

90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration  
League of Women Voters of Whittier  
February 13, 2010



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## Nineteenth Amendment

Passed by Congress June 4, 1919

Ratified August 18, 1920

Section 1: 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.

Section 2: Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

(photos by Mike Tharp)

## SUFFRAGISTS

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)

My name is Mary Wollstonecraft, known as the "first feminist" or "mother of feminism". I was born on April 27, 1759.

My approach to feminism is primarily concerned with the individual woman and about rights. I honored women's natural talents and insisted that women not be measured by men's standards.

I wrote a book-length essay on women's rights and especially on women's education called *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The "rights of man" were not addressing the "rights of woman." If you want to understand the history of feminism it's a must read. Perhaps some of the more political feminists had become aware of my unfinished novel, *Maria: The Wrongs of Woman*, linking women's oppression to the need for MEN to change.

I was lucky enough to be a participant in, and observer of, a remarkable series of social revolutions, especially in England and France. One was enlightenment thought in general: a skepticism about and re-visioning of institutions, including the family, the state, educational theory and religion. I, like those associated with enlightenment thought, put REASON at the center of human identity and as the justification for rights.

But what I was learning and thinking was in stark contrast to the realities of my own life and the lives of women in my family. Abuse was close to home, with little legal recourse. Women without husbands (or at least reliable ones) had to earn their own livings or a living for their families.

In 1796 I renewed an old acquaintance with William Godwin. We became lovers but lived separately to focus on our separate writing careers. We were both philosophically opposed to the institution of marriage, and for good reason. All the rights were given to the husband and taken away from the wife. We were opposed to such laws. However, when I got pregnant, we decided to marry, but still keep our separate apartments.

My daughter can tell you that I died two weeks after her birth of "childbed fever", September 10, 1797. I was 38 years old. This daughter, raised by Godwin with my older daughter, later married the poet Percy Shelly in a shocking elopement. You may know Mary Shelly, author of *Frankenstein*.

My husband, being the honest gentleman he was, published more of my work revealing memoirs of my troubled love relationships, suicide attempts and financial difficulties. This caused many critics to denigrate all women's rights. That may be why I'm not in the pantheon of these well-known activists you will meet or have met today.

Lucretia Coffin Mott (1793-1880)

I was born Lucretia Coffin in 1793 in Nantucket, Massachusetts. When I was thirteen, my parents sent me to a boarding school run by the Society of Friends. Eventually, I became a teacher there. Eventually, I married a fellow teacher by the name of James Mott. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that he made three times the salary that I made. Imagine my anger when I found out that all the male teachers at the school made three times what the female teachers made. Thus began my interest in women's rights.



*Mary Wollstonecraft*

My husband and I were very much opposed to the slave trade and were active in the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1840 my friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton and I determined to travel to London, England for the World Anti-Slavery Convention. At first I was told that I could not address the delegates because I was a woman. Eventually they relented and I did speak, but Elizabeth was not allowed to hear the speech. In fact, women convention-goers were seated where they could not be seen by the male delegates. It was then that Elizabeth and I decided that when we returned home, we would hold a convention for women's rights. It took eight years, but that convention was finally held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. It was here that Elizabeth determined that the focus of the convention would be on women's suffrage.

In 1866 Elizabeth and I and our good friend Lucy Stone established the Equal Rights Association. The next year we were actively involved in an important election campaign in Kansas. Two items on the ballot were of great national import: Negro suffrage and women's suffrage.

Unfortunately, the two groups were pitted against each other in editorial cartoons, editorials themselves, and by various organizations. As a result both lost at the polls.

Despite my great disappointment I continued fighting for women's rights well into my seventies. I died at age 87 in Abington, Pennsylvania, in 1880.

## LUCY STONE (1818-1893)

Hello, my name is Lucy Stone. I was born in 1818, the 8<sup>th</sup> of 9 children. At an early age, I was dismayed as I watched my father rule the household, and my mother, by "divine right." When the bible was quoted to me, defending the positions of men and women, I declared that when I grew up I would learn Greek and Hebrew so that I could correct the mistranslation that I was sure was behind such verses!

My father would not support my education, so I alternated financing my own education with teaching and doing housework. The low pay of women teachers compared to men was another irritant I noted.

I attended Quaboag Seminary in Warren; Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham; and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, in between stints of work. I entered Oberlin College in 1843 and graduated four years later. I was the first woman from Massachusetts to earn a college degree. At graduation, I was asked to write the commencement speech. A male professor would have to read it, of course, since women were not allowed to give a public address. I refused.

I was an ardent abolitionist, and became a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Although I was an effective speaker, they did not like my insistence on speaking for women's rights as well. We compromised and I conducted my feminist lectures on a professional basis, which sometimes invoked hostile and even violent reactions.

After the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, I called for a larger national convention on the subject of women's rights, which was held in 1850. My address to the convention was widely reported and drew many to the cause. (It was thought that this was what converted Susan B Anthony.) I continued my lecture tours, appearing frequently in bloomers.

I married Henry Blackwell in 1855, and the ceremony included the reading by bride and groom of a protest against the marriage laws. I was the first woman in the United States to keep my own name after marriage. We had a daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell.

In 1866, Susan B. Anthony and I proposed a new suffrage organization, the American Equal Rights Association, (AERA), to push for equal rights for both African Americans and women, and especially to work for universal suffrage. In 1867, tensions arose as the proposed 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment would give black men the right to vote, but not women. I was conservative, willing to work for passage of this amendment, followed by a renewed effort on behalf of women.

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had no such feelings and split off and founded NWSA, the National Woman Suffrage Association. They were pushing for a wider scope of women's rights, including easier divorce laws and an end to discrimination in employment and pay. They did not want to support the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment if it were not broadened to include woman suffrage.

In reaction, along with Julia Ward Howe, I formed the AWSA, the American Woman Suffrage Association. This was a more moderate organization that attracted a majority of suffragists. We were only concerned with obtaining the vote, and did not campaign on other issues. In 1870 the AWSA founded its own magazine, the *Woman's Journal*, which I edited. It remained over the years the staunchest and most respected journalistic voice of the suffrage movement, airing both my own and differing views about women's rights. It continued to appear until 1917, in later years under the editorship of Alice Stone Blackwell.

These two organizations finally merged in 1890 and became NAWSA, the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The first convention was held in Washington DC that same year. I was too weak to attend, but was unanimously elected chair of the executive committee.

My last speaking engagement was in Chicago in 1893, and I passed away in October of 1893. I was the first person in New England to be cremated.

When the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1920, the NAWSA was formed into the League of Women Voters, which upholds these high standards today.

### AMELIA BLOOMER (1818-1894)

Welcome Sisters and Brothers.

I am Amelia Bloomer. I was born in upstate New York in 1818.

If you know me at all, you may know me for the apparel that came to be bear my name - the bloomer. I was an advocate for women's rights in all areas of life, including the right to wear more practical clothing. The fashion of the day was very tight, lace-up bone corsets, many petticoats, often weighing more than 10 pounds, and long skirts that dragged in the mud of the unimproved streets and walks of the day, picking up mud and filth. Although I did not invent them, I was in favor of the loose blouse and shorter skirt over the loose pants that were gathered at the ankle (the "bloomer"). Unfortunately they never caught on and I and others were so ridiculed for wearing and promoting them that even I chose to quit wearing them as the criticism was a distraction from discourse on the more important social issues. Although I had less than 2 years of formal education, I was a bright girl. I grew up to be a teacher, writer and journalist. I was lucky in my marriage to Dexter Bloomer, a Quaker, attorney and newspaper owner, as he encouraged me in all my endeavors. I often wrote articles for his newspaper the *Seneca Falls County Courier*.

Living in Seneca Falls I got to know Elizabeth Cady Stanton. And, in 1848 I attended the first women's rights conference that was held there. At that time my primary issue of concern was the temperance movement, so I was an observer at the conference. Elizabeth broadened my views to include women's right to vote, as well as marital rights and women's right to work. Partly as a result of that experience, in 1849 I created my own weekly newspaper, *The Lily*. It was the first newspaper in the United States owned and operated by a woman and it dealt solely with women's issues including moral tracts, and temperance as well as women's right to vote. The circulation eventually reached 6,000. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a frequent contributor to the newspaper.

Did you know that I introduced Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony? I guess I had a small part in the movement just by enabling that partnership. That event is commemorated by a statue in the National Women's Rights National Park.

I subsequently moved to Ohio with my husband. I kept *The Lily* but after another year we moved again to Council Bluffs, Iowa. Because there were no facilities for producing the paper in Council Bluffs, I sold it, although I continued to contribute articles. Unfortunately the paper folded approximately 2 years after I sold it.

I continued to write and to speak out on women's issues and to advocate for women's right to vote.

In 1878, I petitioned Congress for "*either the relief from the burden of taxation or the removal of my political liabilities*". Of course I did not receive a response. It was my view that:

*"It will not do to say that it is out of woman's sphere to assist in making laws, for if that were so, then it should be also out of her sphere to submit to them."*

In the 1870's I spent a short time as President of the Woman's Suffrage Association of Iowa.

In one of my essays entitled "Woman's Right to the Ballot" I stated:

*"Women and men have equal claims to the enjoyment of all these rights which God and nature have bestowed upon the race. Woman is entitled to the same means of enforcing those rights as man; and that therefore she should be heard in the formation of Constitutions, in the making of the laws, and in the selection of those by whom the laws are administered."*

Like all but one of the participants in the 1848 women's right convention, I did not live to see women receive the right to vote. I died in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1894.





Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

## Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)

I am Elizabeth Cady Stanton. I was born in 1815 in New York. My father was an attorney, a congressman and a judge. He introduced me to the law and planted the early seeds that grew into my legal and social activism. When I was a girl I would go into my father's law library and debate legal issues with his law clerks. This early exposure to the law made me realize how unfairly the law treated women, especially married women. Married women had no property, income, employment rights or custody rights over their children. I wanted to change these inequities.

Even though my father was a slave owner, I was an abolitionist. So at a young age I became an Abolitionist, Suffragist and Women's Rights Activist. Some say I deserve the credit for starting the Suffragist movement in the United States.

I studied Latin, Greek and Mathematics at Johnstown Academy. I could compete intellectually with boys my age or older, but I was not allowed to enroll in Union College which was an all mens college. Instead I went to Troy Female Seminary.

I married Henry Stanton in 1840. He and I had the same beliefs and I insisted the words "promise to obey" be removed from my wedding vows. I refused to be addressed as Mrs. Henry B. Stanton. I preferred Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Calling a women Mrs. John This or Mrs. John That is founded on the principle that white men are lords of all. We honeymooned in England where I met Lucretia Mott at an Anti-slavery Convention.

Henry and I had seven children and my last child was born when I was 44. We call him our surprise baby. Henry didn't agree completely with me on all of my notions of female suffrage, but we were married for 47 years. I consider it a happy marriage probably due to the fact that Henry was gone on business most of the time.

My good friend Amelia Bloomer introduced me to Susan B. Anthony. "Thank you Amelia". This union was the start of something big. Susan was single and had no children, so she had time and energy to attend speaking events. I was not able to travel with her, but I was a very good writer. So I would write speeches for Susan and she would travel around the country. It was an effective working relationship.

Susan and I lobbied Congress against the right for African American Males to vote. This may sound strange. I was against slavery but I felt that Black Men should not be permitted the right to vote unless women were allowed to vote as well. By allowing Black Men to vote it may increase the number of voters prepared to deny women the right to vote.

Susan and I founded the National Woman's Suffrage Association in 1869. There was another organization for women's suffrage, but it was more conservative and religiously based, they did not support women's divorce rights, employment rights, or property rights. Even the right to serve on a Jury. All these issues were very important to me. The two organizations did finally merge in 1890.

After my children were grown I would travel giving lectures eight months out of the year. I lectured for about 12 years.

Women did not get the right to vote in my lifetime but I was effective in bringing about reform to allow married women the right to own property, equal guardianship of children and liberalized divorce laws which allowed women to leave abusive marriages.

I died of heart failure in 1902 almost 20 years before women were granted the right to vote.

Although I was unable to attend a formal college or university my daughters did. Margaret attended Vassar and Columbia University and Harriet received her graduate degree from Vassar College. I feel that having my daughters attend the college of their choice was one of my greatest accomplishments.



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### Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

I am Susan B. Anthony. I was born in Massachusetts. My father was a strict Quaker, Mother was Baptist. My father had a cotton mill. I was the second of eight children.

As I grew up, I helped my mother take care of the growing family - and my father's employees who boarded with us. To ensure adequate education, we and the mill hands' children were schooled at home by my father.

I taught school from age 15 to 30, but I quit teaching in 1850 and became a self-supporting member of the lecturing corps. I wanted to change the helpless, hopeless condition of women in this country.

In 1852, I attended my first Women's Temperance meeting and I met Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She was a brilliant speaker - and writer! We recognized right away that we needed to work together. She wrote brilliant speeches and articles but, because she had a growing family at home and I was single, I delivered them - as fast and far as humanly possible. That's the way we worked then for the next 50+ years. I'd delivered 100 speeches or more a year, from Massachusetts to California, criss-crossing the country. Lecturing and reporting back to - and conferring with - Mrs. Stanton. And I gathered petitions.

First, we had to bring to women's attention, the woeful condition they were in! *I lectured for:*

- *fair and equal wages, and for women's right to keep the wages they earned*
- *a woman's right to divorce a drunken abusive husband*
- *guardianship of her children if she left a marriage*
- *the right to get a decent education*

...and maybe most important, for her right to stand up and be heard! In home, church & state!

As the movement for abolishing slavery gained strength, our National Woman's Suffrage Association was asked to put aside the demand for the vote, and just to work to end slavery. We hesitated, but surely ending one person's slavery would make ending the slavery of the rest of us obvious. No, we were wrong about that! Sooooo, after the War, we went back to writing and lecturing for women's rights and suffrage.

In 1872, my sisters and 11 allies registered to vote. And We Voted- and then we were all arrested - including the registrars! Everyone bailed themselves out, but me. I wanted to take it to the Supreme Court! But, do you know? My lawyer posted my bail, because he couldn't bear to see me jailed!

I was so mad - I lectured in 50 towns before my trial date, beginning each speech with "Ladies and Gentlemen, I stand before you a citizen indicted for the crime of voting in the last Presidential election..." I lost the case of course, but I never paid the fine!

In the 1880's Mrs. Stanton and I published the first volume of the "History of Woman's Suffrage, (the movements' pioneers were dying off.) In 1883 we went to Europe to enthusiastic reception, and established The International Council of Women.

Oh, we kept at it, and though we didn't get the vote, the next generation enters this task with college educations, business experience, and the freely admitted right to speak in PUBLIC!

I never retired. I died in 1906.



## MAUD YOUNGER (1870-1936)

I am Maud Younger (I am also known as the *Millionaire Waitress*) and I was active in the Woman's Suffrage Movement not only in California but also on a national level. I was always a strong advocate of trade unions and protective legislation for working women.

I was born in January 1870 in San Francisco where I grew up with 2 sisters and a brother. Because of my family's wealth I was able to attend private schools and to travel abroad. What I saw in my travels convinced me that working women needed protection so, while on a trip to New York in 1901, I took a job as a waitress and joined the Waitresses' Union. I spent the next 5 years in New York and it was during that time I became known as the "*Millionaire Waitress.*" Later, when I returned to San Francisco, I organized a Waitresses' Union there and served as President of the Union Local. I also lobbied for the 8 hour workday law until it was passed in California.

Following my return to California I worked on the California campaign for Women's Suffrage. During that campaign I drove a suffrage float pulled by a team of 6 horses. The first registration of California women as voters took place in 1911 so, after my native state gave women the vote I returned to New York and in 1913 was chosen by Alice Paul as her lieutenant in the newly formed *National Women's Party* which was the militant wing of the Suffragist Movement. I was the keynote speaker at the first Convention of the *National Woman's Party* and worked until 1920 when the long struggle for Woman's Suffrage resulted in the passage of the nineteenth amendment giving women the right to vote.

Following this great victory I returned to work as a Labor Union Activist working with the Women's Trade Union League, the Women's Bureau and the National Consumers' League until 1936.

(Maud Younger died in her beloved California in 1936.)



Carrie Chapman Catt  
Ripon Wisconsin Jan 9, 1859 - March 9, 1947

I am Carrie Chapman Catt. My interest in Women's Suffrage was established when I was about 12 years old. My mother and father had worked tirelessly for Horace Greeley in his bid for the presidency against Ulysses S. Grant. On Election Day my father and the hired man were going to vote. I asked my mother why she wasn't going and the family laughed at me and said women couldn't vote.

I went to Iowa State College and while there insisted that women should be able to have military training like the men. Drill provided healthy exercise and discipline according to the General who ran the program. Company G (for girls) was offered through World War I. I also challenged the university literary society to allow women students to be more active. Only men were allowed to give speeches at meetings, women could only write their ideas in essay form. I insisted on giving speeches myself and after I gave one on Women's Voting Rights women could speak at the literary society meetings.

I spoke at a teachers' school about the importance of women having a solid education. My answer to men who questioned women having the brain power to vote was, "How is it possible that a woman who is unfit to vote, should be the mother of, and bring up, a man who is?"

I became a school superintendent, journalist, lecturer, and was widowed at 26 after a 1 year marriage to Leo Chapman, newspaper editor of the Mason City Republican. I married civil engineer George Catt in 1890. Left financially independent when he died in 1905, I turned my attention again to the suffrage movement as field organizer with Susan B. Anthony, and re-organized NAWSA to be more political in 1890. I was a fundraiser, planner and administrator. I led New York campaigns, and national and international organizations. My secret "Winning Plan" combined state and federal work, and unified mainline movement in 1916. As a pacifist, I lobbied Woodrow Wilson, opposed militants, organized a successful 14-month campaign for ratification, founded the League of Women Voters, and with the help of many dedicated women through the years, the League is celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> year. I worked for world peace until my death in 1947.

"THIS WORLD TAUGHT WOMEN NOTHING SKILLFUL AND THEN SAID HER WORK WAS VALUELESS. IT PERMITTED NO OPINIONS AND SAID SHE DID NOT KNOW HOW TO THINK. IT FORBADE HER TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC, AND SAID THE SEX HAD NO ORATORS."

Alice Paul (1885-1977)  
(with Lucy Burns)

Good afternoon. I am Alice Paul, an American suffragist leader. My close friend, Lucy Burns, and I had the privilege of leading the final push for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing women to vote.

*Lucy, are you here today? Come on up and tell everyone a little bit about yourself.*

*My name is Lucy Burns. I was born in New Jersey on July 28, 1879. I met Alice Paul in 1908 while helping the women Suffragettes in England. In fact, Alice and I returned to the United States and applied several methods of protesting that we learned in Europe. Alice and I actively organized many protests and we were arrested and put in jail for doing this. I am known for spending more time in jails than any other Suffragette. When Alice and I were arrested for picketing the White House, we went on a 19 day hunger strike.*

*I retired from political life after the women in the U.S. obtained the right to vote. During the remaining 46 years of my life, I proudly voted at every election!*

Back to Alice Paul...

I was born on January 11, 1885 to Quaker parents. My mother, Tacie, was a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and was a great influence on my life. She would say, "When you put your hand to the plow, you can't put it down until you get to the end of the row." I guess she is one of the reasons I dedicated my life to women's equality.

Lucy Burns and I were part of Carrie Chapman Catt's National American Woman Suffrage Association. As hard as we worked, to obtain the right to vote for women, it just wasn't happening. That was when we formed our own organization, the National Woman's Party. We decided to employ some techniques we learned from the suffrage movement in Britain.

We used mass meetings, picketing, parade and hunger strikes as part of our new plan. We received much press coverage. Since President Woodrow Wilson was so adamant about not supporting the Suffrage Amendment, we decided to picket the White House. This had never been done before. We were arrested on charges of obstructing traffic. It was during this incarceration that I started a hunger strike. I was moved to the psychiatric ward of the prison and force-fed raw eggs through a tube. Many other women joined the strike. In combination with continuing demonstrations and abundant press coverage, this put much pressure on President Wilson who finally urged Congress to pass the necessary legislation.

In 1919, both the House and Senate passed the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the battle for state ratification began. Three quarters of the states were needed to ratify the amendment. The battle came down to the state of Tennessee in the summer of 1920. If a majority of the Tennessee state legislature voted in favor of the amendment, it would become law.

The youngest member of the Tennessee assembly, Harry Burn, would cast the deciding vote. Harry Burn had intended to vote against the amendment, but upon receiving a telegram from his mother requesting his support of women's suffrage, he voted in favor.

On August 18, 1920, Tennessee ratified the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Six days later, the Secretary of State certified the ratification giving American women the right to vote, and it only took 72 years to accomplish this.

## Birthday Tea - Conclusion

While the league's programs, priorities and procedures have changed over the years to meet changing times, a League pamphlet written in 1919 describes with remarkable accuracy its basic aims today: The organization has three purposes; to foster education in citizenship, to promote forums and public discussion of civic reforms and to support needed legislation.

*"Over the years, the League has also been a training ground for women who want to serve in public office. In fact, the League's ability to prepare women for public life may be its finest legacy to the nation."*

*(Nancy Neuman, President, LWVUS, 1986-90)*

There is probably no other national volunteer organization in America that inspires such a great degree of commitment from its members. As a direct result of that commitment, the League of Women Voters has evolved from what it was in 1920, a mighty political experiment designed to help 20 million enfranchised women carry out their new responsibilities, to what it is today; a unique, nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy and promoting informed citizen participation at all levels of government.

