purvis and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

In 1878, the National Woman Suffrage Association celebrated another anniversary, this one the thirtieth anniversary of the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention. Stanton reported that it was a “grand convention,” a gathering of pioneer suffragists in the Unitarian Church in Rochester. Sojourner Truth attended. So did Elizabeth Smith Miller from Geneva. Lucretia Mott spoke twice. At the end of the meeting, Frederick Douglass gave Mott an official good-bye. She took his arm, and together they walked slowly down the aisle of the church, Mott swinging her bonnet from her hand, while the audience sobbed. This was Mott’s last public appearance. She died on November 11, 1880. 157

That same year, 1878, Marietta Benchley organized a Liberal League in Ithaca. Benchley had been actively advocating women’s suffrage since at least 1870, when she published a series of four articles entitled “Why I Want to Vote” in the Woman's Journal and the Ithaca Journal. 158

In 1878, sixty-four women and fifty-six men sent a very simple petition to the New York State legislature:

To the Legislature of the State of New York. The undersigned citizens of the United States, residents of the State of New York, do ask your Honorable Body to extend the right of Suffrage to woman to the same degree and extent as it is now held by men.

The legislature took no action on the petition. 159

Two of the signers were Alfred and Laura Young, African Americans. Alfred was a glove-maker; Laura had inherited land from her uncle in Danby, Tompkins County. A decade later, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper visited Ithaca. Born free in Baltimore, Harper became an anti-slavery lecturer, poet, and suffragist, one of the founders of the American Woman Suffrage Association. She also worked as a paid agent for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. In that capacity, she spoke at the AME Zion Church on Wheat Street (now Cleveland Avenue) in Ithaca in February 1888. Local

159 Ithaca Democrat, May 16, 1878, quoted in Kammen and Engst, Beulah Land, 28-29; Carol Kammen, “Crumbs of Justice, Archives: the Magazine of the New York State Archives, Spring 2012.
African American women must have been impressed with Harper’s lecture. Sometime after her visit, they formed the Frances W. Harper Club. 160

In October 1886, the annual meeting of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association coincided with the dedication of the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island. Matilda Joslyn Gage stirred the delegates to action. The Statue of Liberty embodied in a woman was, she said, “a gigantic lie,” compared to the “dreadful and outrageous slavery” of women’s lives. Inspired by Gage’s speech, Lillie Devereux Blake, President of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, organized a protest. She hired an old cattle barge and convinced several colleagues to sail around the base of the island, displaying woman suffrage banners to the crowds, while Blake, Gage, and others gave speeches. 161

Women also took direct political action. Following Victoria Woodhull’s model in 1872, Belva Lockwood ran for President of the United States on the National Equal Rights Party ticket in 1884 and 1888. Born in Royalton, Niagara County, New York, Lockwood became, in 1879, the first woman to practice law before the Supreme Court. Newspapers across the country, including those in central New York, picked up the story of her run for the presidency. The Ithaca Daily Journal, for example, noted that “Her promise was to promote and maintain equal political privilege to every class of citizen, irrespective of sex, color or nationality because currently ‘men of the country monopolized all the votes and offices.” In 1888 she spoke “with rapid thought and wit” in Library Hall. Formally called Cornell Public Library, it was established by Ezra Cornell to house Ithaca’s public library and historical society. 162

American suffragists also worked to develop international suffrage networks. In 1888, the National Woman Suffrage Association organized the first international suffrage convention in Washington, D.C. It was billed as a celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention. Stanton greeted “this magnificent gathering of educated women from both hemispheres.” We have come a long way since 1848, she noted, but "we do not intend to rest our case until all our rights are secured." 163

In terms of state action, central New Yorkers supported efforts by the New York State Woman Suffrage Association to enact laws affirming women’s equality. They worked in many areas. “Taxation without representation” was a constant rallying cry. Mrs. Lewis C. Smith of Rochester organized the most active of many anti-tax societies in New York State. In 1874, several of these groups sent memorials to the New York State legislature, asking “that all taxes due from women be remitted until they are allowed to vote.” Petitioners received a hearing on January 24, but the legislature took no further action. Women’s rights advocates also urged legislation to protect the rights of widows and divorced women. They worked for years to convince the legislature to mandate

that police departments hire female matrons to oversee women prisoners, a campaign that finally met with success in 1891.\textsuperscript{164}

In terms of suffrage itself, however, there was hard work and at least two partial successes. In 1880, New York State finally agreed to a provision for women voting in school board elections. Women’s rights advocates had worked for this since at least 1877, when William Emerson from Monroe County introduced legislation to make women equal with men in school issues. When Governor Lucius Robinson vetoed the bill, suffragists worked against his re-election in 1878. He lost. On February 15, 1880, the new governor Alonzo B. Cornell from Ithaca, New York, urged the legislature to consider a bill making women eligible as school officers and allowing women who met property and residency requirements to vote in school elections. “Women are equally competent with men for this duty,” he argued. The legislature took his advice. In 1892, the towns of Crawline and Dryden in Tompkins County elected New York State’s first woman school commissioner, Ella Gale.\textsuperscript{165}

Despite considerable intimidation from local opponents, many women began to vote and hold school offices. According to Matilda Joslyn Gage, Lucy Brand, principal of the Genesee School in Syracuse, was the first woman to vote in New York State. Her detailed account appeared in the *History of Woman Suffrage*, III:

Mrs. Lucy A. Brand, principal of the Genesee school of this city [Syracuse], a woman with abilities as good as those of any male principal, but who, because she is a woman, receives $550 less salary a year than a male principal, was the first woman in the State of New York to cast a vote under the new school law. On Saturday afternoon she was at a friend’s house, when the Journal was thrown in, containing the first editorial notice of the passage of the law. Mrs. Brand saw the welcome announcement. "Let us go and register," she at once said, her heart swelling with joy and thankfulness that even this small quantity of justice had been done woman. "Where is my shawl? I feel as if I should die if I don't get there," for the hour was late, and the time for closing the registry lists was near at hand. To have lost this opportunity would have placed her in the position of a second Tantalus, the cup withdrawn just as it touched her lips. But she was in time, and the important act of registering accomplished, she had but to possess her soul in patience until the following Tuesday. Who shall say how long the two intervening days were to her; but Tuesday morning at last arrived, when, for the first time, Mrs. Brand was to exercise the freeman's right of self-government. A gentleman, the owner of the block in which she resided, offered to accompany her to the polls, although he was a Democrat and knew Mrs. Brand would vote the Republican ticket. Although not hesitating to go alone, Mrs. Brand accepted this courtesy. As she entered the polling place the men present fell back in a semi-circle. Not a sound was heard, not a whisper, not a breath. In silence and with a joyous solemnity well befitting the occasion, Mrs. Brand cast her first vote, at five minutes past eight in the morning. The postmaster of the city, Mr. Chase, offered his congratulations. A few ordinary remarks were exchanged, and


\textsuperscript{165} Kammen and Engst, *Beulah Land*, 38-39.
then Mrs. Brand left the place. And that was all; neither more nor less. No opposition, no rudeness, no jostling crowd of men, but such behavior as is seen when Christians come together at the sacrament. I have long known Mrs. Brand as a noble woman, but talking with her a few days since I could but notice the added sense of self-respecting dignity that freedom gives. "I feel a constant gratitude that even some portion of my rights have been recognized," said she, and I left her, more than ever impressed, if that is possible, with the beauty and sacredness of freedom.

Thirteen other women also voted in Syracuse. 166

In Fayetteville, Matilda Joslyn Gage and 102 other women voted in a new school board made up entirely of women. In Tompkins County, Cora L. Fitch was nominated as school commissioner. She declined to run. In Rochester, Mrs. L.C. Smith was nominated to the board of education, but Rochester officials refused to allow women to vote. 167

New York State’s agreement to allow women to vote in school elections gave suffragists renewed energy. In 1884, several anti-suffragists lost their seats in the legislature, to be replaced by active friends of suffrage. Among them was William Howland, from Sherwood, Cayuga County, New York. Howland secured passage of a special act, allowing women to vote in charter elections in Union Springs, Cayuga County. Other special acts allowed women to vote in city elections in Dansville, Newport, and other municipalities in New York State. Howland also introduced a woman suffrage bill. It was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary where it died. Still, suffragists viewed these as hopeful signs. 168

A New National Organization, 1890

Failure of the courts to uphold women’s voting rights under the Fourteenth Amendment, followed by failure of a federal women’s suffrage amendment to gain traction in Congress, led suffragists to move forward in new directions. The first was to re-organize nationally.

In 1887, Susan B. Anthony of the National Woman Suffrage Association and Alice Stone Blackwell of the American Woman Suffrage Association began a dialogue to create a merger of the two groups. This merger took place in 1890.

Matilda Joslyn Gage opposed the new group, fearing it would be dominated by conservative evangelical religious views. She organized a new National Liberal Union and published the National Citizen and Ballot Box to promote liberal religion and national suffrage. Stanton shared Gage’s concerns but supported the new organization when Anthony engineered her election as NAWSA’s first President.

166 History of Woman Suffrage, III:424, note.
167 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 18-19; Kammen and Engst, Benlab Land, 31; McKelvey, 14-15; History of Woman Suffrage, III.
168 History of Woman Suffrage, III:437.
For the next twenty years, NAWSA continued its focus on a federal amendment, holding annual meetings in Washington, D.C. But energies at the grassroots level focused on state action. The New York State Woman Suffrage Association became an affiliate of NAWSA in 1890 and began organizing local suffrage groups all across New York State.
D. From a High Point to “the Doldrums”? 1890-1908

Overview

After 1890, New York State suffragists supported NAWSA in its annual meetings and congressional appearances in Washington, D.C. They also worked at both local and state levels to create a highly organized system of local suffrage groups who focused on both local and state projects.

Meetings of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association were held in New York City during the twenty years after 1869, but, after 1890, a new surge of formal organizing grassroots of political equality clubs all across New York State led to annual state conventions meeting in central and western New York. Upstate suffrage supporters worked directly with the legislature in Albany for specific voting rights within New York State. There were two small successes and one big failure: In 1880, the legislature allowed women to vote in school board elections. In 1901, tax-paying women in small cities (under 50,000) were allowed to vote. The failure was spectacular. In spite of organizing in every county and the submission of petitions carrying names of 600,000 people, men at the 1894 constitutional convention refused to submit a women’s suffrage provision to voters as part of the New York State constitution.

Far from destroying the suffrage movement, however, this debate generated renewed energies, with support from a dense network of allied organizations who endorsed suffrage, including the Grange, WCTU, labor organizations, both European American and African American women’s clubs, and local social service organizations. Strong New York State leaders influenced organizations all over the country to support women’s suffrage. And women continued to find expanding opportunities in education, work, and voluntary associations, initiating the profession of social work and forming the grassroots base of the national Progressive movement.

In 1898, Matilda Joslyn Gage died, followed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1902 and Susan B. Anthony in 1906. Their loss represented the passing of an era and the beginning of renewed suffrage activity led by a younger generation.

New York State Woman Suffrage Association and Its Local Affiliates

After 1890, National Woman Suffrage Association members joined with the American Woman Suffrage Association to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. NAWSA continued to hold annual conventions in Washington, D.C., and to lobby Congress for women’s suffrage. But they turned their main local efforts toward state-by-state organizing.

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association affiliated directly with NAWSA in 1890. Central New Yorkers continued to support NAWSA, both as members and leaders. Nineteen of New York State’s thirty-five life members of NAWSA were from central New York, including nine from Rochester (Susan B. Anthony, Mary S. Anthony, Mary S. Hallowell, Euphemia C. Purton, Mary Thayer Sanford, James F. Sargent, Angelina M. Sargent, Julia Willetts Williams, Sarah L. Willis), three from Sherwood, Cayuga County (Victoria Bradley, Emily Howland, and Hannah L. Howland), two from Geneva (Anne Fitzhugh Miller and Elizabeth Smith Miller), and two from Fayetteville-
Manlius, Onondaga County (Matilda Joslyn Gage and Belle S. Holden). Ella Hawley Crossett was from Warsaw, Wyoming County. Fannie Humphreys Gaffney lived both in Sodus, Wayne County, and Webster, Monroe County. And Elizabeth Cady Stanton had central New York roots, though she was then living in New York City. 169

Beginning in 1890, Jean Brooks Greenleaf, from Rochester, took over as President of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association from the flamboyant Lillie Devereux Blake. Born in Massachusetts, Jean Brooks Greenleaf moved with her husband to Rochester in 1867. She became active in various women's clubs in Rochester, including the Ethical Club and the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union. She joined the Rochester Political Equality Club, organized by Mary Anthony in 1885-86, and became its second president in May 1888. Her home at 96 N. Goodman Street, Rochester, still stands. 170

Under Greenleaf’s leadership, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association shifted its annual conventions to upstate cities. Before 1890, all state conventions had been held either in New York City or the Hudson Valley. Saratoga held the first two conventions in 1869 and 1870. New York City hosted fourteen of the twenty conventions through 1889. The state association held one convention in Poughkeepsie in 1879, two in Troy (1881 and 1883) and one in Albany (1884) No convention was held in 1880. 171

But in 1890, annual conventions began to meet regularly in upstate New York. They began in Rochester in 1890, where they met in the First Universalist Church, December 16-17, 1890. Six hundred people attended a reception for Susan B. Anthony, welcoming her home after her tour in South Dakota. Jean Brooks Greenleaf was elected President, replacing the dynamic Lillie Devereux Blake, who had served for eleven years. They also decided to hold mid-year meetings throughout the state, where the executive committee would gather during the day and major speakers would attract public audiences in the evening.

Twenty of the twenty-eight conventions held from 1890 to 1917 met in upstate New York, all but five of them in central New York. Four of them met in Rochester (1890, 1896, 1905, and 1914), two in Syracuse (1892 and 1906), two each in Auburn (1891 and 1904), Geneva (1897 and 1907) and Ithaca (1894 and 1911), and one each in Oswego (1901) and Utica (1912). Five more were held in western New York State or the Southern Tier, including Dunkirk (1899), Buffalo (1902 and 1908), Hornell (1903), and Binghamton (1913). The remaining eight conventions met either in the Hudson Valley (Newburgh, 1895; Hudson, 1898; Glens Falls, 1900; Troy, 1909; Albany, 1916; Saratoga, 1917) or downstate New York (Brooklyn, 1893, and New York City, 1915). 172

Moving these state conventions to upstate New York coincided with a major effort to organize local and county suffrage organizations. As Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello noted, before 1888,

169 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI.
suffragists organized four known local societies in New York State. The earliest was the Young Men’s Suffrage League, organized in Brooklyn in 1874. The next was the Albany Woman Suffrage Society, founded in 1880. Mary Anthony founded the Rochester Women’s Political Club in late 1885-86. And sometime in the 1880s, Sarah Smith Garnet (the first African American woman school principal in New York City) organized the Colored Women’s Equal Suffrage League, in Brooklyn. This organization would attract a powerhouse of African American women, including Garnet’s sister Susan Smith McKinney-Steward (one of the country’s first African American women doctors) and colleagues Charlotte Ray (first African American woman lawyer), Verina Morton-Jones (first women medical doctor of Mississippi, founder of the Lincoln Settlement House in Brooklyn), and Maritche Lyons (first African American to supervise both European American and African American student teachers). Sarah Smith Garnet later became Superintendent of the Suffrage Department of the National Association of Colored Women. 173

From 1888-90, New York State suffragists organized eighteen societies, most in 1888. All but one of them were in Chautauqua County. No wonder that Ann Gordon, editor of the Stanton-Anthony papers, called Chautauqua County “the best-organized suffrage county in the country.” 174

Of the 190 suffrage organizations formed after 1890, seventy-one of them were in central New York, not including western New York or the southern tier. Nineteen of these were formed in the 1890s (nine from 1890-95 and ten more from 1895-1900). The remaining fifty-two were organized after 1900. Many were formed after visitors attended a “Woman’s Day” at county and state fairs. 175

Wyoming County suffragists created a county Political Equality Club in 1890. In 1891, six more groups formed. Three of them were in Cayuga County: the Cayuga County Woman Suffrage Association, Sherwood Equal Rights Association, and the Political Equality Club of Auburn. These groups invited the New York State Woman Suffrage Association to meet in Auburn, New York, on November 10-11, 1891, most likely at the Burtis Opera House on North Street (demolished). This was the first convention with Jean Brooks Greenleaf as president. Mrs. J. Mary Pearson gave them welcome, and Susan B. Anthony, Jean Brooks Greenleaf, Lillie Devereux Blake, Anna Howard Shaw, and Mary Seymour Howell were the main speakers. Eliza Wright Osborne held a reception for the whole group at her home at 99 South Street. Membership had doubled since Jean Brooks Greenleaf had taken office, and many groups had held a Woman’s Day at their local county fair. 176

175 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, “Appendix 2,” 197-202; History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter XLI.
Sherwood, New York, home of the Howland family, formed one of New York State’s most active suffrage clubs. Emily Howland was the daughter of Quaker abolitionist and Underground Railroad activist Slocum Howland. Her brother William Howland promoted suffrage as an assemblyman in the New York State legislature. Her sister-in-law Hannah Letchworth Howland and their daughter Isabel Howland, all were active suffragists. Both Emily and her niece Isabel worked locally, statewide, and nationally. Emily Howland served as president of the Sherwood Equal Rights Association and the Cayuga County Political Equality League for many years. From 1892 until NAWSA’s last convention in 1920, suffragists honored Emily Howland as a “pioneer and leader.” She remained a close friend of Susan B. Anthony until Anthony’s death in 1906. And she contributed heavily both to the New York State Woman Suffrage Association and to NAWSA. Susan B. Anthony thought she was one of New York State’s two most important donors (with Eliza Wright Osborne from Auburn). Both Emily Howland and Isabel Howland became life members of NAWSA in 1901, and Isabel served as an officer of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association for a decade in the early twentieth century. Emily accompanied Susan B. Anthony to London in 1903 for the International Council of Women. She spoke with Anthony in 1904 at a Senate hearing, the last that Anthony ever attended. And she continued to participate in legislative hearings, ride in parades (in 1912 and 1913), and give public speeches through the 19-teens. When Howland died in 1919 at 102 years old, her obituary appeared in the New York Times, and at least twelve biographical encyclopedias carry entries about her life.177

Before 1895, groups also organized in Genesee County (Byron Women’s Suffrage Club) and Monroe County (Irondequoit Political Equality Club), Onondaga County (Syracuse Political Equality Club, 1892) and the town of Perry in Wyoming County. 178

In 1892, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association’s annual meeting gathered in Syracuse at the Grand Opera House, across from City Hall on East Genesee Street (now demolished). Susan B. Anthony, then president of NAWSA, was the main speaker. 179

Brooklyn hosted the 1893 meeting in Long Island Historical Hall on November 13-16. Its main task was to approve a statewide plan of action, developed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, to organize the state to support women’s suffrage in the revised New York State constitution. So far, they had organized twenty-three county clubs and many local societies, auxiliary to the New York State Woman Suffrage Association. They had a base to work with. But their biggest challenge—and their biggest opportunity—lay ahead.180

177 For more on suffrage work by the Howland family, see Wellman, “Context Study for Properties in Sherwood,” Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District, 5, 48-55.
179 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI.
New York State Constitutional Convention, 1894

After NAWSA formed in 1890, it supported intense lobbying at various constitutional conventions as part of its emphasis on state-by-state campaigns. These campaigns drew on people within each state, as well as speakers from across the country. As the History of Woman Suffrage noted,

Amendments to strike the word "male" from the suffrage clause of the Constitution have been submitted by ten States, and by five of these twice--Kansas, 1867-94; Michigan, 1874; Colorado, 1877-93; Nebraska, 1882; Oregon, 1884-1900; Rhode Island, 1886; Washington, 1889-98; South Dakota, 1890-98; California, 1896; Idaho, 1896. Out of the fifteen trials the amendment has been adopted but twice--in Colorado and Idaho. In these two cases it was indorsed by all the political parties and carried with their permission. Wyoming and Utah placed equal suffrage in the constitution under which they entered Statehood. In both, as Territories, women had had the full franchise--in Wyoming twenty-one and in Utah seventeen years—and public sentiment was strongly in favor.181

As a result of these fifteen state campaigns, four states, all in the West, recognized woman suffrage by 1896: Wyoming (1890), Colorado (1893), Utah (1896), and Idaho (1896). New York State hoped to be the fifth.

In 1894, New York State held a convention to revise its constitution. Suffragists focused all their energy to remove the word “male” from voting requirements. They failed, but their efforts created an amazing story.182

They began with visits to the New York State legislature, asking that women be appointed as delegates to the constitutional convention. In spite of support in 1887 from Governor David B. Hill and in 1892 from Governor Roswell Flower of Watertown, the final answer was “No.” Then they visited state political conventions, asking them to put a woman’s suffrage plank in their platforms. The answer was again “No.” 183

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association adopted a plan outlined by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony at their annual meeting in Brooklyn in 1893. Harriet May Mills, daughter of abolitionists, graduate of Cornell University, and recording secretary, lecturer, and organizer for the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, was the leading organizer. “We were not lacking in courage,” noted President Jean Brooks Greenleaf of Rochester. But they were lacking money. They raised only $10,000 of the estimated $50,000 they would need for the whole campaign. They saved some money by using the Anthony home in Rochester as their headquarters until they moved to Albany in April. Mary Anthony, their corresponding secretary, became “the embodiment of perpetual activity.” Anthony, with Jean Brooks Greenleaf and Martha R. Almy of

181 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter XLI.
183 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, 382ff.
Jamestown, spent months in Rochester, working full-time, making the house “a beehive of industry.” Martha Almy had 5000 books of blank petitions printed to distribute throughout the state. Mary Anthony plotted routes for organizers and speakers. 184

From January 22 to April 28, Susan B. Anthony, then seventy-four years old, traveled across the state, holding mass meetings in all sixty counties. Central stops included Batavia (Genesee County), January 23-24; Warsaw (Wyoming County), January 24-25; Penn Yan (Yates County), January 25-26; Lyons (Wayne County), January 29-30; Waterloo (Seneca County), January 30-31; Oswego (Oswego County), February 1; Cortland (Cortland County), March 26-27; Norwich (Chenango County), March 22-23; Ithaca (Tompkins County), March 27-28; Watkins (Schuyler County), March 29-30; Rochester (Monroe County), April 10-11; Genesee (Livingston County), April 11-12; Canandaigua (Ontario County), April 12-13; Syracuse (Onondaga County), April 13-14; Auburn (Cayuga County), April 16-17; Canastota (Madison County), April 17-18; and Utica (Oneida County), April 19-20. 185

Tompkins County offers a well-documented example of how these mass meetings worked. On March 27 and 28, Susan B. Anthony and Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, and Mary Garrett Hay held three days of meetings in Ithaca. They held their first meeting with the newly-organized Tompkins County Political Equality League at Library Hall in the City of Ithaca. Mary Garrett Hay noted that 28,000 names had already been signed in Rochester on the petition to omit the word “male” from the new constitution. The convention delegated eighty-five people (thirty-eight women and thirty-men) in every township to canvass Tompkins County for signatures. Rev. Ralph T. Jones of the DeWitt Park Baptist Church spoke. So did Mayor Clinton Bouton and several Cornell professors. Susan B. Anthony gave a rousing two-hour speech. She touted the progress that women—once limited to housework, factory work, teaching, and sewing—had made in employment and education but reminded her audience that women still were not paid equally with men and that all women, no matter how well educated, remained without the vote. We want a petition signed by a million people, she said, “the men’s names for their political influence and the women’s to put a stop to the old taunt that women do not want the vote.” Rev. Shaw, “a stunningly engaging speaker,” drew the largest audience. She spoke with an “intelligent comingling of pathos, pleasantry, irony and sarcasm delivered in a captivating manner and with the choicest language,” arguing that women were “pre-eminently superior to men” especially morally. Yet monuments to women in this country, she noted, were so few that “they would fit into the palm of her hand.” 186

Suffragists put petitions in public places, such as Osborne’s store, near the Post Office on East State Street. They put one in the Cornell University Library and had a hundred signatures within the month, with two hundred more added later. Carrie Bouton, president of the WCTU as well as the Tompkins County Political Equality League, gathered petitions with 3319 signatures. “Had the canvass been undertaken earlier in the season [when the roads might have been better], doubtless many more names would have been obtained,” she noted. And women in rural districts throughout the county responded more favorably than did women in Ithaca. “The women in the country,”

Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York

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Bouton reported, “are better informed and more intelligent upon this subject than the women of our city.” Other important local workers included Professor James Oliver, Martha Genung Hedden, Lucy Pearson, and Helen Potter. 187

Mass meetings in Ontario County is also well-documented. In Canandaigua, Susan B. Anthony spoke to an enthusiastic crowd in the Methodist Church. “The women’s suffrage question is now the all-absorbing topic of conversation among the female element of Canandaigua,” reported the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. “At the close of the two days’ meetings the circulation of petitions was begun, and the signatures of a great majority of the citizens was secured.” This campaign had an unwelcome result locally, however. “Since that time a reaction has set in,” reported the Chronicle, “with a counter petition protesting against striking out the word ‘male’ in the constitution. The instigators of the new movement are acting quietly and are among the most prominent and highly educated element of Canandaigua society.” 188

A similar meeting took place in the West Bloomfield Town Hall on April 28, 1894, this one with local speakers, including Rev. Annis Ford Eastman, co-pastor with her husband Samuel of the Congregational Church in Elmira, and Edwin Hicks, New York State Senator. “Some fifty names were secured to the petition at that time,” noted the Democrat and Chronicle, “and a canvass of the town will probably secure at least 200 more.” 189

Rev. Anna Howard Shaw and Mary Seymour Howell also gave dozens of speeches. Lillie Devereux Blake, Mariana W. Chapman, and Carrie Chapman Catt organized New York City, with headquarters at Sherry’s and a committee that included an Episcopal bishop and a Jewish rabbi. 190

Their goal was to get as many signatures as possible to a petition to take the word “male” out of the new constitution and thus to enfranchise women:

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188 Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 1894 [n.d], quoted in Wilma Townsend, 38.
189 Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 2, 1894, quoted in Wilma Townsend, 39.
190 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, 383.
191 1894 Constitutional-Amendment Campaign Year Report of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association (Rochester: Charles Mann, 1895), 139.
They circulated 5000 petitions and garnered 332,148 individual signatures (about half from women), all sent to Isabel Howland and Mary Anthony, who counted, labelled, and tied them with wide yellow ribbons for presentation to the convention. Isabel Howland also collected statistics on women who owned property and paid taxes throughout the state. In Brooklyn, for example, she found that women paid one-quarter of all the taxes. In Rochester, thanks to Mary Anthony, the number of petitioners (both women and men) numbered twenty-five percent more than the number of legal voters. They had help from allies. The WCTU alone collected 36,000 signatures. Large and small organizations across New York State, including the Federation of Labor and other unions, the Grange, the WCTU, the Society of Friends, the Board of Trustees of North Tonawanda, Herkimer County Grange, Oswego County Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars, WCTU of Clinton County, Erie County WCTU, National Christian League for the Promotion of Social Purity, citizens of Round Lake, citizens of Brooklyn, as well as many individuals brought the estimated total to 600,000. 192

“No more pathetic stories are told of the struggle for liberty in the old days of the Revolution than could be told of the women of New York, in this campaign,” wrote President Greenleaf. “We left nothing undone that we could find to do,” she concluded. 193

On May 24, twelve counties submitted petitions. In order of submission, they were Niagara, Allegany, Livingston, Cayuga, Orleans, Tompkins, Chautauqua, Yates, Wayne, Ulster, and Columbia. Six of these were in our central New York. The Cayuga County petition, headed by Emily Howland and Sobedia Alleman, contained 7,574 names (2659 names of men and 4915 of women, including 3788 “tax-paying” women). Tompkins County, submitted by Carrie E. Bouton, gathered 3319 names on their petition (1244 men and 2075 women). 194

The next day, May 25, petitions came from Brooklyn and from Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Rensselaer, St Lawrence, and Wayne Counties. Seven of these were in our central New York area. 195

192 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, 383-84; 1894 Constitutional-Amendment Campaign Year Report gives the total number of signatures collected by the New York State Woman Suffrage Association as 296,062; WCTU, 36,086; Federation of Labor and Trade, Labor, and Reform Conference, 140,000; United Engineers’ Union, No. 1. Granite Cutters’ Union, etc., 1396; Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, 50,000, for a total of 593,544, p. 141. Pages 139-44, includes a chart on pages 139-40 with total number of names from each county. Pages 141-43 includes petitions from various organizations. 193 Jean Brooks Greenleaf, “Report of the President,” 1894 Constitutional-Amendment Campaign Year Report of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association (Rochester: Charles Mann, 1895), 157. 194 Isabel Howland, Woman’s Journal, June 2, 1894 and William H. Steele, Revised Record of the Constitutional Convention of the State of New York, May 8, 1894 to September 29, 1894 (Albany: Argus Company, 1900), https://books.google.com/books?id=VsSkAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=revised%20record%20of%20the%20constitutional%20amendment%20new%20york&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiJsPX67YTjAhVEdr8KHUfKjA9MQ6AEINzAC#v=onep age&q=revised%20record%20of%20the%20constitutional%20amendment%20new%20york&f=false, record of May 24, 1894, 41-58, quoted in Kammen and Engst, Beulah Land, 51. 195 Revised Record of the Constitutional Convention of the State of New York, May 8, 1894 to September 29, 1894, record of May 24, 1894, 79-80, quoted in Kammen and Engst, Beulah Land, 52.
Presentation of the petitions was dramatic. One observer, probably Isabel Howland, described the scene:

The names were enrolled on pages of uniform size and arranged in volumes, each labeled and tied with a wide yellow ribbon and bearing the card of the member who was to present it. At the opening of the sessions, when memorials were called for, he would rise and say: 'Mr. President, I have the honor to present a memorial from Mary Smith and 17,117 others (for example), residents of ---- county, asking that the word 'male' be stricken from the Constitution.' Often one after another would present a bundle of petitions until it would seem as though the entire morning would be thus consumed. They were all taken by pages and heaped up on the secretary's table, where they made an imposing appearance. Later they were stacked on shelves in a large committee room.

Mrs. Burt, the president of the W. C. T. U., brought in the petitions of her society all at once, many great rolls of paper tied with white ribbon. A colored porter took them down the aisle on a wheelbarrow. 196

Suffrage and temperance leaders also gave several presentations at the convention, including five-minute speeches on June 7 by women from all the Senatorial districts outside New York City. Emily Howland from Sherwood was one of the speakers. On August 8 and 9 and 14 and 15, the convention as a whole took up the issue. Isabel Howland reported that the hall became “a grand woman suffrage meeting.” “If the question had been one of conviction rather than of politics,” she added, “a good majority would have voted for submission had the vote been taken then.” 197

But the convention was stacked against them. While they had support from Edward Lauterbach (Chair of the Republican County Committee in New York City), they faced strong opposition elsewhere. Joseph Choate, Chair of the Constitutional Convention opposed women’s suffrage. So did twelve of the seventeen members of the Suffrage Committee, including William P. Goodelle, Chair, from Syracuse, N.Y. F.E. Tibbetts, a lawyer from 50 South Geneva Street, Ithaca, Tompkins County, expressed sarcastic comments about those on the Suffrage Commission who opposed women’s suffrage:

After I got here, I heard grave and reverend delegates in this convention say that, from personal knowledge, there were ladies who were not proper to cast a ballot, who should not cast a ballot; they were so bad, so low, that it would degrade the ballot. I have, Mr. President, the knowledge that in my own locality there are proper persons to be entrusted with the ballot. I have equal information from the other side, that there are those who are not proper to be entrusted with the ballot. I am in the position of the defendant who answers that he has not sufficient information of knowledge to form a belief. Therefore, with the idea that in the Committee of the Whole we may be enlightened, and that this matter may have such a

196 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, n. 384. See also Isabel Howland, “The Constitutional Convention,” Constitutional-Amendment Campaign Year, 8.
197 Addresses of women from various senatorial districts, 1894 Convention, 34-70.
light thrown upon it that shall not only have knowledge and information, but belief, I shall cast my vote to bring it there. I vote no. 198

In the convention itself, Henry J. Cookinham from Oneida County, and Elihu Root, a leading lawyer in New York City, were outspoken opponents. Thomas G. Alvord of Syracuse presented an anti-woman suffrage petition signed by ninety-two women. Antis also presented petitions from Albany, Utica, Rochester, and Yonkers. 199

The result? 58 ayes and 98 noes. And to make matters worse, the suffrage campaign generated, for the first time, well-organized anti-suffrage workers. 15,000 of them presented petitions to the Constitutional Convention arguing against votes for women. 200

One might predict that this defeat would slow suffragists down. Not so. Jean Brooks Greenleaf rallied her troops: “Our defeat,” she wrote, “was in a sense a victory.” “This was a decided advance over the Constitutional Convention of 1867, when there were but 19 ayes and 125 noes. Then less than one-seventh, this time more than one-third of the members were in favor of the enfranchisement of women.” “Our defeat is not a Waterloo, it is a Bunker Hill!” Blake McKelvey, commenting on the reaction of Rochester suffragists, wrote, “So much earnest feeling was developed in its behalf, especially in Rochester . . . that victory now seemed only a matter of time.” 201

“Our work in the Constitutional Convention ended, what next?” asked Jean Brooks Greenleaf. She gave specific directions for moving forward.

Re-organize your forces! Issue calls for rallies in your county. Employ local talent, both men and women, but secure all the masculine hearers possible. Pass resolutions of thanks . . . Induce every Political Equality Club, or Campaign Committee, to send personal letter, thanking our friends in the Convention for their able and effective work. Besides this, take up the petition work again. 202


199 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, 384-88 and notes 387, 388.


201 Jean Brooks Greenleaf, “Dear Friends,” September 1, 1894, Constitutional Convention, 161-3; McKelvey, 15.

"I think there has never been a time when the women of the State felt more thoroughly acquainted with each other or more united in the determination to win in the pending struggle for liberty than now," wrote corresponding secretary Mary Anthony. Our work has been "simply incredible." 203

They took that simply "incredible work" to Ithaca on November 12-14, 1894. Headquartered at the Clinton House, "the usual large audiences" of suffragists held their first public gathering in the Lyceum Opera House. Only ten days before, Harriet May Mills and Isabel Howland—both Cornell graduates—had gathered members of the Tompkins County Political Equality League in the local YMCA to organize the meeting. They were welcomed by Mayor Clinton D. Bouton and Jacob Gould Schurmann, President of Cornell University. "A galaxy of eloquent New York women made addresses," including Susan B. Anthony. Rev. William Elliot Griffis, minister at the Congregational Church (now St. Catherine’s Greek Orthodox church on West Seneca Street) gave an enthusiastic speech for women’s right to vote and to work wherever they wished. 204

Other speakers included Rev. Annis Ford Eastman, Carrie Twing, from Chautauqua County, who spoke for the Grange, Lillie Devereux Blake, past president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, and, of course, Susan B. Anthony, who dined later with Rev. Shaw at Sage College. "These women are the leaders of the woman suffrage movement in the country," noted the Cornell Era. 205

Jean Brooks Greenleaf, president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, gave a "magnificent address." "The year closing with this convention has been one of the most momentous since the inception of the woman's rights movement in 1848," she said, "and we feel safe in the assertion that its work well may be regarded as the beginning of the end of the great struggle for the political equality of all intelligent law abiding citizens in the state." 206

**Legislative Work, 1895-1900**

For the next decade, Greenleaf’s prediction that 1894 would be celebrated as “the beginning of the end of the great struggle” seemed like a possibility. From 1895-1905 enthusiastic local suffrage groups organized all over central New York. Between 1895 and 1900, central New Yorkers formed ten more suffrage clubs. 207

Four of these were in Tompkins County: East Groton Political Equality Club (1898), Groton Political Equality Club (1898) Ithaca Political Study Club (1899), and the Tompkins County Woman Suffrage Association (1899). The Ithaca Political Study Club was actually a study group, part of the Ithaca Woman’s Club. Ithaca women, though Riley, were too conservative to have a separate suffrage group, but they would be willing to come to a women’s club, with suffrage meetings once a

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203 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI.
204 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI.
month. But, as the minutes reported in 1899, the “Equal Suffrage Section outgrew its crib and
wouldn't stay in its high chair. It talked too much and used language which was very distasteful—not
to say shocking—to some of the members.” In 1899, its members formed a separate Political Study
Club, meeting with the three other political equality clubs (two in Groton and one in Newfield) in
county-wide meetings at the Unitarian Church and elsewhere. Beginning in 1902, they met in the
First Baptist Church in DeWitt Park, whose minister Robert Jones had been a long-time supporter
of women’s suffrage. In 1905, Cornell alumnae formed the Cornell Woman’s Club, which advocated
Cornell-specific issues but did not take on state or national issues such as suffrage.208

Suffragists in Geneva, New York, formed the Geneva Political Equality Club in 1897, to become
one of the leading suffrage groups in the county. Elizabeth Smith Miller and her daughter Anne
Miller held annual suffrage gatherings at Lochland, their home on Seneca Lake. They also kept
scrapbooks from 1897 until their deaths in 1911. These are a remarkable and under-utilized source
of information, especially for the suffrage movement within New York State. They are now part of
the NAWSA collection at the Library of Congress. 209

In 1903, the Geneva Political Equality Club hosted a meeting to create the Ontario County Suffrage
Association, which include local groups from Phelps. Harriet May Mills, state organizer for the New
York State Woman Suffrage Association, helped organize this group. A month later, Charlotte
Perkins Gilman, author of The Yellow Wallpaper and nationally known writer and lecturer, spoke at a
piazza party held at Lochland. And in December 1903, Carrie Chapman Catt spoke in the Smith
Opera House in Geneva. In 1905, the Geneva Political Equality Club helped organize a new suffrage
society in Clifton Springs, which met regularly in the Universalist Church. 210

Wyoming County formed two more suffrage clubs before 1900: Castile Political Equality Club (by
1896) and the Gainesville Political Equality Club (1898). Other clubs were in Genesee (Batavia
Political Equality Club, 1895), Oswego (Oswego County Political Equality Club, 1896), Ontario
(Geneva Political Equality Club, 1897), and Monroe Counties (Susan B. Anthony Club, Rochester,
1898). 211

The Susan B. Anthony Club, organized by Hester Jeffrey in 1898, was the first African American
club devoted specifically to women’s suffrage in upstate New York. It joined the Colored Women’s
Equal Suffrage League in Brooklyn as a key anchor for what would become the Empire State
Federation of Women’s Clubs, organized by Alice Wiley Seay in 1908. It linked similar African

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208 Ithaca study group, Kammen and Engst. “Minutes,” Political Study Club in Ithaca Woman’s Club, Scrapbook, S-94-
6, The History Center, Ithaca, pages 5 and 6; Ithaca Woman’s Club records, #2743 and Cornell Woman’s Club Records,
#41-6-1680, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, quoted in Kammen and Engst,
Beulah Land, 68-69.
https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-4839.
210 Townsend, Ontario County, 42, 43, 112.

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American organizations across New York State, including the Phyllis Wheatley Club, organized by Mary Talbert in Buffalo. ²¹²

Between 1900 and 1906, fifty-two more suffrage clubs formed in central New York. ²¹³

People from these local groups came together annually in the New York State Woman Suffrage Association conventions. Enthusiasm was high in the 1890s. Newburgh hosted the 1895 convention. Afterwards, the convention adjourned to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City to celebrate Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s eightieth birthday. ²¹⁴

The twenty-eighth convention of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association met in Rochester on November 18-19, 1896, in the YMCA Music Hall (on South Street, corner of Court, now demolished) with a dinner at the Livingston Hotel (also demolished), with “more delegates present than ever before.” Suffragists had reason to celebrate. Already, four states in the west recognized women’s suffrage: Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho. What states would be next?

Suffragists held a reception for Susan B. Anthony, who had just returned from a suffrage campaign in California. Antoinette Brown Blackwell and Harriet Tubman both spoke. Harriet Tubman’s appearance was unexpected. Holding Susan B. Anthony’s hand, she talked about her life as an Underground Railroad agent and her work in the war. The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reported that “this old woman, who can neither read nor write, has still a mission, which is the moral advancement of her race.” Mariana Wright Chapman from Westchester County was elected president. Past presidents Jean Brooks Greenleaf and Mary Seymour Howell were appointed delegates to two statewide organizations who had been strong supporters of women’s suffrage, the Grange and the New York State Labor Convention. ²¹⁵

On November 3-5, 1897, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association held its twenty-ninth annual meeting in Collins Hall and Smith Opera House in Geneva. Elizabeth Smith Miller and Anne Fitzhugh Miller entertained the group at her home at Lochland. The mood was festive, as delegates learned that George W. Aldrich, New York State superintendent of public works, had ordered that Susan B. Anthony’s face be carved on the stairway of the brand-new capitol building. As a result of this meeting, local suffragists formed the Geneva Political Equality Club at YMCA Hall on November 30, 1897. This club became the largest suffrage club in New York State, helping to organize four other clubs in Ontario County--Phelps (1898), Clifton Springs (1905), Gorham (1913),


²¹⁴ History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI.

and William Smith College (1914). Many nationally important suffragists spoke here, including Susan B. Anthony, Alice Stone Blackwell, Harriot Stanton Blatch, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and British suffragettes Emmeline Pankhurst and Sylvia Pankhurst. 216

In 1898, suffragists in Rochester met in the Unitarian Church to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention. Other communities also celebrated this anniversary. The small community of Sherwood, New York, home of Emily, Isabel, William, and Hannah Howland, attracted a crowd of forty-five people for talks that paralleled topics from the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments on politics, the law, education, professions, and industry. A piece of cake remains on display in the Howland Stone Store Museum labelled in Emily Howland’s own hand: “Susan B. Anthony’s birthday cake, 1898.” Might this be an artifact from the 1898 Seneca Falls anniversary? 217

Suffrage meetings in 1898, 1899, and 1900 were held outside central New York. They met in Hudson, New York, in 1898. In 1899, they met in the Woman’s Union and Academy Hall in Dunkirk, Chautauqua County. “Both day and evening meetings were large and enthusiastic,” reported the History of Woman Suffrage. And in 1900, the convention gathered in Glens Falls, New York. Susan B. Anthony was there, of course, and the convention congratulated her for raising the whole $50,000 required by the University of Rochester to open their doors to women.218

From 1901 to 1907, all annual statewide conventions met in upstate New York. Five of the seven were held in central New York. Stalwart older leaders predominated. And memorial services for suffrage leaders who had died—Susan B. Anthony, Mary Anthony, and others—were common.

Oswego hosted the 1901 convention in the Presbyterian Church, with the usual speakers: Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, Alice Stone Blackwell, Harriet May Mills, Ella Hawley Crossett, and Marian W. Chapman, president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association since 1896.

In 1902, the convention met in Buffalo at the Church of the Messiah. Delegates elected Ella Hawley Crossett from Wyoming County as president, with Harriet May Mills from Syracuse as vice-president and chair of the state organization committee. They served together until 1910.

Ella Hawley Crossett had attended a suffrage meeting in Rochester in 1890, and from there, she went as a delegate to the NAWSA convention. She returned to organize the Wyoming County Political Equality Club in 1890, where she invited Susan B. Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw to speak. She helped organize the Warsaw Political Equality Club in 1891. A member first of the Universalist Church in Perry and then of the Congregational Church in Warsaw, her work made both communities a hotspot of suffrage activity for the next twenty years. Crossett became president of both the Wyoming County and Warsaw societies and then, from 1902-1910, she served as president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association. Hawley attended national and state women’s suffrage conventions for over twenty years. She was also a member of the WCTU, the

216 History of Woman Suffrage, IV, Chapter LVI; Geneva Daily Times, March 22, 1899; Townsend, 102.
217 Wellman, Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District, 51.
218 History of Woman Suffrage, VI.
Grange, the local school board, the Wyoming County Fair committee, and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Her home “Hillcrest” still stands. Her sisters Lucy Hawley Calkins and Carrie Hawley Bucklin were also active suffragists who helped found the Ithaca Political Study Club.  

Throughout the early twentieth century, NAWSA regularly honored pioneer suffragists at their annual meetings. In 1902, at the meeting in Portland, Oregon (the first national meeting held in the west), four of the six honorees (Charlotte Woodward, Eliza Wright Osborne, Emily Howland, and Olympia Brown) had ties to central New York. From central New York, Mary Anthony, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Elizabeth Smith Miller, and Emily Howland were often honored, along with Stanton and Anthony. In 1908, Emily Howland herself spoke on the “Spirit of 1848” and was, noted the History of Woman Suffrage, “a living embodiment of that spirit.” In 1918-19, the convention sent letters to the pioneers: Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Rhoda Palmer, Charlotte Pierce, Emily Howland, and Mrs. C.D.B. Mills (mother of Harriet May Mills). All had ties to central New York. And it went, with annual tributes to pioneers as a way to create a shared history for contemporary NAWSA members of diverse backgrounds.  

Suffragists worked all over the state in 1902-1903. Harriet May Mills reported to the 1903 convention at the Presbyterian Church in Hornell that she had organized fifty-five meetings throughout the state. Anna Howard Shaw spoke in thirty counties, and Crossett and Mills organizing new local suffrage clubs. Susan B. Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw spoke to “large audiences,” and then they spoke to summer visitors at Chautauqua and the spiritualist assembly at Lily Dale.  

Meeting at the Music Hall in Auburn in 1904, delegates were entertained by Eliza Wright Osborne at her home at 99 South Street, with her son Thomas Mott Osborne giving the welcome in his capacity as mayor.

In 1905, the Political Equality Club of Rochester sponsored the statewide meeting in the Universalist Church, with a tea and tour of the Anthony home (which many felt was “a sacred spot”), and a reception for six hundred people at the Power Hotel. There, Susan B. Anthony introduced several women who had been at the adjourned meeting of the Seneca Falls convention, held in Rochester on August 2, 1848. They included Mary Hallowell, Sarah Willis, Mary S. Anthony and Maria Wilder Depuy. President Ella Hawley Crossett noted the difference between this convention and the one held in Rochester in 1890. Then, she said, there were only seven suffrage clubs in all of New York State. Now there were one hundred local clubs and thirty-one county clubs. Elnora Babcock, indefatigable press chairman from Hornell, reported that five hundred statewide papers printed pro-suffrage articles.

At Syracuse in 1906, the convention gathered in May Memorial Church, with a banner over the door that reflected Susan B. Anthony’s last talk: “Failure Is Impossible.” Many people gave memorial
tributes, and large audiences came both to the church and to University Chapel at Syracuse University to hear Florence Kelley, Mrs. Henry Villard, Rachel Foster Avery, and Anna Howard Shaw.

In 1907, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association met again in Geneva, where many stores and homes displayed suffrage flags and banners. Elizabeth Smith Miller and Ann Miller hosted a memorial service at Lochland for Mary Anthony, who had died in February 1907.

But signs of stress and division among suffragists at both state and national levels had been evident since the 1890s. They began with the merger in 1890 of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association to form NAWSA. This merger led to Susan B. Anthony’s alliance with Frances Willard, the WCTU, and evangelical religious groups. That was a strategic—and very effective—effort to gain important support for women’s suffrage. In New York State as elsewhere, alliance with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union brought thousands of workers to the suffrage cause.

But it signaled a widespread shift in suffrage arguments from natural rights—based on total equality for all people, without regard to sex, race, or class—to pragmatism. Never mind what any particular woman thought, ran this argument. Women disagreed with each other, just as men did. If women have the vote, they will have political influence and power. Every woman can then work toward her own goals. But the suffrage movement would not deal with any issue except the vote.

Many suffragists objected. Suffrage alone was too narrow a goal, they thought. Abandoning higher ideals in order to get support from any group that would support women’s suffrage was not acceptable. In particular, there should be no compromise over religion or race.

Anthony’s old friends Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage took on the religious issue directly. Gage had served as president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association for its first five years and had held several offices (including president from 1875-76) of the National Woman Suffrage Association, but she split from these groups when they joined the American Woman Suffrage Association to form NAWSA in 1890. Instead, Gage formed the Woman’s National Liberal Union to promote women’s rights, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. As publisher of the National Citizen and Ballot Box, she assured the public that “women of every class, condition, rank and name will find this paper their friend.”

In 1893, Gage published Woman, Church, and State, a scholarly overview of women’s place in western history. The Bible, thought Gage, condemned women as inferior, and Christian churches inevitably oppressed women. Much more admirable, she argued, was the position of women in Native American societies.

In making this point, Gage reflected several influences in western intellectual thought. In 1851, Lewis Henry Morgan had published League of the of the Ho-de-no-saunee or Iroquois. Using information


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shared by his friend Jimmy Johnson and Johnson’s nephew Ely Parker (who became secretary to Ulysses S. Grant during the Civil War and brigadier general in the U.S. Army), Morgan argued that Haudenosaunee families were based on matrilineal descent, with women playing major (and highly respected) social roles. His ideas permeated much of western intellectual thought and helped established the new profession of anthropology. In 1877, he published a major study on kinship, *Ancient Society*, used by Frederick Engels to develop his ideas in *Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884). Philosophers such as J.J. Bachofen began to talk about “Das Muterrich,” the mother right. Gage agreed. She began to apply these ideas to her critique of Christianity. 223

In 1895 and 1898, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Olympia Brown, Mary Seymour Howell, and Catharine Fish Stebbins—all with ties to central New York—and others continued their critique of organized religion with *The Woman’s Bible*. It was a leading example of emerging scholarly studies of the Bible, and it became a best-seller. They were harshly critical of organized religion. “This idea of woman’s subordination is reiterated times without number,” Stanton asserted, “from Genesis to Revelations; and this is the basis of all church action.” Negative public reactions led to Stanton’s loss of credibility in the organized suffrage movement. Meanwhile, Stanton moved farther to the left. She argued that economic issues were paramount and declared, “the few have no right to the luxuries of life while the many are denied its necessities.” 224

The issue of race also profoundly challenged egalitarian ideals of New York State suffragists and became an increasingly divisive issue nationally. Hopes ran high during Reconstruction for a society that promoted equal rights for all people. But after 1877, the federal government took no responsibility for insuring equal rights. The creation of NAWSA in 1890 coincided with a revision in the state constitution of Mississippi, incorporating limits on voting rights for African American men, a direct challenge to the Fourteenth Amendment that signaled the beginning of the worst of Jim Crow segregation laws. As Ann Gordon noted, women suffragists stopped asking for federal protection for voting rights “at the same moment that southern states formalized the exclusion of Black men from the franchise.” In the South (and sometimes also in the North), legal segregation, enforced by violence, became the norm. Increasingly sophisticated laws mandated racial discrimination in virtually every aspect of public life. African Americans found themselves with limited access to public facilities, public transportation, schools, and voting rights. In 1891, Ida Wells-Barnett began her nationwide campaign against lynching, after three of her friends, African American businessmen in Memphis, Tennessee, were killed. In 1896, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* confirmed that “separate but equal” was the law of the land. But, as everyone knew, separate did not usually mean equal. 225

In July 1896, the same year of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, African American women met in Washington, D.C. to organize a National Association of Colored Women. The brain child of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin from Boston, the National Association of Colored Women combined three earlier

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organizations of African American women. Harriet Tubman, along with Ida Wells Barnett, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and dozens of other leaders, was present at this convention. With a motto of “Lifting as we climb,” the National Association of Colored Women took on a wide variety of race and women’s issues, including education, jobs, and political and civil rights. Mary Church Terrell, an Oberlin graduate, became its first president.  

Paralleling dominant-culture European American suffragists in NAWSA, women in the National Association of Colored Women reflected a turn from universal rights toward pragmatism. But they had a different focus. In the context of segregation enforced by violence and sometimes death, National Association of Colored Women members realized that voting was one of the ways in which they could resist. They worked to guarantee voting rights especially for African American men but also for women, as a tool for basic safety and survival.

In New York State, African American women formed a network of local clubs. The Equal Rights Association in Brooklyn was particularly active with Susan Smith McKinney Steward, Sarah Smith Garnet, Maritcha Lyons, and Verina Morton-Jones. In 1898, Hester Jeffrey formed the African American Susan B. Anthony suffrage group.

Born in Norfolk City, Virginia, in 1842, Jeffrey lived in Boston, married Roswell Jerome Jeffrey in 1865, and moved to Rochester in 1891. There she quickly became an activist, working both with African Americans through the AME Zion Church, and with European Americans through the First Unitarian Church. She helped raise money for the statue of Frederick Douglass, erected in 1898, the first public monument to a person of color in the U.S. Jeffrey organized or joined a host of reform organizations, both African American and European American, in Rochester and nationally. She became the national organizer for the National Association of Colored Women.

Suffrage was only one among many causes that African American women’s clubs espoused. As Christine Ridarsky noted, “For Black women, the vote was about more than improving their own status; it was also about protecting the status of Black men who were being disenfranchised through educational tests and intimidation. Thus, few Black women’s clubs were organized solely to advocate for suffrage, though many included it among the causes they supported.”

In 1908, all of these were linked statewide into the Empire State Federation of Women’s Clubs. Their mandate was broad, including economic rights, education, political rights, anti-lynching, and

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227 Roslyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women and the Vote*.

228 Goodier and Pastorello, Chapter 4, “A Fundamental Component: Suffrage for African American Women” gives an excellent overview.


care for those in need. They took on responsibility for sending Harriet Tubman money to support herself in the old folks’ home that she had established in Auburn. And they put special emphasis on creating a better future for young African American women. This group affiliated with the NAWC and played a major role for African American club women in New York State. From 1916-20, Mary B. Talbert, an Oberlin graduate and a member of the Michigan Street Baptist Church in Buffalo, served as president of the NAWC. In this position, she raised money to save Frederick Douglass’s home at Cedar Hill, and she promoted issues such as anti-lynching and women’s suffrage. Her work won her the coveted Springarn medal from the NAACP in 1921.

Just as some African American suffragists, such as Hester Jeffrey, worked also with European American-dominated groups such as NAWSA and the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, these groups in turn sometimes invited African American women to speak at white-dominated conventions. Mary Church Terrell, for example, spoke at Seneca Falls in 1908 and again at the fifth annual Ontario County Suffrage Association meeting at the Universalist Church in Clifton Springs, May 25, 1908. 231

While efforts at cross-race collaboration were fairly common in New York State, and many European American suffragists in the region disavowed overt racism, they faced the divisive question of race in their relationships with national suffrage leaders. Southern white suffragists, in particular, argued that women’s suffrage was a way to maintain white supremacy, since European American women outnumbered immigrants and people of color. And they opposed inviting black and white women to sit together in the same conventions. 232

The issue came to national attention in 1900, when the General Federation of Women’s Clubs met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Federation, formed in 1890 by New York City journalist Jennie Croly, coordinated work among white women’s clubs throughout the country. With an early emphasis on self-education, women’s clubs branched out to embrace an activist agenda to oppose child labor, support a pure food and drug act, and beautify local communities. By 1910, they had introduced the idea of suffrage into their national debate (after is earlier introduction by Anna Howard Shaw into the New York State federation meetings).

In 1900, the General Federation had not yet endorsed women’s suffrage, but its actions at their Milwaukee convention were a portent for the future and spilled over into suffrage groups nationally. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, one of the organizers of the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869 and founder of the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, came to the 1900 convention with credentials from three Boston suffrage groups. One, the New Era Club, was an African American group. Two others were predominately European American. When the


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convention agreed to accept her credentials from the two European American groups but not from the African American club, St. Pierre Ruffin refused to be seated at all. 233

A less-well-known example involved Hester Jeffrey, from Rochester. At the same convention, she represented an organization she had founded, the Girls’ Home Association of Rochester, which had joined the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. When she tried to speak, the president “cleverly ignored” her. 234

The action of the GFWC reverberated throughout the country. On the one hand, the National Association of Colored Women, meeting at the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union in Buffalo in 1901, decided deliberately to ignore the whole issue. Delegates included Margaret Murray Washington, wife of Tuskegee’s Booker T. Washington; Mary Church Terrell, President; Mrs. B.K. Bruce, wife of the former African American Senator from Mississippi; Hester Jeffrey from Rochester, the National Association of Colored Women’s national organizer; and Rosetta Douglass Sprague, Frederick Douglass’s daughter, who had grown up in Rochester but was then living in Washington, D.C.; and Mary Talbert from Buffalo, corresponding secretary. On July 10, 1901, the Buffalo Enquirer reported:

At the opening session yesterday, it was deemed likely that some action would be taken regarding the refusal of the National Federation to admit colored women, but the only reference to the race question was made by Mrs. Lottie Wilson of Bay City, Mich., when she said: “We wish to say that the colored women are too busy to argue the question. It does not mean anything to us to be able to participate in the work of white women’s clubs. We have a great mission to carry out, and we mean to do it.” 235

The Buffalo Courier was more direct. “Race Question Is Scorned,” read the headline. “National Association of Colored Women Appears to Treat It with Silent Contempt.” 236

In 1903, however, in a blatant appeal to southern white suffragists, NAWSA repudiated earlier suffrage arguments that political equality was an inherent universal right of all citizens. As Ann Gordon has noted, NAWSA reaffirmed its intent “to do away with the requirement of a sex qualification for suffrage.” But “what other qualifications shall be asked for it leaves to each State.” Essentially, it gave carte blanche to any limitations that states might choose to put on African Americans, men or women, as voters. 237

For many suffragists, issues of racism resolved themselves into tensions between idealism v. pragmatism. If northern suffragists affirmed suffrage as a universal right for all citizens, they risked losing southern support for women’s suffrage. If they excluded African Americans from women’s

236 Buffalo Courier, July 10, 1901.
suffrage organizations, they undermined their own commitment to equality. This debate continued to plague the European American-dominated suffrage movement.

Other issues also began to wear down suffrage optimism. In 1895, Massachusetts voters defeated women’s suffrage in a referendum. In 1897, Delaware voters did the same. In New York State, alerted by the power of suffragists at the state constitutional convention, anti-suffragists founded in 1895 the New York State Association Opposed to Woman’s Suffrage. By 1896, only four states had gained women’s suffrage (Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah). Five states (Oregon, Washington, South Dakota, and New Hampshire) all failed to endorse women’s suffrage. No more states would enter suffrage ranks until 1910, fourteen long years away. 238

Within New York State, suffragists had little success in promoting specific suffrage goals through legislative action. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt, Governor of New York State, suggested that suffragists drop their demand for a constitutional amendment or statewide suffrage referendum. Work on something that the legislature can pass without going to the voters, he advised. The New York State Woman Suffrage Association followed this plan for several years. They had only two results. Beginning in 1901, women who paid taxes in small towns and villages could vote on local special tax assessments. In 1902 to 1907, the legislature held hearings every year on a bill to allow all women in cities with less than 50,000 people to vote. The bill never got out of committee. Finally, in 1910, the legislature agreed that women who paid taxes could vote on bond issues. That was all. 239

Finally, suffragists who had led the organized movement for thirty years were growing older and dying. Matilda Joslyn Gage died of a stroke in 1898. Elizabeth Cady Stanton died of heart failure in 1902, after writing one last letter to Governor Roosevelt, promoting women’s suffrage. Susan B. Anthony, then eighty years old, left the presidency of NAWSA in 1900 to Carrie Chapman Catt.

When Susan B. Anthony died in 1906, her funeral was held on March 15, 1906, in Central Presbyterian Church (on the site of the current Hochstein School of Music). Anna Howard Shaw, Hester Jeffrey, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., and Carrie Chapman Catt delivered eulogies. Catt told her hearers, “To the wrong that needs resistance, To the right that needs assistance, To the future in the distance, Give yourself.” 240

Hester Jeffrey went a step beyond giving eulogies. Just three months before her death, Susan B. Anthony had given her last public speech in the 1879 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on Favor Street in Rochester. In 1907, when the church built the new Memorial AME Zion Church at the same location, Jeffrey included a stained-glass window dedicated to Susan B. Anthony, the first memorial anywhere in the country to honor Anthony after her death. Jean Brooks Greenleaf, former


239 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:454.

president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, spoke at the window’s dedication. Other windows were dedicated to Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Lucy Sprague (a long-time African American suffragist in Rochester), and Hester Jeffrey’s in-laws. All but the Douglass window were moved to the new AMEZ Church on Clarissa Street and still exist.  

Mary Anthony died in 1907, leaving her life savings of $2000 to the suffrage cause. Hester Jeffrey visited Mary Anthony shortly before her death. "See to it that you put your whole mind in this suffrage movement,” she told Jeffrey, “for the destiny of your race is involved in it. The racial issue is whether the negro shall be accorded the rights and privileges of a man and citizen in this country." But changes were on the horizon. New groups supported suffrage. Labor unions, along with the WCTU and the Grange, had long been suffrage allies. But, beginning in the 1890s, working women formed cross-class alliances with middle class women to promote suffrage as one tool for economic equality. Formation of three Women’s Educational and Industrial Unions in upstate New York—in Buffalo, Rochester, and Auburn—created bases for political action. In 1903, women in New York City’s Lower East Side formed the Women’s Trade Union League. This group attracted women from all classes, with the goal of promoting the rights of working women, including the right to vote. In 1907, Harriot Stanton Blatch organized the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, which would play a major role in suffrage activism. African Americans continued to play a role in the suffrage movement, not only through the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs but also through the newly-organized National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1905, the Niagara movement, with W.E.B. DuBois and thirty-one other African American male leaders, met first at the home of William and Mary Talbert in Buffalo before going to Ft. Erie, Ontario, Canada. When leaders formed the NAACP in 1909, they included many women in leadership roles. In the 19-teens, the NAACP also endorsed women’s suffrage. Younger suffragists were also stepping into leadership roles. “Many bright and enthusiastic young workers” attended the first suffrage convention of the century in Glens Falls in 1900. Maud Wood Park and Inez Haynes Irwin, two graduates of Radcliffe College, organized the national College Equal Suffrage League to attract younger members to NAWSA. Cornell University’s Campus Club


became one of many chapters in thirty states, leading NAWSA to organize the National College Equal Suffrage League in 1908 as an official branch.  

Harriot Stanton Blatch was one of the new generation of suffragists. Born in Seneca Falls in 1856, she was the sixth child and second daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and she had been raised with women’s rights ideals. As a little girl, teased by other children, she had come to her mother and asked tearfully, “Muzzer, what is ‘iman’s ‘ights?”

In 1882, she married Harry Blatch, an Englishman. They moved to England, where she became an active suffragist and socialist. When she moved back to the U.S. in 1902, she found U.S. suffragists, in contrast to radical British reformers, conservative and ineffective. Perhaps unaware of grassroots energies across New York State, she thought that the suffrage movement “bored its adherents and repelled its opponents.” Blatch set out to change that.

By 1908, she saw some success. New energies infused the old “boring” suffrage movement.

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244 Kammen and Engst, Beulah Land, 78-80.
245 Margaret Stanton Lawrence, [Rem.], II: 13-14, and "ECS, 1815-1915," 40-41, typescript, Vassar, quoted in Judith Wellman, Road to Seneca Falls, 221.
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Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
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E. On to Victory: New Faces, New Allies, New Methods, 1908-1920

Overview:

Beginning in 1908, signs of rejuvenation emerged in the suffrage movement in New York State and nationally. Newer leaders came to the forefront, with new allies (especially urban working women, wealthy women, socialists, and organized men), a new emphasis on the federal suffrage amendment, and new marketing techniques (including parades, automobile campaigns, street speaking, and women’s days at county fairs).

A celebration of the sixtieth anniversary at Seneca Falls in 1908 highlighted roots of the suffrage movement in central New York and formed a strong platform for moving forward with renewed energy. Moving NAWSA headquarters to New York City in 1909 shifted leadership anchors downstate. Nevertheless, many national and statewide leaders had roots in central New York, and upstate New York remained a major suffrage organizing area.

Some rural counties upstate as well as working class neighborhoods downstate voted for suffrage, but anti-suffrage upstate politicians and editors ensured that most counties in central New York voted against suffrage in both 1915 and 1917. Downstate voters, many from New York City’s Lower East Side, carried women’s suffrage to victory in New York State in 1917.

In terms of the national movement, central New Yorkers divided their support between the NAWSA (whose members backed World War I and President Wilson) and the National Woman’s Party, who opposed Wilson with drastic measures, such as picketing the White House and hunger strikes in jail. The work of both organizations led Wilson to support a federal amendment for women’s suffrage in 1918.

More than five hundred National Woman’s Party members were arrested in Washington, D.C., for picketing the White House. We do not have a list of all of them. But Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, compiled a list of those who actually served time in prison. While many listed their residence as New York State, most of these were from New York City. Very few listed an upstate address. None were from central New York. 247

Key Congressmen from upstate New York helped bring women’s suffrage to the nation with approval of the Nineteenth Amendment in the House of Representatives on May 21, 1919, in the Senate on June 4, 1919, by the Tennessee legislature on August 18, 1920, and finally signed by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby on August 26, 2010.

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A New Generation Builds on the Past and Attracts New Allies

Roots of change in the suffrage movement had been obvious for years, as younger people began to take leadership roles in the movement. In February 1906, New York State suffragists supported NAWSA’s effort to lobby congressional committees for a federal suffrage amendment. At their annual meeting in Syracuse in 1906, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association abandoned their limited goal of suffrage for tax-paying women in small towns and cities. They decided once more to demand a constitutional amendment that would recognize suffrage for all women in New York State. New energies emerged to support these larger goals.

By 1907, these new groups began to have an impact. Harriot Stanton Blatch’s Political League of Self-Supporting Women gave testimony before a committee of the New York State legislature on February 6, 1907, and held a mass suffrage rally, the first in many years, in Cooper Union, New York City.248

But the real effort was yet to come. On May 26-17, 1908, suffragists across the state and national used the sixtieth anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention to kick off a major organizing campaign and a renewed emphasis on statewide and national suffrage amendments. Blatch started the effort at the old Wesleyan Chapel, now the Johnson Opera House, in Seneca Falls. Later sessions met in Mynderse Academy and the Presbyterian Church.

Thousands attended the celebration. The program brought together, noted the Seneca County Courier-Journal, “brilliant women, leaders of thought, from all parts of the state and nation” to commemorate “the movement for Equal Rights, which has been world-wide in its results.” Participants included one signer of the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments (Mary Hallowell), as well as pioneer suffragist Antoinette Brown Blackwell. Maud Nathan, prominent New York City suffragist of Jewish background and President of the New York Consumers’ League, Alice Hooker Day, Nathaniel Schmidt, Cornell University Professor, and Mary Seymour Howell also spoke. Fanny Garrison Villard (daughter of William Lloyd Garrison), Eliza Wright Osborne (daughter of Martha Wright), and Harriot Stanton Blatch commemorated their suffragist parents. Mary Church Terrell spoke in remembrance of Frederick Douglass. Rev. Annis Ford Eastman spoke for Elizabeth Smith Miller, who could not be present. 249

Ella Hawley Crossett, president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, unveiled a bronze plaque on the Wesleyan Chapel. Designed by Elizabeth St. Matthews, it included an image of Justice with the following inscription:

On this spot stood the Wesleyan Chapel where the first Woman's Rights Convention in the world's history was held, July 19 and 20, 1848. At that meeting Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved the following resolution, which was seconded by Frederick Douglass: Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves the sacred right to the elective franchise.

248 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:486.
249 Seneca County Courier-Journal, May 28, 1908.
Women’s Rights National Historical Park has moved the original plaque inside, but a replica remains on its original spot on the now-preserved Chapel wall. 250

After the ceremonies in Seneca Falls, Blatch, Professor Earl Barnes, and others took a trolley ride from Seneca Falls to New York City, stopping to give suffrage speeches all along the way. 251

The Buffalo Political Equality Club, headed by long-time President Mrs. Richard Williams, invited both the New York State Woman Suffrage Association and the NAWSA to hold their annual convention in Buffalo, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary in Seneca Falls, October 15-21, 1908. Emily Howland, then eighty-one years old, represented that first generation of pioneer suffragists in New York State. She gave a talk at the NAWSA convention on the “Spirit of 1848.” 252

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association reported extensive outreach to allied groups. Anna Howard Shaw had spoken to the New York State Federation of Women’s Clubs. Harriet May Mills was a speaker at the World’s Temperance Congress. The state convention agreed to keep its statewide headquarters in Syracuse but to open an office in Albany, as well, while the legislature was in session.253

In 1908, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association re-introduced their demand for a New York State constitutional amendment recognizing women’s suffrage. In hearings before the Judiciary Committee, Ella Hawley Crossett and several suffragists from New York City presented their case. With support from the New York City Federation of Labor (250,000 members), the New York State Grange (75,000 members), the New York City Federation of Women’s Clubs (35,000 members), and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (30,000 members). Suffragists, including those from newly-energized women’s clubs, deluged legislators with letters. Legislators were unmoved. Neither the Senate nor the Assembly took action. James Wadsworth, Jr., from Geneseo, Livingston County, was speaker of the Assembly and an outspoken opponent of women’s suffrage. So was his wife Alice Hay Wadsworth, who served as president of the National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage. From 1914-1926, James Wadsworth served as U.S. Senator from New York. In that position, he opposed women’s suffrage in Congress.254

Harriot Stanton Blatch continued her agitation. Three hundred women from the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women appeared in Albany on February 19, 1908, and she organized a mass meeting at Carnegie Hall in New York City. She brought Emmeline Pankhurst to the U.S. in 1909, to speak at suffrage groups all over New York State. The Geneva Political Equality Club hosted...
Pankhurst on November 22, 1909, for a talk entitled “The Meaning of the Women’s Movement in England.”

At least some suffrage groups in central New York experienced a resurgence. The Political Study Club in Ithaca reached one hundred members, the largest increase in membership of any suffrage group in New York State. At its annual meeting in Troy, New York, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association announced that “‘Not since the constitutional convention in 1894 had so much work been reported.” Ella Hawley Crossett, state president, or Harriet May Mills, vice-president, had attended suffrage meetings in forty-one counties.

Also in 1908, African American women organized the Empire State Federation of Women’s Clubs at the White Rose Home, a settlement house in Harlem in 1908, under the direction of Alice Wiley-Seay, born enslaved in Virginia in 1858. Their goal was two-fold: to do “uplift work among girls and young women” and to provide for Harriet Tubman in her old age. At their first annual meeting in July 1909, they reported memberships from twenty clubs in the New York City area. They would expand to include 103 clubs across New York State. Suffrage became one of their causes.

Emily Howland and the Cayuga County Political Equality Club also remained a staunch friend of Harriet Tubman. In 1911, Howland gave a talk to the club, paying tribute to Tubman and reading a letter from the Board of Managers of the Tubman Home, inviting members to visit Tubman there.

The momentum continued. In 1909, headquarters of both the NAWSA and the New York State Woman Suffrage Association moved to New York City. Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont, wealthy socialite, was newly-committed to the cause and used her immense wealth to promote it. She personally paid rent on an entire floor of an office building at 505 Fifth Avenue at the corner of Forty-second Street. She also established a national press bureau. Such an infusion of funds brought new energy to the suffrage movement in New York State and the country as a whole.

With help from Senator Henry W. Hill from Buffalo and Assemblyman Frederick R. Toombs from New York City, both Republicans, New York State Woman Suffrage Association once more introduced a resolution to take out the word “male” from the New York State constitution. Suffragists were enthusiastic. They stood for four hours, listening to the speeches before the Judiciary Committee, and then they attended a mass meeting in the Assembly Chamber that night.

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255 Townsend, Ontario County, 54.
256 Kamen and Engst, Beulah Land, 87; History of Woman Suffrage, VI:446.
|sketch-alice-wiley-seay#page/1/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic_entity|bibliographic_details|3935930; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 8, 1909.
258 Wellman, Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District, 52.
Ella Hawley Crossett asked the committee: "Does it mean nothing to you that 40,000 women in this State are organized to secure the franchise; that a few years ago 600,000 people signed the petition for woman suffrage to the constitutional convention; that associations formed for other purposes representing hundreds of thousands of members have endorsed it?" She had her question answered. The committee took no action, nor did the Legislature. 260

In 1910, reported the History of Woman Suffrage, the hearing broke all records. "The Assembly Chamber was filled to the utmost and surging crowds outside tried to get in. Members of both Houses stood for hours listening to the speeches." Judiciary Committees in both Senate and Assembly refused to let the bill go to the legislature for a vote, "admitting," though suffragists, "that it would be carried if they did." They repeated the process every year, with the same result, until suffrage finally passed in 1917. 261

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People organized in 1909. It became an important voice for suffrage for African American men and also for women’s suffrage. They devoted a whole issue of The Crisis in August 1915 to women’s suffrage. Mary Talbert from Buffalo, New York, wrote one article for this issue, "Women and Colored Women." Mary Church Terrell wrote another, "Woman Suffrage and the Fifteenth Amendment." 262

With help from socialists, working women also organized with great effectiveness around suffrage. John Spargo, a socialist from New York City, spoke "independently with much power, demanding the vote especially for working women," at the 1909 hearing before the Judiciary Committee. Women in New York City’s garment district, including Clara Lemlich, Rose Schneiderman, and Pauline Newman, also agitated for suffrage, generating a major debate in 1909 within labor organizations and helping to promote International Woman’s Day. The Triangle Shirtwaist fire in 1911, which killed 145 young immigrant women, generated a new sense of urgency to national debates about working conditions and rights for factory women. Rose Schneiderman called for both "bread and roses." And women formed a new Wage Earners League for Woman Suffrage. "Why are you paid less than a man? Why do you work in a fire trap? Why are your hours so long?" they asked working women. And the answer was obvious: "Because you are a woman and have no vote. Votes make the law. The law controls conditions. Women who want better conditions must vote."263

On October 18-21, 1910, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association held its annual meeting in the auditorium of the Shredded Wheat Company in Niagara Falls. It was Ella Hawley Crossett’s last year as president, and she could be proud of the organization’s accomplishments. With a

261 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:457.
membership of 58,000, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association now counted 155 local clubs and thirty-seven county clubs. They had held 695 public meetings across the state, with another 1614 meetings of local societies. The state association had held 241 meetings, including at least one in every unorganized county in the state, making a total of 2550 meetings in one year alone. Petitions were sent to Congress with names of 72,086 signers in upstate New York plus 24,114 names from New York City.264

The work had not been easy. It required coordination of people in local communities all across the state. “Lack of space prevents naming the hundreds of women who gave unceasing service through these years when faith and courage were required and there were no victories as a reward,” noted the History of Woman Suffrage. “In all the cities of the State the local women arranged courses of lectures with prominent speakers and kept suffrage continually before the people through the press and in other ways. By this quiet, persistent work of comparatively few women the foundation was laid for the majorities in the many “up-State” counties when the amendment came to a vote.” 265

Max Eastman, then a young professor at Columbia University, became the organizer for the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage, the first of its kind in the country. Eastman was the son of Annis Ford Eastman, Congregational minister from central New York, who had raised both her son Max and her daughter Crystal with ideas of women’s rights. Both Max and Crystal Eastman moved to New York City, where they became leaders of the new generation of suffragists. The idea for a Men’s League had originated in conversation between Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the New York Evening Post, and Anna Howard Shaw, with input from Rabbi Stephen Wise. It attracted support from well-known bankers, financiers, and newspaper men. George Foster Peabody was an early supporter and key funder. James Lee Laidlaw served as president for six years and carried the idea of a men’s suffrage organization across the country, helping to create the National Men’s League. Although the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage was centered in New York City, the group held meetings throughout New York State, including one in Rochester. Max Eastman became a featured speaker especially on college campuses, where he organized many suffrage clubs. 266

Also in 1910, the Women’s Political Union (formerly the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women), sponsored the first suffrage parade in New York City, organized by Mrs. James Lee Laidlaw. Eighty-seven men from the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage bravely marched in this parade, subject to jeers and taunts from the crowd. The History of Woman Suffrage reported, “No act of men during the whole history of woman suffrage required more courage than that of the 87 who marched up Fifth Avenue on that occasion, jeered by the crowds that lined the sidewalks.” 267

264 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:447.
265 History of Woman Suffrage, VI: 448.
267 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:485.
Such parades had precedents in upstate New York. On August 6, 1909, for example, Political Equality Club members in Geneva won a prize for their decorated automobile, driven in the Fireman’s Association parade. 268

The 1910 parade was followed by annual New York City parades. In 1911, at least 3000 people followed a banner carried by Inez Milholland, a Brooklynite who spent summers at her family home in Lewis, Essex County. The banner read: “Forward out of error, Leave behind the night, Forward through the darkness, Forward into light.” Marchers walked from 57th Street to Union Square, where they were greeted by a crowd of 10,000 people. In 1912, the parade was even larger. Thousands, including those from the Men’s Suffrage League, walked from Washington Square to Central Park, viewed by half a million spectators. Among them were Emily Howland and Isabel Howland from Sherwood, New York, wearing white dresses with purple sashes. The following year, Emily Howland attended one more New York City parade, this time riding in an “electric.” 269

In 1911, headquarters for the New York State Woman Suffrage Association moved to an old mansion at 180 Madison Avenue south of Thirty-fourth Street, New York City. But annual meetings continued to be held in upstate New York. In 1911, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association met again in Ithaca, New York, for its forty-second meeting. Two hundred delegates met in the First Baptist Church and in Sage Chapel. The convention met in Utica in 1912 and in Binghamton in 1913. 270

The focus of these suffrage work in 1911-12 was a huge statewide campaign, with over two hundred open air rallies held in the summer months outside New York City, especially on Long Island and in eastern, northern, and western counties. The Women’s Political Union brought to Albany in 1912 “the largest suffrage delegation which had ever gone there. They practically compelled consideration of the suffrage resolution and after its defeat campaigned against the enemies, ending the political careers of some of them.” And from December 16-28, 1912, suffragists, under the leadership of “General” Roslie Jones marched the 170 miles from New York City to Albany to present a request for suffrage to the new governor William Sulzer. Sulzer’s response was heartening: “All my life I have believed in the right of women to exercise the franchise with men as a matter of justice. I will do what I can to advance their political rights and have already incorporated in my Message advice to the legislators to pass the suffrage measure.” So successful was this march in New York State that Jones decided to do a similar march to Washington, D.C. On Lincoln’s birthday, February 12, 1913, they left Hudson terminal in New York City, headed to the nation’s capital. They arrived just before Wilson’s inauguration, to take part in the huge suffrage parade organized by Alice Paul on March 3, 1913. 271

After narrow defeats in 1911 and 1912, the legislature finally responded favorably. In January 1913, it agreed to support a referendum for a women’s suffrage amendment to the New York State

268 Townsend, Ontario County, 49.
269 Townsend, 59; Newspaper clipping, May 17, 1912, and letter noted from Emily Howland Papers, #2681, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; typewritten notes [Mildred Myers?], Hazard Library, Poplar Ridge.
270 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:449; Kammen and Engst, Beulah Land, 87-88.
271 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:451.
Constitution. After approval by a second legislative session in 1914, the measure would go to voters in a public referendum in 1915.


At the same time, suffragists nationally began again to press for a federal woman suffrage amendment. Energized by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, who led the Congressional Union committee of NAWSA, NAWSA turned once more toward a national amendment. Paul and Burns, with experience in the more radical British suffrage movement, were frustrated, however, by NAWSA’s conservative tactics. In December 1913, they broke away to form an independent suffrage organization. Their first major action was to organize a huge parade and pageant in Washington, D.C., on the eve of Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration. Attempting to gain support from southern white suffragists, Alice Paul asked African American women to march separately at the end of the parade. Most did so, but Ida B. Wells-Barnett from the Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago made history by marching with the Illinois contingent. Jeers and catcalls from hostile onlookers created chaos through much of the march. At the 1914 march the following May, police were better prepared, and the march proceeded in good order. 272

By 1916, the Congressional Union called themselves the National Woman’s Party, and they would create innovative, dramatic, and effective actions that no one in the nation, most especially President Woodrow Wilson, could ignore. They picketed the White House (the first group to do so), went to jail, and initiated hunger strikes.

In order to get a federal amendment, suffragists needed votes in Congress. With the addition of Washington (1911) and California (1912), there were six states, all in the West, that had approved women’s suffrage by 1913. All eyes turned to New York State. Everyone predicted that New York, with the largest population of any state in the Union, would be the first state east of the Mississippi to approve women’s suffrage. And when it did, momentum would be unstoppable for a federal amendment.

Nationally, every one of the country’s 435 congressional districts sent a suffrage delegation to Congress when it officially opened on April 7, 1913. Suffragists presented petitions from each of these districts, demanding women’s suffrage. Some of these petitions came from central New York. The *Journal of the House of Representatives* recorded, for example, “petition of the Political Study Club, of Ithaca, N.Y., favoring the legislation conferring the right of suffrage on women; to the Committee on the Judiciary. Also, petition of the Cornell Equal Suffrage Club of Ithaca, N.Y., favoring an amendment to the Constitution of the United States giving women suffrage; to the Committee on the Judiciary.” and the women’s suffrage amendment was introduced into both the Senate and the House.  

In June, the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage reported favorably on the amendment, for the first time in twenty-one years. July brought even more hopeful news. Doris Stevens, a member of the Congressional Union, described the scene:

> a monster petition signed by hundreds of thousands of citizens was brought to the Senate asking that body to pass the national suffrage amendment. Women from all parts of the country mobilized in the countryside of Maryland where they were met with appropriate ceremonies-by the Senate Woman Suffrage Committee. The delegation motored in gaily decorated automobiles to Washington and went direct to the Senate, where the entire day was given over to suffrage discussion. Twenty-two senators spoke in favor of the amendment, presenting their petitions. Three spoke against it. For the first time in twenty-six years suffrage was actually debated in Congress. That day was historic.

The 1913 convention of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association was held in Binghamton, Harriet May Mills was replaced as president by Mrs. Raymond Brown, the first president from New York City since Little Devereux Blake. Of the eleven officers and directors, four were from central New York: Mrs. Nicolas Shaw Fraser from Geneseo was recording secretary, while Harriet May Mills (Syracuse), Helen Probst Abbot (Rochester), and Ruth Woolsey Mott (Oswego) were directors. Ruth Woolsey Mott represented a powerful husband-wife suffrage team. Her husband Luther W. Mott was a banker and Republican Congressman from Oswego, New York. Her promoted both women’s suffrage and prohibition throughout his years in Congress, from 1911 until his death in 1923. Their house still stands.

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All this public organizing received considerable attention in the press and resulted in a major increase in support for the New York State Woman Suffrage Association. Paying membership in the statewide organization increased from 5252 in October 1910 to 8139 in October 1913, with another 50,000 non-dues-paying members. They published a regular newsletter, under the editorship of Harriet May Mills for ten years and then under Minnie Reynolds and Cora E. Mills for four more. It continued to send the largest statewide delegation to annual meetings of NAWSA.\textsuperscript{276}

As a result of renewed energy across the state, several new suffrage clubs were organized in central New York in 1913. In Ontario County, for example, the Gorham Political Equality Club formed under the auspices of the Geneva Political Equality Club, with fourteen charter members. The Victor Equality Club organized at the home of Mary L. Draper, with seventeen members. Members of the Victor Equality Club marched in parades in both Rochester and New York City. William Smith College organized a club in 1914. The following year, Shortsville organized a Political Equality Club on March 4, 1915. Canandaigua formally organized a suffrage club in 1915, inviting Carrie Chapman Catt herself to speak at the Ontario County Woman Suffrage Association’s meeting in what is now the Ontario County Historical Museum.\textsuperscript{277}

In 1913, Iowa-born Carrie Chapman Catt, President of NAWSA and then a resident of New Rochelle, New York, created a “winning plan” for both national and statewide organizing. Catt was an organizing genius, and she envisioned seamless coordination between local, state, and national action. Within New York State, working with a coalition of suffrage groups, she divided the state into twelve districts. Central New York included District Five, Syracuse, with Mrs. L.O. McDaniel and then Harriet May Mills as chair; District Six, Ithaca, Helen B. Owens, Chair; District Seven, Rochester, Alice C. Clement, Chair, and District Twelve, Utica, Lucy C. Watson, Chair. Organization reached every polling district in the state.\textsuperscript{278}

By January 1914, they activated this plan, holding mass meetings in every county, with “Schools of Method” to train grassroots organizers. Catt visited fifty upstate counties, and twenty-eight paid organizers spread out across the state. Suffragists in Victor, New York, held one such meeting on February 20, 1914, attracting seventy-five people to hear Helen Probst Abbott from Rochester and Agnes Blossom Lewis, Ontario County suffrage leader. That same month, Helen Owens, Chair of District Six, held a conference in Sibley Dome, in conjunction with Cornell University’s Homemakers’ Conference. Both Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw gave major addresses. In March, the Canandaigua Current Events Club held a meeting in the Congregational Church, inviting Mrs. Raymond Brown, President of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, to speak.\textsuperscript{279}

Many newspapers took up the cause. In February 1915, \textit{Puck}, a humor magazine that was once anti-suffrage, published a special issue devoted entirely to suffrage. It included cartoons and pictures, some featuring kewpie dolls created by illustrator Rose O’Neill, urging readers to cut them out and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[276] \textit{History of Woman Suffrage}, VI:449.
\item[277] Townsend, \textit{Ontario County}, 64, 90, 102, 108, 124.
\item[278] \textit{History of Woman Suffrage}, VI:470.
\end{footnotes}
put them on their walls. In March, the *Geneva Daily Times* published a twelve-page appeal to Ontario County voters to support women’s suffrage in the November referendum.  

The New York State Woman Suffrage Association held its annual convention in Rochester on October 12-14, 1914, at Convention Hall (now Geva Theater), Powers Hotel, Genesee Valley Park, and street corners in downtown. Women came in automobiles from all over New York State, stopping to hold street meetings along the route. When they arrived in Rochester, Carrie Chapman Catt greeted them with a plan of work for the whole year, dividing tasks into monthly assignments for each district. She assigned each district a proportion of the $150,000 she planned to raise. She outlined plans for schools for suffrage organizers and poll watchers, street speaking, special editions of newspapers in every county, an automobile campaign, parades in every large city, presentations at county fairs, and a house-to-house canvass to collect names of every pro-suffrage woman. Delegates got a chance to practice their skills, holding street meetings in downtown Rochester and a large automobile parade that began in Genesee Valley Park. A month later, a mass meeting in Carnegie Hall raised $115,000, the largest amount ever raised in a suffrage meeting in one day.

Within New York State, suffragists organized a highly coordinated campaign that reached into all 150 assembly districts. About 200,000 women worked statewide on this campaign, including forty paid organizers, who held mass meetings in every county and in 124 cities across the state. In the six months prior to the election, suffragists recorded 10,325 meetings. “Flying squadrons” went from city to city, canvassing voters, standing on automobiles, soap boxes, or steps to hold street speeches, and attracting press reports. The week before the election, major cities such as Rochester, Buffalo, and New York City held marathon sessions, speaking a full twenty-four hours. Suffragists invaded movie theaters and vaudeville shows with posters, advertisements, and onstage performances from comedians, for whom suffragists collected jokes. Writers and artists created newspaper and magazine articles, posters, and banners. They printed 7,230,000 leaflets, 657,200 booklets, 149,533 posters, and a million suffrage buttons. Two hundred thousand match cards appealed to smokers with the words “Vote Yes on the Suffrage Amendment.”

The Press Bureau had 214 volunteer press coordinators all over the state. Ten of the fifteen daily newspapers in New York City were pro-suffrage. Rural newspapers overwhelmingly supported suffrage. Newspapers in upstate cities, however, were generally opposed, and this would prove to be disastrous for suffragists.

As New York State headed toward the woman suffrage referendum in November 1915, suffragists had reason to be hopeful. Eleven western states had already recognized women’s suffrage. Statewide energies received support from national efforts. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs finally endorsed a federal suffrage amendment, and five hundred women descended on President Wilson’s office to lobby for it. And the Supreme Court ruled in favor the NAACP’s suit against grandfather clauses, enacted by seven southern states to prevent many African American men from voting. It

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281 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:474.

Energy in New York State ran high, as people from central New York joined thousands of suffragists who marched down Fifth Avenue on October 23, 1915. Ethel Stebbins, an 1895 graduate of Cornell University, served as grand marshal. The New York State Woman Suffrage Association estimated that 38,783 marchers walked down Fifth Avenue from 2:00 p.m. until long after dark, in the largest suffrage parade ever organized.

Geneva sent the largest upstate contingent. Mary Gray Peck from Seneca Castle recorded her impressions of the march in her diary:

\begin{quote}
Day of the grand parade. About 40,000 marchers. Estimates all the way from that of the Anti’s (25,000) to that of the N.Y. American, 52,626!! Already 5 Av. [5th Avenue] was lined w. crowds & the traffic suspended. At 3 the bugsle blew the advance. Mrs. Catt led us out onto the Av. and from then till 7 p.m. the thousands of marchers poured out the Sq. The last weary ones reached the Park at 8 p.m. five hours after. Union League Club greeted w. sight of our own members heading men’s division! Men’s League sang John Brown’s Body to words “We will vote for Woman Suffrage Due next Election Day. Glory Hallelujah!” Socialist men chanted “Votes, Votes, Votes for Women” to mark time, 30 bands, women in white w. yellow sashes, Mrs. Catt walked all the way, as did Anna Shaw. A million people watched us. \footnote{Quoted in Townsend, Ontario County, 72, 121. Townsend noted names of Geneva suffragists who went to the parade: Mrs. Alfred G. Lewis, Mrs. Thomas H. Truslow, Mrs. W. W. Page, Mrs. D. W. Hallenbeck, Miss Edith Wells, Miss Marjorie Wagner, and Mrs. Irving McGraw. Florence Stewart came from Canandaigua. Mrs. Charles Marsh attended from Victor.}
\end{quote}

On the night before election day, the Women’s Political Union sponsored a lunch for one thousand people at the Hotel Astor, to celebrate Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s one hundredth birthday. Daughters Harriot Stanton Blatch and Margaret Stanton both gave reminiscences.

The \textit{History of Woman Suffrage} reported on suffragists’ mood in October 1915. “There seemed no end to the women who were determined to win the vote and a multitude of men seemed to be ready to grant it.” Rural voters seemed particularly supportive of suffrage. Dr. Lavinia Davis spoke in October 1915 to a WCTU convention in Ithaca. “I believe New York will carry this election,” she said, “if you work back on the hills and valleys. Our hope lies in the rural districts.” \footnote{Quoted in Kammen and Engst, \textit{Boudah Land}, 106.}

Such was not to be. On November 2, 1915, New York State voters defeated the woman suffrage amendment by 194,984 votes. The vote was about the same in both downstate and upstate areas,
About 43.5 percent in favor and 56.5 percent against. Most central New York counties voted against women's suffrage. In part, they were influenced by highly organized conservative politicians, in major upstate cities, supported by anti-suffrage newspapers. James W. Wadsworth, Jr., in Genesee, was a powerful opponent. His wife Alice Hay Wadsworth, President of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, encouraged him. New Jersey and Pennsylvania defeated suffrage, also.²⁸⁵

Only five counties in New York State supported suffrage. True to predictions, they were all rural areas, with small cities. Tompkins was in central New York, Chautauqua County in western New York, Broome County in the southern tier all voted in favor. Initial reports showed that Cortland County approved suffrage by nine votes, but a later count showed that it failed to pass. Some disagreement exists about whether Niagara, Chemung, and Schenectady Counties approved suffrage. Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, noted that most counties opposed suffrage “by a range of fifty-two to seventy-three percent, with one third of all counties coming out against suffrage at sixty percent or more.” ²⁸⁶

In an article in the Cornell Women’s Review in December 1915, Nora Stanton Blatch DeForest, Stanton’s granddaughter and first women to graduate from Cornell with a degree in civil engineering, broke the vote in New York City down further: “The silk stocking districts were most unfavorable,” she wrote, “in spite of the fact that the most suffrage work had been done in them. The only assembly districts that carried were the… purely laboring class districts. The vote also went by nationalities; the Italians, the Serbs and the English against; the Germans and French for; the Americans, Irish and Jews divided.” ²⁸⁷

“The disappointment was almost crushing,” noted the History of Woman Suffrage. The challenge had been “almost superhuman,” and the work “colossal,” in a campaign “never before approached anywhere in the history of suffrage.” Most likely, it was the largest non-violent campaign ever carried out in U.S. history. In spite of the huge effort, suffragists blamed themselves for not raising enough money and not having enough workers in every town and county.

But they remained optimistic. “Suffrage has fallen, but it has fallen forward,” reported Juanita Breckenridge Bates in Ithaca. They realized that almost half a million voters had left the suffrage question blank. All they had to do was convince those undecided men to support suffrage. Two days after the election, suffrage organizations held a mass meeting at Cooper Union in New York City, where, “with boundless enthusiasm,” they raised $100,000. Harriet Stanton Blatch’s Women’s Political Union was notably absent. They withdrew entirely from state suffrage efforts. Instead, they joined the national Women’s Political Union and its concentration on a federal amendment. ²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ History of Woman Suffrage, VI, reported that Tompkins, Cortland, Broome, Chautauqua, and Niagara Counties approved suffrage. Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 167, reported that Broome, Chemung, Chautauqua, Cortland Schenectady, and Tompkins County passed women’s suffrage.
²⁸⁷ Nora Blatch DeForest, quoted in Kammern and Engst, Beulah Land, 111.
²⁸⁸ History of Woman Suffrage, VI:475; Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 167-69.
On November 30 - December 2, suffragists re-organized the New York State Woman Suffrage Association into the New York State Woman Suffrage Party. Several political equality clubs also changed their names from “club” to “party.” Leadership of the new organization, now with over a million dues-paying members, came overwhelmingly from New York City. Vira (sometimes spelled “Vera”) Boarman Whitehouse, wife of stockbroker Norman DeRapelye Whitehouse, replaced Carrie Chapman Catt, new president of NAWSA, as chair. We will succeed, said Whitehouse, “on the twin pillars of money and steady organizational work.” Officers included only three women from upstate New York: Artist Alice Morgan Wright from Albany, Henrietta Wells Livermore from Buffalo, and Harriet May Mills from Syracuse.  

They lost no time. Under the leadership of Vira Boarman Whitehouse, they introduced a new suffrage resolution into the state legislature on January 10, 1916. In spite of concerted Republican opposition and lukewarm Democratic support, a visit of five hundred women on March 14 and a concerted pro-suffrage press campaign convinced thirty-three senators to vote or it on April 10, with only ten nay votes. The Assembly followed shortly after. It took one more vote of the legislature in 1916 to get the measure before voters in 1917.

Suffrage organizers went right to work across the state, holding mass meetings and trying to organize men’s suffrage leagues in every county. In Shortsville, New York, a “splendid body” of 150 “earnest and enthusiastic women” met on May 5, 1916. On May 10, a local suffragist and playwright, Frances Brunson, presented a satirical suffrage play, “Surrender of Sam” to a gathering at the Fortnightly Club in East Bloomfield. In September, the Ontario County Woman Suffrage Party held a booth at the Ontario County Fair in Canandaigua, selling all sorts of baked goods, candies, and garden produce.

An organizer’s life was not sedentary. In August, Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, NAWSA organizer in Auburn, New York, described her exhausting day in a letter to her parents. She had talked a member of the men’s suffrage committee into submitting a resolution on suffrage to the Letter Carriers Union, recruited another man to speak at the Cayuga County Fair in Moravia, solicited women to make thirty cakes for soldiers, had two news stories published in each of the two local papers, and talked to three women, trying to get them to be city chair. She spoke publicly at suffrage events all over her region, hosted outside speakers at her own expense, and generated press reports.

The plan was that every polling district would have a captain and ten workers, with a chair and board of officers in every major city. Alice Clement and then Mrs. Henry G. Danforth spearheaded the campaign in Rochester. Mary Hyde Andrews, followed by Gertrude (Mrs. Frank) Tone, worked in Syracuse. Lucy C. Watson headed efforts in Utica. Eighty-eight trained organizers supervised volunteers. Suffragists from Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire

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289 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:476; Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 164, 169-71
290 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:476.
291 Ontario County Times, September 19, 1917; Townsend, Ontario County, 75, 83; Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 165.
292 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 162, 174-78.
and several western and southern states joined the effort. A door-to-door campaign aimed to reach every household. Special mailings to targeted audiences of male voters included a focus on men serving in the military. Mary Peck, from Seneca Castle, New York, noted that this strategy was a major focus “because it demanded service from every worker, did not offend sensitive parties as more spectacular efforts would have done, and reached into individual homes as meetings never could.” The result, noted Susan Lewis, “was the largest individually-signed petition ever assembled.” A total of 1,014,000 women signed the petition, a majority of women in New York State. 293

The Educational Section established travelling libraries and training schools for poll watchers. They sent out eleven million brochures and letters and seven million posters upstate, with another five million in New York City. Correspondence suffrage schools to reach rural women, developed by Gertrude Foster Brown and Mrs. Howard Mansfield, became the model for national efforts in rural counties. The New York State Federation of Labor and the Women’s Trade Union League sent out literature and spoke at meetings and on street corners. A church section worked specifically to enlist church members. More than 9000 speeches and meetings were held upstate and 11,100 in New York City. The History of Woman Suffrage noted that “Every kind of advertising medium was used, billboards, street cars, subway and elevated cars and stations, railroad cars and stations; large electric signs and painted illuminated signs flashed weeks before election, the slogan most often used being, "1,014,000 Women ask you to Vote for Woman Suffrage November 6." 294

Raising money was a constant task. Upstate, Emily Howland from Sherwood, New York, and Eliza Wright Osborne (Martha Wright’s daughter) from Auburn, New York, became the most important donors. A bequest from Mrs. Frank Leslie, publisher of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, provided almost a million dollars. 295

In September, Maine defeated a suffrage amendment, and suffragists in New York feared the same result. In October, however, they received hope from Woodrow Wilson who received cordially a delegation of one hundred New York State suffragists, led by Vira Bohrman Whitehouse. "I am very glad to add my voice to those which are urging the people of your State to set a great example by voting for woman suffrage.”

On October 27, 1917, suffragists held a huge suffrage parade, the last ever held in New York City. Delegations of suffragists from upstate carried huge posters with petitions pasted on them. District captains from New York City carried their petitions in sixty-two huge ballot boxes, with numbers of signatures listed on each. When Tompkins County parade posters were returned to Ithaca, Juanita Breckenridge Bates, suffragist leader, presented them to the Ithaca mayor—her husband Fred Bates.296

294 Goodier and Pastorello give a fine overview of the 1916-17 campaign in Women Will Vote, 171-78.
295 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 173.
On November 6, 1917, was an historic day. New York State voters carried the women’s suffrage referendum by 102,353 votes. But, in spite of the central New York’s reputation as the birthplace of the women’s rights movement, women’s suffrage lost in upstate New York by 1510 votes. People in Auburn, Oswego, and Syracuse voted in favor, but Rochester citizens voted against women’s suffrage, influenced by anti-suffrage Republican George W. Aldrich and negative press from local papers. In spite of support from Republican Governor Charles S. Whitman, the Republic machine all over the state worked against the amendment. Livingston County followed the anti-suffrage lead of Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr. “His influence was so strong and his financial hold on the county so powerful,” noted the History of Woman Suffrage, “that even men who were in sympathy with woman suffrage were afraid to vote for it. This influence materially reduced the favorable vote in adjoining counties.” Ontario County voted against the amendment, with the exception of the Town of Seneca, where Mary Gray Peck, Carrie Chapman Catt’s personal secretary, lived. So did Seneca County, home of the first women’s rights convention. 297

But several cities and some rural counties across the state, including, most importantly, New York City, carried the amendment to victory. Tompkins County voted for suffrage, as it had in 1915, by 3307 in favor to 1778 against. Buffalo changed its 1915 negative results to a suffrage majority of 4560 in 1917. And New York City voters, many of them from working class and immigrant districts, carried the amendment by fifty-three percent of the total vote. They were unexpectedly helped by Charles Murphy, Democratic Party boss from Tammany Hall. As Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello noted, “The withdrawal of his opposition effectively translated to Tammany support for women’s rights to vote.” 298

The History of Woman Suffrage listed many reasons for the 1917 victory: support from voters of all parties, labor unions, and prominent men and organizations, as well as women’s war work and the model of European countries who had granted women’s suffrage. “Most of all,” it concluded, “it was due to the originality, the dauntless energy, the thorough organization methods and the ceaseless Campaigning of the suffrage workers, who in winning the great Empire State not only secured the vote for New York women but made the big commonwealth an important asset in the final struggle for the Federal Suffrage Amendment.” 299

When New York State finally recognized women’s suffrage in November 1917, Emily Howland wrote to her niece Isabel, “Congratulations by phone and calls that Suffrage is won in New York State. I feel as though I was receiving as proxy for the absent and gone before. It seems too wonderful to be true. I went to Auburn yesterday to get in touch with the spirit

298 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:467-68; Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 179, 182. Emily Howland She had appeared onstage at the 1912 NAWSA convention, where she announced in a trembling voice that, although she could not attend many more conventions, she wished to give one more major gift, a donation of $800. The entire audience cheered loudly. Only Jane Addams received louder applause, noted one newspaper. NAWSA again sent greetings to Howland as one of the “original surviving pioneers” in 1916 and 1917.
299 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:467-68.

Historic Context Statement for Women’s Suffrage in Central New York
Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
of the time. Mr. Bowen rolled us in thy car . . . Everybody wished that thee was there. It did seem too bad that thee could not be there at the last.” 300

Only one signer of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments remained alive to vote in November 1918. Rhoda Palmer, a Quaker from Geneva, New York, born in 1816, was 102 years and five months old when she went to the polling booth. She died nine months later, only two doors from the house in which she had been born. 301

New York State became the fourteenth state, and the first east of the Mississippi, to recognize women’s suffrage. New York was the “Gettysburg of the woman suffrage movement,” said Carrie Chapman Catt. “The victory is not New York’s alone,” reminded them. “It’s the nation’s.” Passage of women’s suffrage in New York State vastly strengthened effort for a federal suffrage amendment. New York State moved forty-five congressional delegates and forty-five electoral college votes into the suffrage camp. 302

At the national level, Carrie Chapman Catt replaced Anna Howard Shaw as president of the NAWSA, now two million strong. NAWSA moved its headquarters from New York City to Washington, D.C. At their annual meeting in Atlantic City in 1916, Catt introduced her “winning plan,” based on New York State’s successful organization. She wanted only women who could devote full-time to coordinated suffrage organization at both state and national levels. She got it. In two stories of their Manhattan headquarters, they “transformed NAWSA into a modern, urban, cosmopolitan lobby for women’s right to vote,” noted historian Jonathan Soffer. 303

In July 1916, President Wilson—finally—agreed to promote a woman suffrage plank in the Democratic Platform. The Republican Party also included a women’s suffrage plank. Suffragists were disappointed, however, when Wilson failed to mention women’s suffrage in his address to Congress in December 1916. 304

U.S. entry in World War I in April 1917 led many members of NAWSA, as well as those in the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, into war work. Many worked in England or France with the Red Cross as nurses and ambulance drivers. Marian Dickerman and Nancy Cook, for example, left their teaching jobs in Fulton, New York, to work for the Endell Street Military Hospital, staffed entirely by women in London. Mary Talbert served as nurse and secretary of a YMCA in Romagne, France, teaching classes to African American soldiers. Others sold Liberty Bonds and raised money at home. From April to August, New York State suffragists took a military census at the governor’s request. They also tied suffrage to the war effort. At a meeting of the New

300 Auburn Citizen, November 26, 1912; Emily Howland to Isabel Howland, November 8, 1917, Howland Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore Library.
302 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 171, 184.
York State Woman Suffrage Association in Saratoga Springs in August 29-30, 1917, President Jacob Gould Schurman of Cornell University noted that women could already vote in England, France, and Russia. “Is America to be less liberal than its European Allies in this world war?” he asked. “Are we to lag behind while they march forward under the banner of progressive civilization?”

Some suffragists continued their commitment to peace, however. Emily Howland was one of them. “War has been through all time not only the greatest scourge of mankind and the greatest foe to civilization but the most formidable obstacle to the advancement of woman,” she declared in 1914. “The world is sick of war,” she wrote to the Cayuga County convention of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in 1922, “but the air is filled with hate. That spirit must be cast out before the healing of the nations can follow.”

Democracy did not always begin at home, even among suffragists. Members of the Colored Women’s Suffrage Club of New York City attended the Saratoga convention in 1917. While some found the speeches impressive, others complained of discriminatory treatment by white suffragists. Anyone who paid her dues should have full membership, they argued. Some traveled to Syracuse after the convention and reported their impressions.

The National Woman’s Party chose to concentrate on suffrage at home. They adopted dramatic tactics. In January 1917, they began picketing the White House, the first group ever to do so. For two and half years, these “silent sentinels” carried signs with slogans such as “Mr. President, what will you do for woman suffrage?” “Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty.” “Kaiser Wilson, have you forgotten your sympathy with the poor Germans because they were not self-governed? 20,000,000 American women are not self-governed. Take the beam out of your own eye.”

Women from all over the country came to Washington, D.C., as pickets. Although the New York State Woman’s Suffrage Party supported a resolution of disapproval at its August 1917 meeting, at least sixty women volunteered from New York State. In October, women were sent to Occoquan workhouse in Virginia. When they went on hunger strikes, demanding that they be treated as political prisoners, they were force-fed. During the night of November 14-15, thirty-one suffragists then in prison were brutally treated by the guards. As were many Americans, Wilson was horrified. He pardoned the prisoners immediately, but they only returned to their picketing with renewed commitment. When the picketing ended in June 1919, after the Senate finally approved the woman

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306 Wellman, Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District, 54.

suffrage amendment on June 4, over five hundred women had been arrested and 168 of them had been jailed. 308

In January 1918, Wilson came out strongly in favor of a woman suffrage amendment as a war measure. On May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives passed, with forty-two more votes than needed, the women’s suffrage amendment. New York State Representatives overwhelmingly supported suffrage, with thirty-five in favor, five absent, and only three (Riordan from New York City, Dunn from Rochester, Monroe County, and Sanders from Stafford, Genesee County) voted no. Not until June 4, did the measure pass the Senate, 54-25. New York State Senators split, with William M. Calder voting in favor suffrage and James W. Wadsworth, Jr., voting, as he always did, against it. 309

On June 16, 1919, only twelve days after Congressional approval, New York Governor Al Smith called a special session of the legislature. The Assembly approved the future Nineteenth Amendment unanimously. In the Senate, Henry M. Sage, Republican from Albany, grandson of Henry W. Sage, founder of Sage College for Women at Cornell University, opposed women’s suffrage. Sage excused himself, and the rest of the Senate voted unanimously in favor. New York State had formally entered the federal suffrage ranks. 310

Final judgment came to the State of Tennessee, the thirty-sixth state. Anti-suffragists in Tennessee attempted to win votes by opening a suffrage museum, displaying items such as Stanton’s Woman’s Bible and photos of Susan B. Anthony with her African American friends, including Frederick Douglass and Hester Jeffrey. The tactic did not work. Tennessee formally approved suffrage, after a hard fight, on August 18, 1920. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby signed it into law on August 26, 1920. 311

Suffragists celebrated. NAWSA held its last convention, called the Victory Convention. As they looked toward the future, they did not forget the past. They honored four living suffrage pioneers, all with ties to central New York: Emily Howland, Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Olympia Brown, and Charlotte Woodward Pierce, the only living signer of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. Though she lived to see passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Charlotte L. Woodward Pierce herself never voted. On election day, 1920, she was too ill to vote. Her eyesight was failing rapidly, and she was confined to her home. "I'm too old," she said. "I'm afraid I'll never vote." And, as far as we know, she never did. 312

The seventy-two-year fight for women’s suffrage was over. Or was it? What did the Nineteenth Amendment really mean?

308 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 184; Matthew Costello, Picketing the White House: The Suffragist Movement During the Great War. https://www.whitehousehistory.org/picketing-the-white-house.
309 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:489.
310 History of Woman Suffrage, VI:489.
312 History of Woman Suffrage, V:203, 501, 559, 610, quoted in Wellman, Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District, 54; “Oldest Suffragist Hits Woman’s Party,” June 2 [1921], quoted in Wellman, Road to Seneca Falls,
F. Implementing Suffrage: Accomplishments and Limitations, 1920 and Beyond

Overview

The History of Woman Suffrage concluded that the Nineteenth Amendment ended a movement for political liberty which had continued without cessation for over seventy years: “The story closes with uncounted millions of women in all parts of the world possessing the same voice as men in their government and enjoying the same rights as citizens.” But that was not quite the case.\(^{313}\)

The Nineteenth Amendment forbade any state to restrict the right to vote to anyone based on their sex. It did not, however, prohibit states and the federal government from restricting voting rights based on other criteria. We are most familiar with efforts in the southern states—through poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and physical violence—to limit voting rights for African Americans. But the Ku Klux Klan was very active across New York State in the 1920s. Native Americans were not granted citizenship until 1924, and many Native people (including traditional Haudenosaunee people) chose not to identify as U.S. citizens. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act made a national effort to guarantee voting rights to each citizen. But gerrymandering, limits on suffrage for former felons, and the 2013 Supreme Court decision in Shelby v. Holder to retract federal protection for voting rights in states, continued to challenge the American democratic system.

Going to the Polls

While the Nineteenth Amendment signaled the end of the organized women’s suffrage movement, it was, in many ways, more of a beginning than an end. As Ann Gordon, editor of the Stanton-Anthony Papers, reminded us,

To close the history of woman suffrage at 1920 is to ignore those women left behind in 1920, women who still dreamed of equal political rights. It is also to ignore how precarious the victory, how easily women can lose their ability to vote if the state where they reside exercises its right to exclude people, and to forget that freedom without voting rights is a mockery, whoever you are.\(^{314}\)

Despite its limitations, approval of the Nineteenth Amendment in August 1920 enfranchised twenty-six million women. More than five million of them were in New York State, and they were entering a new era with new challenges.\(^{315}\)

One issue was to get women to the polls. On April 8, 1920, women in New York launched the New York State League of Women Voters, organized in January 1920 at the last NAWSA convention. The League was designed to be non-partisan and educational, working to educate women voters and

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\(^{313}\) History of Woman Suffrage, VI.  
\(^{315}\) Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, reported 10,385,227 people in New York State.
lobby for a wide variety of progressive proposals. “Education became the new activism,” noted Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello, and New York women formed the model. Today, the League has state leagues in every state and more than 1000 local leagues. \[316\]

Women voters in New York State did not take full advantage of their new right. Although 679,618 women had registered to vote by May 1918 (sixty percent of them as Republicans), only thirty-four percent of eligible women voted in 1920, and they made up only thirty percent of the total votes. Political parties eagerly sought women’s votes. But women generally voted in ways similar to men, and they reacted in similar ways to the issues. A 1927 report on women voters noted that “that the enfranchisement of women, aside from increasing the size of the electorate, had shown no effects of which the parties need take serious account.” \[317\]

Political parties in New York State made a strong effort, however, to recruit women to run for office and take leadership roles. Many suffragists from central New York took this route, and several became statewide and national political leaders. Marion Dickerson, a history teacher in Fulton, Oswego County, New York, ran for New York State Assembly on the Democratic ticket in 1919, opposing the entrenched Republican Thaddeus Sweet, who served from 1910-1920 and as Speaker from 1914-20. New York women voters promoted protective labor legislation for women and children, but Sweet refused to let it come to a vote in the Assembly. Although Dickerman did not win, she gained substantial support. Some thought her challenge to Sweet kept him from getting the nomination for governor. \[318\]

Nancy Cook, Dickerman’s lifelong partner and fellow Fulton teacher, managed Dickerman’s campaign. Her work was so impressive that Harriet May Mills, Chair of the Women’s Division of the Democratic Party, invited her to become Executive Secretary. She served in that position for nineteen years and became a key player in gubernatorial and presidential campaigns for both Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt. She also met Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1925, Cook and Dickerman joined Roosevelt in constructing Stone Cottage at Val-Kill, where they lived from 1925-1947. In 1927, the three developed Val-Kill Industries, utilizing Cook’s superb woodworking skills to create furniture, while Dickerman worked with Eleanor Roosevelt at Todhunter School. \[319\]

Harriet May Mills herself ran for Secretary of State on the Democratic ticket in 1920. She lost, but in the 1920s, she became New York State’s first woman State Hospital Commissioner. In 1935, New York State dedicated the Harriet May Mills Women’s Center at the New York State Fairgrounds.

316 Goodier and Pastorello, Women Will Vote, 186-89.

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Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
Her Syracuse home, once the headquarters of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, now serves as a 12-bed rehabilitation center for women.  

Nationally, the Nineteenth Amendment had some immediate results that affected women in New York State and across the nation. Wilson established the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor. Under Mary Anderson’s leadership, the Bureau became a strong advocate for women workers. Twenty women’s organizations, representing memberships of twenty million women, joined to form the Women’s Joint Congressional Committee. One of their successes was passage in 1921 of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act, administered by the Children’s Bureau. It formed a model for federal-state cooperation that became a precursor of Depression-era agencies, but, pressured by critics who labelled it socialist, Congress canceled it in 1929.

The Nineteenth Amendment did not guarantee voting rights for all women. While it prohibited using sex to prevent citizens from voting, any state could—and many did—limit voting rights, especially for people of color in southern states, based on polling taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and physical violence. While New York State did not officially limit voting rights, a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan attempted to intimidate not only African Americans but Catholics, Jews, and immigrants generally, women as well as men. State headquarters for the KKK was in Binghamton, New York, but evidence of Klan membership has been found in many upstate cities. In Buffalo, the Klan organized in 1921, in opposition to mayoral candidate Francis X. Schwab, born to German Catholic parents. Murder of a policeman who infiltrated the Klan led to its demise and landslide re-election of Mayor Schwab in 1925. In Oswego County, local people still remember a cross burning just outside the City of Oswego, and Klan robes were discovered in an attic in Pulaski, New York.

Racism continued to plague the suffrage movement itself. When Mary White Ovington wrote to Lucy Burns, asking that the National Woman’s Party invite Mary B. Talbert to speak, Ovington introduced Talbert as “able, liberal in thought, and perhaps the best known colored woman in the United States today." “I believe that the Negro woman can win her right to vote if she is upheld by the rest of the country. The thinking southern woman is generally more fair-minded than the southern man, but she cannot secure justice for the colored woman without she has the backing of all of us.” While the New York State branch of the National Woman’s Party unanimously supported this idea, Alice Paul refused to invite Talbert, because, noted Ovington, “she does not represent a feminist organization.”

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African American suffragists often turned to transnational alliances to help in their fight. In 1920, Mary Talbert herself was one of ten official delegates (and the first African American woman delegate) to the International Council of Women in Norway. When the International Council of Women of the Darker Races met in 1923, many African American women activists attended. 324

Those not defined as citizens—including Native people, Asian Americans, and American women married to foreign nationals—were also excluded from voting. Residents of American territories (Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam) were not covered by the Nineteenth Amendment, either. Subsequent federal and state legislation—including the Cable Act of 1922, the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—dealt with many of these exclusions. Puerto Rico did not grant full voting rights to women until 1935. Not until the McCarran-Walters Act in 1952 were Asian Americans born outside the U.S. able to become citizens.

Central New York women were affected by all of these acts. Local women who married foreign nationals officially became citizens of another country, for example. Listed as “aliens” in the 1920 census, they were not able to become naturalized U.S. citizens until the Cable Act of 1922. When Angie Carpenter of the Town of Harmony, Chautauqua County, married Philipp Menges, a German immigrant, in 1918, she became officially a German citizen, as did her daughter Lydia when Lydia was born in 1921. Not until 1922, could Angie Menges and her daughter, both U.S.-born, become official U.S. citizens. 325

Native Americans were not officially citizens in the eyes of the U.S. government until 1924, when the federal government passed the Indian Citizenship Act. In spite of this federal legislation, state regulations continued to prohibit many Native Americans from voting. Not until 1948, for example, could Native people on reservations in New Mexico vote. And then it took a court case brought by Isleta Pueblo Miguel Trujillo, Sr. At the same time, many Native people—including many Haudenosaunee people—refused to accept citizenship in the U.S. “Accepting United States citizenship would be a treason to their own Nations,” argued Joseph Heath, General Counsel of the Onondaga Nation. Today, many Haudenosaunee carry their own passports. 326

The Nineteenth Amendment prohibited states from preventing people from voting because of sex. But it did not affect the unequal legal and political status of women in any other area of life. Alice Paul noted that no concern raised at the 1848 Seneca Falls convention had been resolved

except for voting rights. On July 20-23, 1923, she brought the National Woman’s Party to Seneca Falls to suggest a remedy. Meeting in the Presbyterian Church on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention, the group endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment: “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.”

People from central New York made up a large part of the 1000-person audience. Edith Houghton Hooker, a graduate of Granger Place School in Canandaigua, edited the June 16, 1923, edition of *Equal Rights*, published by the National Woman’s Party. “Women no longer need to be subordinated to men,” she wrote. “The way to equality is open to them, and yet...in every avenue of life...they are still in almost complete subjection. From legislative halls to the police force, in the shop and factory, in the schools, in the home, women are still in substantially the same position they occupied before the vote was won.” 327

![Image](https://rrlc.org/winningthewvote/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/12/SBAnthony5.jpg)

After their meeting in Seneca Falls, members of the National Woman’s Party traveled to Rochester to pay homage to Susan B. Anthony at her grave in Mt. Hope Cemetery, July 22, 1923.

University of Rochester, Rare Books and Special Collections

The Equal Rights Amendment was designed to change that. Every session of Congress dealt with the ERA from 1923 until it finally passed 1972. New York State became the sixteenth state to ratify the ERA on May 18, 1972, but, by 1979, only thirty-one states had ratified the ERA, not the thirty-five needed. Thirty-seven states have now ratified it, including Nevada in 2017 and Illinois in 2018. Many Congressional representatives continue to attempt to remove the deadline.

Jury duty was another area of contentions. In 1935, the federal government allowed women to act as jurors in federal cases. New York State followed suit in 1937 with the Kleinfeld Permissive Woman Juror Bill. Women could serve on juries in New York State, but counties set the criteria. Tompkins County, for example, allowed women on juries, but, as Carol Kammen and Elaine Engst noted, any woman could opt out simply by registering in the courthouse. 328

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Other questions included the right of women to control their own bodies and have access to credit, education, and jobs. These helped form a new agenda for women’s rights. With the Civil Rights and feminist movements of the 1960s, some of these issues were resolved for women in central New York and throughout the nation. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 extended federal protection to all voters. But threats to voting for both women and men remained. In 2013, Shelby v. Holder eviscerated the Voting Rights Act. Challenges to equal political representation—such as gerrymandering—continued to threaten the very basis of the American democratic system.

Within New York State, less than half of eligible voters regularly went to the polls in the 20-teens. New York State had the eighth lowest turnout of any state in the nation. Legislative initiatives in 2019 offered incentives to voters by creating nine days of early voting, same day registration, and easier absentee voting. Will these have an impact on voting in New York State in 2020? 329

As historian Liette Gidlow suggested, the Nineteenth Amendment, whether in central New York or the nation, was not the “end of the struggle for diverse women’s equality.” It was a “crucial step, but only a step, in the continuing quest for more representative democracy.” 330

329 Donna Lieberman, Executive Director, New York Civil Liberties Union, January 2019.
II. Historic Sites Relating to Women’s Suffrage in Central New York That Are Potentially Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Introduction

Because leaders from central New York was so important in the state and national suffrage movements, many historic sites relating to women’s suffrage in this region are already listed on the National Register of Historic Places or are National Historic Landmarks. Think, for example, of the homes of Susan B. Anthony in Rochester, Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls, Matilda Joslyn Gage in Fayetteville, Harriet May Mills in Syracuse, and Emily Howland and Isabel Howland in Sherwood.

At the other extreme, many sites have been demolished. Sometimes, they were destroyed through fire, as was Dr. Mary Walker’s birthplace and home in the Town of Oswego. Sometimes they were deliberately demolished, as was Cordelia Greene’s water cure in Castile, Wyoming County. In cities, rebuilding of commercial blocks often destroyed important historic resources, such as Corinthian Hall in Rochester, destroyed by fire in 1898, rebuilt by 1904, and demolished in 1929. Beginning in the 1960s, federal government support for urban renewal destroyed many more historic buildings. Many farms and villages in rural central New York, has not been re-built since the early years of European American settlement. So many historic relating to women’s suffrage still stand.

The National Register requires that “historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects” must be at least fifty years old and must possess “integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.”

In addition, they must be locations that fall into one of the following four categories:

A. “That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. “That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

C. “That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. “That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.”

These suffrage sites will all fit into Criterion A, “associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.” In this case, they show how Americans struggled to implement their essential democratic system.

331 How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm
If they are “associated with the lives of significant persons in our past,” these sites may also illustrate Criterion B, as homes or churches of suffrage leaders.

Most of these sites are relatively undistinguished architecturally, but a few of them may be eligible also under Criterion C, designed by an architect or representing a significant architectural style.

Finally, a handful of these sites may be eligible under Criterion D, if they “have yielded or be likely to held, information important in history or prehistory.” This term refers especially to archaeological sites.

Sites already listed on the National Register, as well as graves, statues, and structures no longer standing, are listed on the site database but are not listed here as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Exception are sites of three demolished buildings that are now potential archaeological sites.

In some cases, individual sites may be listed on the National Register as part of a historic district. Because of the way that districts are described, it is difficult to tell which buildings they contain. In those cases, we have made our best guess about whether or not a site is currently listed on the National Register as part of a historic district. Sites that may be in historic districts should be carefully reviewed, to be sure our assessment of their status is correct.

For purposes of this report, we will use the term “site” generically. These include a variety of building types. Most are homes, but they also include churches, schools, government buildings, opera houses, and landscapes. We have not included gravesites, cemeteries, or statues. Sources are referenced in the database, and further information appears in the narrative, Part I of the Historic Context Statement. Since this is a reconnaissance-level survey, we have (with few exceptions) made no attempt to document these sites exhaustively. All deserve further work in primary sources.

Rather than listing these sites chronologically, we have listed them by topical themes:

A. Context of Reform
B. Suffrage Activism
C. Suffrage Activists
D. Implementing Suffrage: Post-1920.
Theme I: Context of Reform

This category includes sites relating to reforms that provided a context for creating central New York as a hotspot for women’s suffrage, including religious revivals, abolitionism, utopian communities, educational reform, health reform, and Native American communities that provided inspiration for some suffragists. Many of these, including the Oneida Community Mansion House, Ganondagog, and the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse, have already been listed on the National Register or are National Historic Landmarks, but their interpretation does not always include references to their importance for women’s rights and women’s suffrage.

Possibilities for new National Register nominations include:

A. Context: Health and dress reform

Site 1. Site of Glen Haven Water Cure. North Glen Haven Road, southwest end of Skaneateles Lake, Town of Sempronius, Cayuga County. Archaeological site.

![Southwest corner of Skaneateles Lake, looking southwest
Approximate site of Glen Haven Water Cure, south of current sign
Photo by Paul Malo, July 2005](image)

Significance: Operated by James C. Jackson, William Chaplin, Theodosia Gilbert as water cure, health reform, dress reform center. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other dress reformers took steamer from Skaneateles for dress reform convention at Glen Haven, c. 1852. Chaplin was also involved in at least two nationally-publicized Underground Railroad events. (For more information, see Judith Wellman et al, Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Auburn and Cayuga County (Auburn: Auburn Historic Resources Review Board and Cayuga County Historian’s Office, 2005, www.cayugacounty.us/portals/0/history/ugrr/report/index.html).
Site 2. **Jackson Sanitorium** (Our Home on the Hillside), Woodland Park, Dansville, Livingston County.


Significance: Water cure and health spa owned by James Caleb Jackson and Harriet Jackson, abolitionists and women's rights advocates.

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Site 3. Cascadilla Hall. 115 Cascadilla Place, Ithaca, Tompkins. Potential archaeological site.

Dr. Samantha Nivison, graduate of the Women’s Medical College of Philadelphia, set up a water cure first in Dryden and then here in Cascadilla Hall. One purpose was to educate women as doctors and nurses.


Significance: Sanitarium kept by Cordelia Greene, active suffragist.
B. **Context: Education.** Some educational institutions that included women are already listed on the National Register, but with no emphasis on their connection to women’s rights and women’s suffrage. One example is **Granger Homestead (1816) and Granger Place School (1876-1906).** Crystal Eastman attended this school with other suffrage activists before she moved to NYC to become a leader in movements for suffrage, workers' rights, peace, and founded the ACLU. Already on National Register.

Examples of educational sites that might be eligible for the National Register include:

**Site 5: Central College, McGraw, Cortland County.**

New York Heritage Digital Collections

Parts of this college still stand.

Significance: Established by American Baptists in 1849, this college was modeled after Oberlin College, and it accepted both black and white, male and female students. It also had women as well as men and African Americans as well as European Americans as professors. African American professors were Charles L. Reason, William G. Allen (whose marriage to a white woman created a national scandal), and George Vashon. In 1856, there were nine professors and 226 students (half of whom were African American, including the Edmondson sisters, who escaped from slavery in Washington, D.C.) The school closed in 1860.
Site 6. Sage Hall, Cornell University, 114 East Avenue, Ithaca, Tompkins County.

Significance: Built 1875 as a hall for women students. Matilda Joslyn Gage, mother of Maud Gage, Cornell student, spoke in the “Botanical Lecture Room” at Sage College, at the invitation of the Social Science Club. Anthony and Shaw were entertained here in 1894. Isabel Howland, Harriet May Mills, Nora Blatch DeForest and other suffragists were Cornell graduates.

Site 7. Macedon Academy. 31 F, Macedon Center, Wayne County. (11706.000043 undetermined)

Significance: This Academy was started by Quakers and others as a bi-racial school that accepted by male and female students. Many people affiliated with this school were abolitionists and women’s rights advocates. Maria E. Wilbur, Quaker and signer of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, sent her daughter, Gulielma (Wilbur) Sutherland her in 1845-48. Other students included Rachel Dell Bonnel, signer of the Declaration of Sentiments, and her sister Elizabeth (1846-47); Harriet, Milton & David Doty, children of Elias & Susan Doty (1847-1848); and three children of Academy promoter, William Gould Barker and his wife Caroline Barker. All of these people were either...

**Site 8. Ella Wilcoxen Home.** 39 West Main St Macedon, Wayne County (11724.000025 undetermined).

[https://www.redfin.com/NY/Macedon/39-W-Main-St-14502/home/79390240](https://www.redfin.com/NY/Macedon/39-W-Main-St-14502/home/79390240)

Significance: Ella Salome Wilcoxen, the first female graduate from the University of Rochester in 1901, lived in this house her entire life and was a teacher in the area.
C. Context: Abolitionism/Native American rights.

Site 9. Junius Monthly Meeting Meetinghouse, Waterloo, N.Y. 42°55'47.2"N 76°55'21.8"W, 42.929768, -76.922725. Click on following URL for image of Junius M.M. foundations at north end, just west of cemetery: https://www.google.com/maps/dir/42.931085,-76.9206757/Quaker+Cemetery,+Waterloo,+NY+13165/@42.9294794,-76.9227003,144m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m8!4m7!1m0!1m5!1m1!1s0x89d0ced3f3508d5d:0xe44b6cf6c04a1d8!2m2!1d-76.922622!2d42.9294864

Significance: In October 1848, radical reformers met at the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse to organize a new Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends. They had left Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends over issues of hierarchy within the Meeting and working with the “world’s people” in reform movements. From 1849-1884, these reformers met annually from 1849-1884 in the Junius Monthly Meetinghouse in the Town of Waterloo. They invited people of “all names and no name, Christians, Jews, Mahammedans, and pagans [referring to traditional Seneca people] who gather under the law of Love.” They supported women’s rights, along with other reforms. By 1852, Elizabeth Cady Stanton called herself a member of the Congregational Friends. The Junius Meetinghouse was moved after 1893 and then burned, but the outline of its foundations is clearly visible from satellite views. It stood at the northwest end of the original cemetery, where many signers of the Declaration of Sentiments are buried.

Significance: J.C. Hathaway (brother of Phoebe Hathaway) and Eliza Hathaway, Orthodox Quaker abolitionists, used their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. J.C. was an anti-slavery lecturer and president of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. J.C. Hathaway attended the 1850 Worcester women’s rights convention and acted as president pro tem. The Hathaways were friends with Frederick Douglass, and correspondence survives from Douglass to them.

Site 11. Phoebe Hathaway House. 5881 Allen Padgham Road, Farmington, Ontario County. (Photo not available.) (06905.000098 undetermined).

Significance: Home of Phoebe Hathaway, organizer of first women's anti-slavery society in Farmington, women's anti-slavery fairs kept this house as an Underground Railroad station. She wrote to Stanton in August 1848 suggesting they invite Lucy Stone to speak. Farmington Quaker (Orthodox).
Site 12. Congregational Church, 8758 Main Street, Honeoye Falls, Ontario County. (06912.000041 undetermined).

https://ucchoneoye.org/

Significance: Frederick Douglass spoke here before the Civil War. Helen Pitts attended at least one of his lectures. In 1884, she became Frederick Douglass's second wife. After the Civil War, Honeoye Falls became an important center of suffrage organizing, with two suffrage societies. Matilda Joslyn Gage also spoke in Honeoye, but the location of her speech is not known.
Historic Context Statement for Women's Suffrage in Central New York
Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator/Dana Teets, Database Manager
Sponsored by Ontario County Historical Society, Ed Varno, Director
Funded by Preserve New York, 2019
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Theme II: Suffrage Activism

A. Suffrage Activism: Petitions. Petitioning was one of the most important methods of social change in the suffrage movement. We have very few examples of sites associated with petitioning (Cornell University Library is one of them). One important place related to petitions needs further research: Forty-four married ladies from Darien and Covington (in Genesee and Wyoming Counties) sent a sarcastic petition to the New York State legislature in March 1848, supporting the Married Women’s Property Act.

Site 13. Depauville, 13791 Vincent Road, Clayton, Jefferson County.

Eleanor Vincent House, still standing in Depauville, New York.
Courtesy of Karen Lago, Depauville Free Library

Significance: On August 15, 1846, two years before the Seneca Falls women's rights convention, “six ladies in Jefferson County” (Anna Carter Bishop, Lydia A. Williams, Eleanor O’Connor Vincent, Amy Eldrige Ormsby, Susan Ormsby, and Lydia Ormsby Osborn) sent a petition to the New York State legislature asking that the proposed new state Constitution be amended “so as to extend to women equal, and civil and political rights with men,” the first known petition for women’s suffrage in New York State.

B. Suffrage Activism: Conventions and Meetings. The Seneca Falls women’s rights convention in 1848 marked the beginning of the organized movement for women’s rights and women’s suffrage in New York State and across the nation.

Nationally, women’s rights advocates held a convention every year except 1857 before the Civil War. After the war, they held meetings of the American Equal Rights Association from 1866-1869. Beginning in 1869, with the organization of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association nationally and the New York State Woman Suffrage
Association, suffragists held conventions several times a year across New York State. They held annual conventions of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association and dozens and dozens of local and country conventions.

Suffragists also spoke at ad hoc meetings in many places throughout New York State. In 1853-54, for example, Susan B. Anthony spoke in all but two of New York State’s counties. In 1893-94, she held mass meetings in every county. The Stanton-Anthony papers project compiled a list of every place where Anthony or Stanton spoke, but this list is no longer available. Some of these sites are listed in Ida Husted Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, but much research remains to be done.

Sites of many of conventions are already listed on the National Register, but with no mention of their importance to the suffrage movement. These include the Diefendorf Hall, Fort Plain, 1867; Smith Opera House, Geneva, 1897; Powers Hotel, Rochester, 1905; Presbyterian Church, Oswego, New York State Woman Suffrage Association, 1901; First Universalist Church, Geneva (now the public library), fourth and fifth annual conventions of the Ontario County Political Equality Association 1907 and 1908; GEVA, Rochester, 1914; Presbyterian Church, Seneca Falls, 1923; Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, 1914; First Baptist Church, Ithaca, 1911; Unitarian Church, Ithaca, 1918; Clinton House, Ithaca, 1894;

Many sites, however, are not yet listed on the National Register. These include:

4. **Sites relating to the Seneca Falls convention, 1848.** The convention held in Seneca Falls on July 19-20, 1848, was the first known gathering in the U.S. specifically for women’s rights. It initiated the organized women’s rights movement. Recognizing the national importance of this convention, Congress established Women’s Rights National Historical Park in 1980, incorporating several key buildings associated with this convention, including the Wesleyan Methodist Church, where the convention met, and homes of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas and Mary Ann M’Clintock, Jane and Richard Hunt, and Jacob P. Chamberlain, all signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. (For more on sites in Seneca County, see Judith Wellman et al, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Seneca County, New York*. Waterloo: Seneca County Historian, 2006, https://www.co.seneca.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/discovering_ugrr-ADA.pdf.

A few related sites are already listed on the National Register.

- Seneca Falls Knitting Mill. Built 1844 as woolen mills by Charles Hoskins, signer, and others. Reopened as Phoenix Mills by signer J. Chamberlain and others. Woolen mill instead of cotton to avoid using labor of slaves. Will be new home of National Women's Hall of Fame.

- Hunt Block/M’Clintock Drugstore. Built by Richard P. Hunt, signer of Declaration of Sentiments. Thomas M’Clintock, signer, had drugstore/bookstore in this block. Elizabeth M’Clintock was clerk. Second floor used for anti-slavery meetings.
• Henry Seymour House. 27 Cayuga Street. Home of Henry Seymour, signer of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments.

• Presbyterian Church, Seneca Falls, 23 Cayuga Street. Site of National Woman's Party meeting, 1923, where Alice Paul announced Equal Rights Amendment to U.S. Constitution. Earlier building was site of trial of Rhoda Bement, 1843, for attending lecture by Abby Kelly Foster. Original church stands on State Street. Part of Seneca Falls Village Historic District? https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca_Falls_Village_Historic_District.

In addition to these sites, there are twenty known house sites relating to signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. Five sites no longer have standing houses. But there are fifteen extant homes of other signers, plus two industrial sites (Seneca Knitting Mill and Waterloo Woolen Mill), one commercial block (Hunt Block in Waterloo), Seneca County Courthouse, and two churches (former Trinity Episcopal Church and Seneca Falls Presbyterian Church), scattered throughout the region in Seneca County, Ontario County, Wayne County, and Onondaga County. All of these are listed on the database and should be evaluated for a possible MPDN. Examples include:
Site 14. Joel Bunker [Bonker] House, 12 Miller Street, Seneca Falls, Seneca County. (09940.000527 undetermined)

Significance: Joel Bunker [Bonker], a cooper, signed the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. He represents working class support for both abolitionism and women’s rights.

Site 15. Rachel Dell Bonnel House. Route 96, Town of Waterloo, Seneca County (if this house is extant need complete address). Route 96. 42°55'56.5"N 76°56'30.0"W, 42.932371, -76.941666.

Significance: Home of Rachel Dell Bonnel, Quaker and signer of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments.

Photo by Judith Wellman, June 2019

Significance: This house was owned by Henry Bonnel, who spoke at 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse after Stanton's speech on October 6, 1848, saying "If a hen can crow, let her crow," meaning, he said, that a woman should do whatever she can. Bonnel owned at least three houses in this area, and we do not know which one he and his family lived in. At least two others are no longer standing.

Site 17. Thomas and William Dell House. Route 96, just east of Blue Sky Road, across from Referral Auto. 42°56'05.1"N 76°56'54.2"W, 42.934761, -76.948374.

Photo by Judith Wellman, June 2019

Significance: Home of Thomas and William Dell, Quaker signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments.
Site 18. Daniel Cady House and Farm. 2 Auburn Rd. (not sure if this is correct address). 2 Auburn Rd. Four apts. now in building.

Significance: Farm owned by Daniel Cady just north of village of Seneca Falls, most likely the source of food and supplies for Cady Stanton family in Seneca Falls.

Site 19. Jacob P. Chamberlain House. 1 Seneca Street, northwest corner of Washington and Seneca Streets. Owned by WRNHP but apparently slated for demolition.

Significance: Owned by Jacob P. Chamberlain, signer of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, president Free Soil meeting, June 1848, representative to Congress, farmer, miller, neighbor of Stanton family.
Site 20. Susan and Elias Doty House. 968 Canandaigua Road Lat/Long 43.044241, -77.310813. (11706.000111, undetermined)

Photo by Judith Wellman.


Site 21. Charles Hoskins House. 40 Cayuga Street, Seneca Falls. Already on NR.

Photo by Judith Wellman, 2006.

Significance: Father of three daughters, Charles Hoskins signed the Declaration of Sentiments at the first woman's rights convention. He was a leading Whig and keeper of the major dry goods store in Seneca Falls, who helped create the Free Soil Party in Seneca Falls.
**Site 22. Lovina and Hannah Latham House.** 37 W. Bayard Street, Seneca Falls, Seneca County. (09940.000044 undetermined)

Significance: Home of the Latham family, sons and daughters of Obadiah and Lovina Latham, were active abolitionists and woman’s rights activists, as well as major builders in Seneca Falls and central New York. Lovina and Hannah Latham signed of Declaration of Sentiments.

**Site 23. Jabez and Delia Matthews House.** 118 State St., Waterloo, Seneca County. Needs further research.
Significance: Delia Mathews signed Declaration of Sentiments.

**Site 24. Lydia Mount House.** Edwards Road, Town of Seneca Falls. Still looking for street address.

Photo by Judith Wellman

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Significance: Home of Lydia Mount, signers of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. May also have been home of Mary E. Vail, signer of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. Mary Vail buried in Junius M.M. Cemetery, Nine-foot Road. Further research needed.

**Site 25. Stephen Shear House.** Town of Junius, Seneca County (cannot be located due to incomplete address provided).

Significance: Home of Stephen Shear, Quaker signer of Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. From 1849-1871, and perhaps longer, Shear participated in annual meetings of the Congregational Friends (Friends of Human Progress).

**Site 26. Elizabeth D. Smith House.** 713 Erie Street Macedon, Wayne County (Check address.)

Significance: Elizabeth D. Smith was an active Quaker abolitionist and Underground Railroad supporter. She was also a signer of the Declaration of Sentiments at the first woman’s rights convention in Seneca Falls on July 19-20, 1848. (For more information, see Judith Wellman, Marjorie Allen Perez, *Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County*, 185-190.)
Site 27. David and Lucy Spalding House. 2251 Eibert Road, Town of Spafford, Skaneateles, Onondaga County

Significance: David and Lucy Spaulding (Spalding) attended the Seneca Falls woman’s rights convention in 1848 and signed the Declaration of Sentiments. They represent those European Americans whose commitment to equality was rooted in spiritual values, in their case probably Quaker values, and who supported abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass. They also illustrate the close connection between abolitionism and the early woman’s rights movement.

Site 28. Trinity Episcopal Church. 27 W. Fall Street, Seneca Falls, Seneca County.

Significance: Trinity Episcopal Church, built in 1833, was architecturally significant as one of the earliest church buildings still standing in central and western New York and perhaps the earliest Episcopal Church building in the area. It has recently been converted to apartments, with major effects on fenestration and appearance. It is historically significant because several abolitionists, both European American and African American, and at least ten signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments were members or attenders of this church, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
Site 29. Seneca County Courthouse. 48 West Williams Street, Waterloo, Seneca County. (09941.000266 undetermined)

https://nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/seneca/

Significance: Lucretia Mott spoke here, 1849.

Site 30. Waterloo Woolen Mill. Route 5 and 20, Waterloo, N.Y. (09941.000110 undetermined)

Photo by Judith Wellman, June 2019

Significance: The Waterloo Woolen Mill produced fine woolen cloth and shawls. Its owners bought wool from local farmers and rejected the use of cotton, since it was grown by enslaved people. Richard P. Hunt was an abolitionist Quaker who signed the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. He was also the richest man in Seneca County in 1850, owner of much real estate and the main investor in the Waterloo Woolen Mill (central section shown here).
After Seneca Falls, many conventions followed in central New York. Sites of many of these are already listed on the National Register, for example the Smith Opera House, Geneva, and Convention Hall (current GEVA theater), Rochester.

Here are possible National Register nominations for sites not already listed:

**Site 31. Universalist Church.** South Bristol, Ontario County. (Still standing?)

Significance: The first women's suffrage club was created in South Bristol and met at this church. Emily P. Collins founded the Women's Equal Rights Union in 1848 and met regularly.

**Site 32. Universalist Church.** 21 Maple Avenue, Victor, Ontario County. (06950.000037 undetermined).

Significance: Half known members of Victor Equal Suffrage Association went to the Universalist Church.
**Site 33. West Bloomfield Town Hall.** 9035 NY 5 West Bloomfield, Ontario County Wikipedia lists 2560 Co. Road 37, Bloomfield. Route 5--SW corner of Routes 5 & 20 and CR 37.

![Image of West Bloomfield Town Hall](image.png)

Townsend, Ontario County, 39.
Still standing but not in good shape.

Significance: April 28, 1894, suffragists held “an enthusiastic meeting” here to generate support for change to New York State constitution to allow women to vote. Speakers were Rev. Annis Eastman, Judge William H. Smith, and Edwin Hicks.

**Site 34. Mynderse Academy, 105 Troy Street, Seneca Falls, Seneca County**

![Image of Mynderse Academy](image.png)


Significance: Sessions of 60th anniversary of 1848 women's rights convention met here, as well as in Johnson Opera House and Presbyterian Church, May 26-27, 1908.
Site 35. Sibley Hall. 921 University Avenue, Ithaca, Tompkins County.

https://www.cs.cornell.edu/~edward/architecture.html

Site 36. First Baptist Church, Ithaca. 309 North Cayuga Street, Ithaca, Tompkins.

http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMQ6E2_First_Baptist_Church_DeWitt_Park_Historic_District_Ithaca_NY

Significance: Suffragists held many meetings here, including Tompkins County Suffrage Association, 1902, 1911 New York State Woman Suffrage Association convention, where Anna Howard Shaw spoke, 1914 suffrage meeting from nine counties. Rev. Ralph Jones supported suffrage. On March 24, 1918, Ella G. Boole, president of the New York State WCTU spoke here urging women to vote.

Site 37. Unitarian Church. 306 North Aurora Street, Ithaca, Tompkins.

https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/about-us/history/

Significance: May 13, 1918, Juanita Bates, president of Tompkins County Woman Suffrage Party, held meeting.
Suffrage Activism: Landscapes

By the early twentieth century, suffragists began to exploit many new marketing opportunities. They held regular public programs at county and state fairs, for example. They also held parades—with individual walkers, automobiles, and trolleys. Landscapes that may be eligible for the National Register include:

Site 38. Warsaw Village Park. Warsaw, Wyoming County (12141.000279 undetermined).

Significance: The Wyoming County Fair was held at the Warsaw Village Park, and the Women's Political Equality Club regularly used the fair to promote their cause of women's right to vote.


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https://www.cityofrochester.gov/geneseevalleypark/

Significance: The National American Woman Suffrage Association held an automobile parade that began here, as part of their annual meeting October 14, 1914.

C. Suffrage Activism: Legislative action.

Several homes represent legislators—at both the state and federal level—who were suffrage supporters or suffrage opponents. We need much more research to augment this story, but several relevant homes are already listed on the National Register, including those of Luther Mott, pro-suffrage Congressional Representative from Oswego, and James Wadsworth, Jr., anti-suffrage New York State legislator, Geneseo.

Site 40. Thaddeus Sweet Home. Phoenix, Oswego County. No photo available.

Significance: Thaddeus Sweet was an anti-suffrage New York State legislator and chair of the Assembly, 1910-1920, Phoenix, Oswego County. When Marion Dickerman from Fulton ran against him, the race was hotly contested and most likely cost Sweet his opportunity to become governor.
Theme III: Suffrage Activists: Homes.

A. Suffrage Activists: Homes.

Homes of prominent suffragists in New York State form the dominant number of buildings currently listed on the National Register. But many more might be eligible, including (in alphabetical order):


Significance: Purchased in 1845 by Susan Look Avery and her husband Benjamin Avery as a summer home. They moved to Louisville, Kentucky in 1847, where she became a founding member of the Louisville Equal Rights Association. The family returned here every summer, where they hosted such notables as Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, Charlotte Perkins Gillman, and Booker T. Washington. Anthony: "A few days were given to Mrs. Stanton, who was spending the summer with her son Gerrit and his wife at Hempstead, L. I., and they prepared the call for the next national convention. She reached home in time to speak on September 9 at Wyoming, where she was a guest at the delightful summer home of Mrs. Susan Look Avery for several days, as long as she could be persuaded to stay." Harper, Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony.
Site 42. Emma Biddlecom Sweet House. 28 Harper Street Rochester. Original house may have been replaced with the stuccoed house now at 28 Harper Street below. Or Biddlecom Sweet (1862-1951) may have built this house. Needs further research.

Significance: Sweet was a cousin of Susan B. Anthony, best known as Anthony’s secretary during the last years of the famous suffragist’s life. Accompanied Anthony on her travels to California to work on the suffrage campaign. Traveled abroad to Europe to attend women’s suffrage conventions. Held various offices in Rochester’s Political Equality Club and Monroe County Woman Suffrage Party. Honorary Pres. Rochester League of Women Voters.

Site 43. Ella Hawley Crossett House. 29 Summit Avenue, Warsaw, Wyoming. (12141.000281 undetermined)

Significance: Warsaw's women organized the Warsaw Political Equality Club under the leadership of Ella Hawley Crossett. She went on to become the President of the New York State Suffrage Association from 1901-1910. House currently owned by Andrew Mauer.

Site 44. Frederick Douglass House. 271 Hamilton Street, Rochester, Monroe County.

Significance: Frederick Douglass, signer of Declaration of Sentiments, purchased this house in 1855. In 1872, he deeded it to his daughter Rosetta Douglass Sprague. The Spragues lived there until 1876, when Douglass took back the house and kept it until his death in 1895. Douglass may have kept the home as his official voting residence.
Site 45. Maria Wilder Dupuy House. 184 Park Avenue, Rochester, Monroe County. Still standing?

Significance: -Introduced by Susan B. Anthony at reception in Powers Hotel for 1905 meeting of New York State Woman Suffrage Association as one of those who had attended the 1848 Rochester Women's Rights Convention: "A reception was given at Powers Hotel attended by over 600 people. During the meetings Miss Anthony introduced a number of women who had attended the first Woman's Rights Convention, which adjourned from Seneca Falls to Rochester, Mary Hallowell, Sarah Willis, Mary S. Anthony and Maria Wilder Depuy."

Site 46. William C. Gannett and Mary Thorn Gannett House, 15 Sibley Place, Rochester, Monroe County. Address needs to be checked with historic records.

Significance: Mary Thorn Gannett was an educator, reformer, and social activist. In 1893, she organized, with Susan B. Anthony and others, the Rochester's Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU). She helped open the University of Rochester to women. She was a member of Rochester's Political Equality Club, beginning in 1891, and in 1894, she addressed the Suffrage Committee of the Constitutional Convention on behalf of women's right to vote.
Site 47. Jean Brooks Greenleaf House. 196 Goodman Street, Rochester, Monroe County.

![Jean Brooks Greenleaf House](image)

Photo by Judith Wellman.

Significance: Jean Brooks Greenleaf was President of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, 1890-96, during the great fight for suffrage in the 1894 New York State Constitution. She was also extremely active in many Rochester clubs.

Site 48. Elizabeth Smith Miller House. 4664 Park Street, Peterboro, Madison County. (05313.000020 undetermined).

![Elizabeth Smith Miller House](image)

Photo by Judith Wellman

Significance: Home of Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of Gerrit and Ann Smith, from 1851-1869. Active suffragist until her death. Today owned by Jody Luce, the "tailor of Peterboro."
**Site 49. Elizabeth Smith Miller House.** 15 Sullivan Street, Cazenovia, Madison County. Now a dormitory for Cazenovia College.

https://map.cazenovia.edu/#UMAP_2012092634445|BLD_2012092610900

Significance: From her marriage in 1843 to 1846, Elizabeth Smith Miller lived here with husband Charles Dudley Miller.

**Site 50. Elizabeth Smith Miller House,** 1065 Lochland Road, Geneva, Ontario County. (06940.000872 undetermined).

http://www.lochlandinc.org/

Significance: In 1852, Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of Gerrit Smith, moved to Geneva, N.Y., where she and her daughter Ann became mainstays of the Geneva Political Equality Club, organized in 1897 with 135 members. They often held club meetings and receptions here. Stanton, Anthony, Pankhurst, Lucy Stone, Anna Howard Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, and other woman's rights advocates stayed here and spoke here. In 1933, Lochland became a school for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, organized by Florence Stewart.
Site 51. Helen Barrett Montgomery House, 233 Westminster Road, Rochester, Monroe County.

Photo by Judith Wellman.

Significance: Helen Barrett Montgomery, associated with the Lake Avenue Baptist Church, maintained close ties to Susan B. Anthony and the suffrage movement as a member of the Women’s Political Equality Club of Rochester. Shortly after Anthony’s death in 1906, Montgomery served as the second vice-chairman on of the Susan B. Anthony Memorial Association, a Rochester committee established to ensure that Anthony’s pioneering work for women’s rights was properly recognized. Montgomery as also active in many other reform movements.

Site 52. Fanny Barrier Williams house. 163 Erie Street, Brockport, Monroe County. (05541.000527 undetermined).

https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/163-Erie-St_Brockport_NY_14420_M43708-34946

Significance: Home of Fannie Barrier Williams, who worked to secure equal rights and opportunities especially for African American women. A founder of the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. One of the founders of the NAACP. She was the only African American selected to eulogize Susan B. Anthony at the 1907 National American Women’s Suffrage Association. Continued to advocate for African American women, if only from the sidelines, until her death in 1944. Lived here when she was a child, moved to Chicago, and then lived again in this house from 1926 until her death in 1944.
2. **Churches.** Many suffragists were associated with churches, either as lay people of ministers. The following include churches that might be eligible for the National Register:

**Site 53. Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,** 42 Favor Street, Rochester, Monroe County.


Significance: This church, organized in 1831, is associated both with abolitionism and women’s rights. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hester Jeffrey, as a member of this church, organized African American women for both African American rights and women’s suffrage. Jeffrey worked closely with Susan B. Anthony. In 1898, she organized the Susan B. Anthony Club for women’s suffrage. In 1906, Susan B. Anthony gave her last public address in the church. When this church was dedicated in 1907 (the third building on this site), Jeffrey raised money to install four stained glass windows. All but one of these windows is now in the new AME Zion Church on Clarissa Street. The window presented by the Susan B. Anthony Club for Susan B. Anthony was the first public monument to Anthony after her death. Jean Brooks Greenleaf spoke at the dedication.

![Window](https://rrlc.org/winningthevote/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/12/HJeffreys1.jpg)
Site 54. Brockton Congregational Church. 546 Valley Road, Brooktondale, Town of Caroline, Tompkins County. (10901.000296 undetermined)

Significance: Annis Ford Eastman, Juanita Breckinridge Bates. Anna Ford Eastman were ordained from this church in 1892. Eastman spoke often at suffrage conventions throughout the region. Her children, Crystal Eastman and Max Eastman, became suffrage leaders in New York City. Now called Caroline Valley Community Church.

http://www.unyumc.org/resources/church/caroline-valley-federated-church

Image: https://www.instagram.com/p/BxNarlNgqWs/.


Site 56: South Butler Congregational Church. South Butler, Wayne County. Needs street address.

Significance: The Congregational Church of South Butler is nationally significant as the first known European American congregation in the U.S. to call both an African American freedom seeker, Samuel R. Ward, and a woman, Antoinette Brown, as its pastor. Brown’s installation ceremony took place in the Baptist Church across the street (now demolished), and she boarded with the Clarendon Campbell family. All of these buildings show the close relationship between abolitionism and the early woman’s rights movement. Church has been remodeled.
IV. Implementing Suffrage: Post-1920.

**Site 57. Site of Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook Home.** 3 South Third Street, Fulton, Oswego County.

![Photo by Judith Wellman](image1)

Significance: Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook boarded here in the 19-teens when they were teachers at Fulton High School. Dickerman went on to run for New York State Assembly in 1919, while Cook became Executive Director of the Women’s Commission of the New York State Democratic Party. Both moved to Val-kill with Eleanor Roosevelt, where Cook helped develop a furniture construction business and Dickerman worked with Roosevelt at Tod Hunter School.

**Site 58. Women’s Club.** 156 West Second Street, Oswego, Oswego County.

![Photo by Judith Wellman](image2)

Significance: The Women’s Club of Oswego formed in 1918. They incorporated in 1926 and purchased this house in 1927, now owned by the Heritage Foundation of Oswego.
Site 59. Harriet May Mills Art and Home Building. 581 State Fair Boulevard, New York State Fairgrounds, Syracuse, Onondaga County.

![Harriet May Mills Art and Home Building](https://freethought-trail.org/trail-map/location:harriet-may-mills-art-and-home-center/)

Photo by Mary Ellen Chesbro

Significance: Built in 1934 as the Harriet May Mills Women’s Building, this center was dedicated to Harriet May Mills for her lifetime of work with the New York State Woman Suffrage Association and women’s rights.
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Chautauqua County, New York. Western New York Heritage (Winter 2014)


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