

Law Day 2013

Women's Suffrage

The First Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY in July 1848. Although the convention was supposed to be for women only, men were not turned away. Ultimately, 42 men were part of the 300-member assembly. James Mott, an advocate for women's rights and the husband of one of the day's speakers, Lucretia Mott, even chaired the event.

suf•frage [sŭf'rīj]

noun

1. the right to vote esp in public elections; franchise
2. casting a vote

On the first day, in addition to Lucretia Mott's speech, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read her Declaration of Sentiments, symbolically modeled after the Declaration of Independence and included these words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed

by their Creator with certain inalienable rights..."

The convention was just the beginning of the fight for the right to vote. There were rallies and parades that included large numbers of supporters and individual acts to challenge the status quo. One

such act was when Susan B. Anthony attempted to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election of 1872.

She was arrested and brought to trial in Rochester, found guilty and fined \$100 for breaking the law. She never paid the fine and never served jail time.

In 1915, a referendum was held in New York State on the suffrage issue. Despite rallies, parades, speeches, and broadsides, the amendment was

defeated. However, in 1917 New York State granted women the right to vote – one of the first states to do so. It came three years before the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution giving women the vote in national elections. The 1917 result followed nearly 50 years of marching, fund-raising and rallies. The triumph was achieved despite fears of antisuffragists that when a woman received the right to vote, "... political gossip would cause her to neglect the home, forget to mend our clothes and burn the biscuits."

Student Assessment:

What one new thing did you learn from this activity?

Next installment: Equal Opportunity

Newspaper Activity:

Protests and their Effects

The struggle for American women to gain the right the vote was a lifelong fight which eventually led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Look for news about current protests. What happened as a result? What do you think could be the long-term effects of protests going on today?



Women's Suffrage Parade, New York City 1913