Lake County Woman Suffrage Campaign in 1890

MARY KAY JENNINGS

"It was the first great victory of her forty years of work. She spoke as one inspired, while the audience listened for every word, some cheering, others weeping."1 Susan B. Anthony received the announcement of Wyoming’s admittance to the Union with woman suffrage in its constitution at the opera house in Madison, South Dakota, on the evening of Friday, 27 June 1890, although Mrs. Mary Seymour Howell’s account is dated 10 July.2 The actual date and details of the burgeoning woman suffrage movement in Lake County, South Dakota, are recorded in the Madison Semi-weekly Sentinel, a prosuffrage, Republican newspaper published by F.L. Mease. The Sentinel and similar newspaper accounts provide a vivid history of the Lake County women who shared the struggle of civilizing a new land with the help of dedicated men. By 1890 they were well into campaigning for woman suffrage, one of South Dakota’s longest political struggles.

South Dakota women had been on the brink of enfranchise-

2. Ibid. Mrs. Howell’s account is dated 10 July as are subsequent references.
ment throughout the territorial period. In 1879 they had been granted the right, under territorial law, to vote at school meetings. In 1885 both the Council and the House of Representatives of Dakota Territory passed a bill granting suffrage to women, but it was vetoed by Governor Gilbert A. Pierce on the grounds that it would delay the granting of statehood. When statehood was granted in 1889, the new constitution provided that if the male electorate chose to remove the word male from the constitution in the fall 1890 election, women could enjoy equal suffrage. It was this challenge that brought Susan B. Anthony, president of the National Suffrage Association, to South Dakota for the first time in November 1889. She and other suffragists were convinced that the frontier would be more liberal in granting equal voting rights. Their conviction proved wrong in South Dakota.

Madison, located in Lake County in southeastern South Dakota, was not organized for suffrage campaigning before the evening of 18 November 1889. Miss Anthony then recounted the suffrage movement history, passed out literature and helped local advocates form their own association. Mease included a clipping from the *Aberdeen News* in the *Sentinel*: “Lake county has an equal suffrage society organized by the inspiration of Susan B. Anthony's lecture. General Beadle, not unknown to Dakota politics, is the president.” General William Henry Harrison Beadle had worked to restrict the sale of school lands in the territory and was present at most territorial legislative sessions. Known as “the saviour of the school lands” after his lobbying proved effective, Beadle accepted the position of president at Madison’s new normal school that year.

Another prominent name in the Lake County Equal


4. Miss Anthony stayed in the home of Mrs. R.C. McCallister while in Madison. The home was new and fashionably built, and still stands on Madison’s Egan Avenue.

5. The history of this unsuccessful but exhilarating campaign, from Miss Anthony’s visit in 1889 to the defeat of suffrage the following fall, is contained in copies of the *Madison Semi-weekly Sentinel* on file in the Karl E. Mundt Archives in Madison.

Suffrage Association (ESA) was Rebecca Hager. She was elected secretary and proved to be one of the suffragists' most able advocates in the state. The wife of Madison's First Methodist minister, Mrs. Hager had been active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) on state and local levels. The Hagers had been sent to Madison by the Dakota Conference in 1887, and "having been educated in the East, they brought a new appreciation of the cultural arts, especially in music." The Reverend C.E. Hager, who organized the Lake Madison Chautaugua, joined his wife as an officer of the ESA in mid-1890.

F.L. Mease, publisher of the Sentinel, was probably influenced in his support of suffrage by his association with the Hagers. He was a member of the First Methodist Church and is remembered as an active member who sang in the choir as late

as the 1920s. Mease’s wife, Nora Scoggin Mease, was an officer of the WCTU and was frequently a singer at church and social functions. The Meases were married three days after Susan B. Anthony’s first visit to Madison, and the Sentinel’s favorable attitude towards suffrage may have been furthered by the link of suffrage with that happy occasion in the publisher’s life.

During the 1890 campaign the newspaper’s endorsement of suffrage presented a problem in editorial dexterity. The newspaper was Republican, and the Republican party did not endorse the woman suffrage plank at its state convention. Equal suffrage was wholeheartedly endorsed, however, by the Farmers’ Alliance, which was developing strength in South Dakota. In an age of strong newspaper partisanship, supporting an opposing party’s plank created a delicate situation.

Mease made no outright endorsement of woman suffrage until the spring of 1890. On 17 January 1890 a small political note read, “H.P. Smith [state senator from Lake County] has introduced Senate bill No. 57—Giving the right to women to vote at all school and municipal elections.” After that, few issues of the paper failed to carry an item of local or state news on the suffrage issue. Regular press releases and letters from the state ESA offices in Huron, urging Madison women to participate actively in the campaign, were printed.

The 4 February 1890 Sentinel included an antisuffrage letter from Mrs. Emma R. Sterling, the Redfield, South Dakota, WCTU president. “More men are anxious to give the ballot to women than women are to receive it. They talk as though all women would vote right. We differ with them.” Mease did not respond directly to Mrs. Sterling’s letter. The same issue that carried her antisuffrage stand included a pro-suffrage letter that J. H. DeVoe had written to the editor of the Huron newspaper. DeVoe had commented on suffrage earlier and said that his remarks had been misconstrued by the Huron paper. DeVoe outlined a detailed study of Kansas women voters’ records [Kansas women were allowed to vote in city and lower level elections] that was a good argument for equal suffrage. His

11. Ibid., 4 Feb. 1890.
letter ended, “You insinuate in your comment that I claim only 3,000 WCTU women of South Dakota are asking for the ballot. This is unfair. I did not say it, nor did I insinuate that all those who do not ask for the ballot are inmates of the brothel.”

Not only the number, but also the caliber, of women wanting the vote was evidently in question.

Mease interviewed Madison women on the suffrage issue for the 4 April issue. The article was entitled “The Women Talk” and subtitled “Some Opinions Expressed on Proposed Suffrage Amendment” and “Should Women have the Ballot?” The four women interviewed said, “Yes!” to the question. One interviewee, Mrs. C.H. Dye, poet and private elocution instructor, repeated a well-known suffrage rallying cry in her comments, “A Disenfranchised class is an oppressed class and until the working woman has a vote her employer will little heed her prayer for living wages.”

Ellen Chapman Beadle, wife of the general, was for the cause but rightly pessimistic. “While it is just for them [women] to have the ballot they would not at first generally use it, but another generation would. For the same reason that they would not generally use it, a majority do not now really demand it. The disused or unused right is less strongly asserted. For the same reasons they will not receive it. They will let their great opportunity pass. The majority of men treat the question with already fixed opinion or prejudice against it.”

In response to the interview Rebecca Hager stated, “It is surely just for women to have the right of franchise, as the injustice of ‘taxation without representation’ was settled in this country over a hundred years ago. I think it eminently proper for all loyal Americans to have the privilege of voting. Women as a class are more patriotic than men, and our nation needs more ballots from citizens who prize country above self.”

The fourth woman in the article echoed the others’ sentiments.

In the article’s introduction, Mease stated the newspaper’s position on equal suffrage. That position remained constant for twenty-eight years.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 4 Apr. 1890.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
The *Sentinel* can see no valid reason why in this enlightened age the mothers, wives and sisters are not justly entitled to vote and are not equally as competent to exercise this great privilege and duty as the average male proportion of the commonwealth. The use of the ballot would be perfectly safe in the discretion of South Dakota’s intelligent womanhood. It is asserted by the opposition, as a leading negative argument, that the majority of women do not want to vote. Even this weak assumption will be most effectually answered by the extent to which the women emphasize their claims during the campaign. At least, we believe that locally the cause will be best served and the men enlightened by a thorough discussion and free expression of opinions from the ladies of the community.

In April city and county elections were to be held, and the women of Lake County were urged by the state ESA to attempt to vote. Territorial law had granted women the right to vote only at elections that included school business. Mease interpreted new state law as allowing females to vote on school questions in any election. Rebecca Hager, Mrs. J.A. Trow, Mrs. W.L. Smith, and Mrs. F.G. Young, all WCTU officers, signed a notice appearing in the *Sentinel* asking all women interested in the upcoming election to meet at the Baptist church.

The women of Madison duly flexed their franchise muscles at the election, and Mease’s report on their orderly dismissal from the polls was brief, but caustic.

There seems to have been a difference of opinion regarding the right of the ladies to vote on school matters at the late city election. In Madison the judges of election were instructed not to receive any women’s votes on school questions and they strictly adhered to the instruction. In the second ward several ladies went to the polls and one acting under legal advice offered a ballot on school officers. It was refused and a local newspaper—our sunny Evening P.M.—makes her the object of newspaper ridicule and sneers at the ladies attempting to vote. Heaven forbid, that the outside world should take this unmanly slur as a reflection of the best thought of this community.

The article also referred to women’s acceptance at the polls in DeSmet and Rapid City. The 24 June issue referred to nearby

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 11 Apr. 1890.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 18 Apr. 1890.
Arlington, where women voted in a June election; “the old croakers up there who have been shouting that the women did not want to vote, were laid on the shelf to meditate.” The election referred to at Arlington brought this request in the Sentinel’s Ramona Items, “Next Tuesday is election; come ladies and vote. We will let you.”

The presence of national suffrage figures enlivened the South Dakota suffrage campaign to an extent probably never surpassed. Susan B. Anthony had thought her 1889 visit to the new state would be enough to organize the campaign for the fall election. However, at the request of South Dakotans, she decided to return and spend much of 1890 in the state. She also arranged for suffrage advocates, the Reverend Anna Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, Henry Blackwell, Mary Seymour Howell, Julia Nelson, the Reverend Helen Putnam, Clara Colby, Laura Johns, Matilda Hindman, and the Reverend Olympia Brown, to campaign in South Dakota. Most of the speakers were financed by the national association and all but four were in Lake County that year.

The South Dakota WCTU was well organized and included many suffragists, but Susan B. Anthony preferred that the suffrage issue be sought independently of the prohibition issue, which was the main thrust of the WCTU. It was her view that woman suffrage did not need the enemies of prohibition and that if women were members of the electorate, prohibition would soon be affected. The backing of WCTU members was happily accepted, but Miss Anthony wanted a strong, separate ESA, and financial disputes over national ESA funds being handled by other prosuffrage organizations, or even the state ESA treasury, plagued the campaign.

Rebecca Hager appears to have carried out Miss Anthony’s wishes. She was an active officer of the ESA and at the same time worked to engender enthusiasm for suffrage in the city, county, and state WCTUs. At a county WCTU meeting in June Mrs. Hager and Mrs. Lillie Hubbell of Madison spoke at length

20. Ibid., 24 June 1890.
21. Ibid. Such activities were common in 1890. Historian Dorinda Riessen Reed devoted an entire chapter to that year in The Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota.
on suffrage and received a commitment from the members present. Helen Barker, state suffrage organizer, had promised Susan B. Anthony in March that suffrage would be made the specialty of the WCTU at all county and district conventions, but when the September state WCTU convention was held, Madison was the only city WCTU organization that was mentioned as making suffrage its "specialty" for the year.

Spring elections and WCTU meetings were only a preface to the real excitement of the 1890 campaign. The Reverend Anna B. Shaw came to Madison on 19 April 1890, as part of her statewide campaigning. Anna Shaw had studied to be a Methodist-Episcopal minister, preached for two years, but had been refused ordination after she completed further studies. She joined the Methodist-Protestant Church and was ordained. After serving as a minister for many years, Miss Shaw became committed to the women's movement. Her association with Susan B. Anthony led her to the exhausting South Dakota campaign of 1890 and eventual presidency of the National-American ESA.

Shaw wrote about that campaign in her autobiography:

That South Dakota campaign was one of the most difficult we ever made. It extended over nine months; and it is impossible to describe the poverty which prevailed throughout the whole rural community of the State. There had been three consecutive years of drought. The sand was like powder, so deep that the wheels of the wagons in which we rode "across country" sank half-way to the hubs; and in the midst of this dry powder lay withered tangles that had once been grass. Every one had the forsaken desperate look worn by the pioneer who had reached the limit of his endurance, and the great stretches of prairie roads showed innumerable canvas-covered wagons, drawn by starved horses, and followed by starved cows, on their way "Back East."

Lake County was such a dismal stop for Anna Shaw that April because of the long drought that had touched Lake County the years before. However, the spring of 1890 brought good rains, and the farmers who survived the dry weather had high hopes. Madison was progressive, having an electric plant

23. Ibid., p. 25.
24. Sentinel, 19 Sept. 1890.
and trolley lines to the ballpark. The social atmosphere was enlivened by Normal School events, and civic leaders were already interested in C.E. Hager’s attempts to have a chautaugua at Lake Madison.

Miss Shaw’s first address was on a Saturday evening in the Baptist church. That church, now designated as First Baptist, had been built in 1889 and was probably an impressive meeting place. It was also the setting for the September WCTU open meetings. The Reverend S.G. Adams was the minister at that time. The *Sentinel* read:

As the law now reads only insane men, idiots, paupers and women are excluded from voting. . . . It was shown that all philanthropists are equal suffragists, also all the great reformers and women who have come in contact with the world see the necessity of the ballot in the hands of women. . . . Miss Shaw is an entertaining speaker, witty and fluent in delivery and has perfect control of her audience.  

The following evening brought an ecumenical endorsement of equal suffrage. The article stated, “The churches of the city gave up their services and everybody went to the opera house to hear the second address [by Shaw]. The hall was completely packed. The choir sang an anthem. Rev. Gwynne [Presbyterian] offered prayer, after which Rev. Anna Shaw [Methodist-Protestant] was introduced by Mrs. Hager [Methodist-Episcopal].”  

The Reverend Miss Shaw exercised her religious training at that meeting, mixing Biblical interpretation with suffrage rhetoric.

Matilda Hindman, a well-known suffrage lecturer, had also joined the South Dakota campaign. Her addresses at Madison’s First Methodist Church and the opera house were reported in the *Sentinel*. This Pennsylvania suffragist inspired formation of the Madison ESA. The earlier ESA had been on the county level. The suffragist’s goal was a tightly knit organization at the state, county, city, and township levels.

A speaker who was not campaigning just for suffrage visited

27. Ibid.  
the county soon after Miss Hindman and the Sentinel handled a delicate situation well. Ben Terrell, Farmers’ Alliance proponent, spoke in Madison. Republican publisher Mease reported Terrell’s address in detail, giving special emphasis to the speaker’s prosuffrage views without espousing the alliance. The farm women’s response was also reported. “A large number of country ladies (the farmers’ wives) were noticed in the audience. They seemed to appreciate the remarks and witty illustrations of the speaker.” A small item in the same issue shows General Beadle was active as county ESA president. It read, “The equal suffrage club meets at the Methodist church tonight and will be addressed by General Beadle and C.H. Dye, Esq.”

The biographies of Beadle, however, do not explore his advocacy of woman suffrage. In his autobiography Beadle wrote of the 1889 constitutional vote: “I regret to say that woman suffrage lost. While not specially advocating it, I had always favored it and voted for it, as I did for prohibition.” The general did not mention his strong advocacy shortly after the constitutional vote in his autobiography. This may have been an oversight, because he mentions in prefatory remarks that the autobiography was hastily composed. It may also have been an intended omission. Woman suffrage was voted down in 1890, 1894, and 1898 by the male electorate. Advocacy of such a losing cause would not have added to Beadle’s reputation. His support of woman suffrage may also have diminished when his wife died in 1897.

Ellen Chapman Beadle had been ill during their stay at the Park Hotel in Madison. Their daughter, Mae Beadle Frink, related to author Barrett Lowe, “Mother’s health was never very good after 1865; although she was always able to direct the management and work of the household. She was of a retiring disposition and not particularly interested in social affairs.”

The Sentinel does not mention Mrs. Beadle’s attendance at

29. Ibid., 3 June 1890.
suffrage meetings, but the article quoted above, entitled "The Women Talk," indicates she was well informed on the issue.

The suffrage movement was having problems at the state level while it was gaining support in Lake County. During the Democratic state convention, held in Aberdeen on 11 June 1890, Judge Bangs spoke to the other delegates in favor of equal suffrage. "His speech was eloquent but fell on barren soil, for E.W. Miller, who came near securing the nomination for congress, replied in an ungentlemanly speech that was conspicuous for coarseness and bigotry, insulting Mrs. Harden and the other ladies on the platform." 32

Also in June, Helen Gougar, the author of the Kansas suffrage law, lectured in Madison. She spoke to a small audience at the opera house on Saturday, 21 June, and to a larger audience at the same location the following evening when local churches again cancelled services and congregations were asked to attend the lecture.

One of Helen Gougar's remarks shows a racist attitude that was common in the suffrage campaign and Dakota politics. "If the amendment is defeated this fall in South Dakota there is every reason to fear that the ignorant Sioux Indians on the

32. Sentinel, 12 June 1890.
reservation will vote before the intelligent women of this state are granted the elective privilege.”  

The thought of uneducated Indian and non-English speaking immigrant men being allowed to vote when educated, American-born white women could not was repugnant to suffragists, and the argument probably won them followers among white male voters. Russian immigrant men had appeared at the Democratic convention wearing antisuffrage badges, and suffragist Mary Seymour Howell had hastily left Tripp, South Dakota, after “she was met by a delegation, mostly Russians, and told that they did not want to hear any woman preacher and she would not be allowed to speak in the school house.”

Many early suffragists formed their opinions during the abolition movement, but political expediency made it necessary to campaign against nonenfranchised groups. In 1891 the Reverend Anna Shaw decried the fact that woman suffrage received fewer votes than male Indian suffrage (37 percent to 45 percent) in the 1890 election. She did, however, show a more universal outlook when she said, “Let all of us who love liberty solve these problems in justice; and let us mete out to the Indian, to the negro, to the foreigner, and to the woman, the justice which we demand for ourselves... Let us recognize in each of them that One above, the Father of us all, and that all are brothers, all are one.”

Kansan Helen Gougar wrote a letter to the editor of the Aberdeen News while in Madison. It was reprinted in the Sentinel. “In your valuable paper of the 18th ‘Fair Play’ says she is opposed to suffrage but is raising ‘three boys to be patriotic voters.’ If this woman is so capable of raising three patriotic voters, why is she not able to vote patriotically herself, thus having four votes instead of three in that particular household? Why?”

If Mrs. Gougar’s letter did not change “Fair Play’s” mind, the news Susan B. Anthony received in Madison might have. Anthony’s receipt of news of Wyoming statehood, with

33. Ibid., 24 June 1890.
34. Ibid., 6 June 1890.
equal suffrage in its constitution, was certainly the joyful high point of the long, losing battle in 1890. Had South Dakota voted for woman suffrage that year, the elections would probably have overshadowed the news from a neighbor state. As it happened, the campaign was only groundwork for nearly three decades of political activity.

The visit by Miss Anthony and Mrs. Howell was arranged to coincide with a farmers’ picnic at Lake Herman. Lake Herman, located three miles west of Madison, was a pleasant meeting place, having a natural grove on its eastern shore. On the day of the picnic, 27 June, the Sentinel noted that abundant rain promising good crops gave the farmers good reason to celebrate and “the woods are full of them.” 37 Wagonloads of farm people were reported traveling through Madison to the picnic that day, so Mrs. Howell’s estimate of a thousand farmers may not have been greatly exaggerated. 38 By the time the 27 June issue went to the presses, it could be reported that Susan B. Anthony, Mary Seymour Howell, and John Harden had arrived at three o’clock.

The officers of the Farmers’ Alliance sponsored the occasion, but Republican publisher Mease referred to it only as a “farmers’ picnic” and alliance speaker John Harden received only passing notice compared to that for the noted suffragists. Harden was stumping for the presidency, and Mease reported, “the speech of John Harden, the husband of Sophia Harden, secretary of the farmers’ alliance, delivered at the farmer’s picnic last Friday missed the mark...poorly directed...coolly received.” 39

The highlight of the evening meeting at the opera house was the news from Wyoming.

**EQUAL SUFFRAGE**

Addresses by Susan B. Anthony and Mary Seymour Howell——

the County Organized.

Friday evening Susan B. Anthony addressed the people at the opera house...Miss Anthony speaks with wonderful vigor and force for her years [70]. Her remarks reviewed the history of the movement from its inception, the progress it has made, difficulties

36. Sentinel, 24 June 1890.
37. Ibid., 27 June 1890.
39. Sentinel, 1 July 1890.
met and surmounted, and the indication of its early success. Before leaving the stage Miss Anthony received a telegram stating that the senate had passed the Wyoming admission bill granting equal suffrage. Miss Anthony’s face beamed with satisfaction as she read the message to the audience, which showed no little excitement.”

The newspaper’s account is not as personal or as hyperbolic as Mary Seymour Howell’s memory of the occasion. Her letter reads:

In the afternoon we drove some distance to a beautiful lake where Miss Anthony spoke to 1,000 men, a Farmers’ Alliance picnic. When she asked how many would vote for the suffrage amendment, all was one mighty “aye,” like the deep voice of the sea. That evening we spoke in the opera house in the city. While Miss Anthony was speaking a telegram for her was handed to me, and as I arose to make the closing address I gave it to her. I had just begun when she came quickly forward, put her hand on my arm and said, “Stop a moment, I want to read this telegram.” It was from Washington, saying that President Harrison had signed the bill admitting Wyoming into the Union with woman suffrage in its constitution. Before she could finish reading the great audience was on its feet, cheering and waving handkerchiefs and fans. After the enthusiasm had subsided Miss Anthony made a short but wonderful speech. The very tones of her voice had changed; there were ringing notes of gladness and tender ones of thankfulness. It was the first great victory of her forty years of work. She spoke as one inspired, while the audience listened for every word, some cheering, others weeping.

When Miss Anthony was starting for South Dakota she was urged not to go, through fear of the effect of such a campaign on her health. Her reply was, “Better lose me than lose a State.” A grand answer from a grander woman. And this night in South Dakota we had won a State and still had Miss Anthony with us, the central figure of the suffrage movement as she was the central figure in that never-to-be-forgotten night of great rejoicing.

The Sentinel’s account of the event gave almost equal significance to the remarks of Mrs. Howell. It continued, “Saturday evening Mrs. Howell delivered her lecture on the ‘Dawn of the 20th Century’...Mrs. Howell repudiated the miserable lie circulated in the east about starving Dakota, and declared that she never had so many good things to eat as since

40. Ibid.
coming to South Dakota. Mrs. Howell made many friends here." That article was followed by county ESA secretary Rebecca Hager’s account of the organization’s meeting, which followed the Friday addresses. Twenty-two delegates from nine townships were present. This compares with only three organized townships in 1918, the final year of the suffrage drive.

The state suffrage convention, an event that closely followed Susan B. Anthony’s victory, was held in Huron on 8-9 July 1890. Rebecca Hager reported that the suffrage campaign was encouraging, and "the slight differences that existed were all amicably settled at this meeting and the forces now stand

42. Sentinel, 1 July 1890.

New officers according to Sentinel, 1 July 1890: Vice-pres., Rev. Hager; Treas., Miss Mary Fitts. Chairpersons of township committees: Badus—Mrs. A.W. Drake; Wayne—Mrs. Ball; Concord—H.P. Smith; Farmington—S.W. Pitts; Franklin—T.S. Barrett; Herman—H.J. Hammer; Wentworth—Mrs. J.B. Johnson; Orland—Mrs. C.W. Shirley; LeRoy—Wm. Dixon; Chester—Wm. Richardson; Town 106-54—A.H. Tuttle; Lakeview—Dr. E. Clark (also pres. of Madison ESA). Delegates to state suffrage convention: Thos. Barrett, Geo. Beck, H.P. Smith, Mrs. J.B. Johnson, Dr. Gwynne, Rev. Hager, Mrs. C.W. Wood, Miss Mary Fitts, and Mrs. Hager.
united for victory." The slight differences were more explicitly noted in the Sioux Falls Argus-Leader. "At the first session the devotees of Susan (Anthony) and Judge Thomas of Codington made violent charges against the executive committee for criticizing Miss Anthony and demanded its resignation." This inner dissension was over Miss Anthony's refusal to leave the campaign funds in the state treasury. The state executive committee of the Equal Suffrage Association opposed putting the money in the national treasury and the entire committee was forced to resign because of this fight. The Lake County delegation at the convention included a Methodist minister, a Presbyterian minister, a state senator, and several women including Mary Fitts. Miss Fitts was Lake County ESA treasurer and she held an interest in the First National Bank of Madison.

While the county and city suffrage associations were growing, the township level was also developing. News items in the Sentinel indicate that suffrage was a close second to crops as a topic of interest in 1890. The 16 September issue included this item from the local reporter Bass Bawl; "The Franklin Equal Suffrage Association No. 1 met last Saturday night, but on account of the bad behavior of small boys on the back seat they adjourned early." On 12 August the Sentinel stated, "Women suffrage cranks are thick enough to stir with a stick." This comment may have been directed at women preparing for the visit of Julia B. Nelson. Julia Nelson, from Red Wing, Minnesota, campaigned in Madison and spoke at the Boyd, Crow, and Thomas schools and at Prospect, Winifred, Ramona, and Franklin—the village with "suffrage cranks"—on 13 August.

South Dakota was primed for suffrage discussions, and the state WCTU convention, held at Madison in September, was mainly centered on that issue. WCTU Superintendent of Franchise Susan Fessenden, the Reverend Anna Shaw, and Matilda Hindman addressed the women delegates. Many proposals were drawn up by the organization at the meetings, one of which

44. Sentinel, 11 July 1890.
45. Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, 10 July 1890.
46. Reed, The Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota, p. 36.
47. Sentinel, 16 Sept., 12 Aug. 1890.
read, "Therefore, Resolved; that we, members of the WCTU and women of South Dakota will never cease to petition, to work for, and to demand the ballot for women, till we are granted a fair share in the government of our commonwealth." Another resolution read, "the earnest and heartfelt gratitude of all the suffragists of South Dakota is hereby extended to Susan B. Anthony, who has devoted her entire time, energy and experience for six months [in South Dakota] to the cause of liberty and justice." 48

A male proponent of equal suffrage visited Madison in late September 1890. Henry Blackwell, former editor of the "Woman's Journal," a woman suffrage weekly, was by 1890 devoting his full efforts to lecturing in behalf of equal suffrage. As a protest against unfair treatment given women under the law, Blackwell and his wife, Lucy Stone, had agreed that she retain her maiden name after they were married. Blackwell's lecture at the Madison Courthouse was not given sufficient notice and, therefore, was poorly attended. Blackwell attempted to appeal to men at the dollars and cents level. The Sentinel read, "it was his opinion that the state of South Dakota could not spend $100,000 in advertising that would cause such an immigration to its borders, as to pass this equal suffrage amendment." 49

Arousing male voters' interest in the "women's" cause tried the patience of South Dakota and out-of-state suffragists. Carrie Chapman Catt, a nationally-known speaker, delivered a pessimistic view of the suffrage campaign to the state executive committee. "Continuing as we are, we can’t poll 20,000 votes. We are converting women to 'want to vote' by the hundreds but we are not having any appreciable effect upon the men... Ours is a cold, lonesome little movement, which will make our hearts ache about November 5. We must get Dakota men in the work. They are not talking woman suffrage on the street. There is an absolute indifference concerning it." 50

General Beadle campaigned at the Boyd school, in Summitt Township, and in Wentworth. Emma DeVoe, state suffrage

48. Ibid, 26 Sept. 1890.
49. Ibid.
worker, and Kansas ESA president, Laura M. Johns, joined in the October effort to win the county. On 31 October, a “Franklynite” wrote this still hopeful letter to Mease. “I hope that the other townships of Lake County will follow the plan proposed by Franklin. The friends of equal suffrage in that township are preparing for a grand turnout on election day, Nov. 4. On that day they will give a free dinner to all who vote for equal rights. By this it may be shown to the public how every election day will become a picnic day when women go to the polls.”

After the election, unsubtle bribery, such as the free dinner suggestion, was not mentioned in the *Sentinel*. Mease’s pro-suffrage paper put the bad news at the end of the article on the election, “a conspicuous dearth of boisterous electioneering. This was probably due to the fact that the ladies were present from the early opening to the closing of the ballot. They turned out in large numbers, the wives, sisters, mothers and grandmothers of Madison. . . . Equal suffrage carried with a good majority in some of the towns but is lost in the city and county.” The county vote, as recorded in an 1892 *Gazetteer*, was 535 for suffrage, 1012 against.

When the election was over, the national speakers packed their bags and went on to other suffrage wars. The Reverend Anna Shaw wrote, “After all our work, we did not win Dakota that year, but Miss Anthony bore the disappointment with the serenity she always showed. To her a failure was merely another opportunity.”

It was difficult to maintain the enthusiasm of that hectic, hopeful year in Lake County. The Reverend C.E. and Rebecca Hager moved on to Aberdeen in 1892, where Mrs. Hager became franchise officer of the state WCTU. By the turn of the century, they were living in Nebraska. From there, Hager wrote to his former congregation member Lillie Hubbel, “the Church at Madison is the most truly united, harmonious and responsive

51. *Sentinel*, 31 Oct. 1890. Equal rights and equal suffrage were equated by women of this period, as they had been by other groups in the United States.
52. Ibid., 5 Nov. 1890.
of any we ever served. The most considerate of their pastor’s interest and the most liberal in dealing with all the interests of Christ’s Kingdom.”

Woman suffrage was voted down by male voters six times, but one member of Hager’s church remained faithful to the cause. The *Sentinel* is not remembered as one of the newspapers that carried suffrage publicity plates in the movement’s final, victorious campaign of 1918, but Mease was still prosuffrage after twenty-eight years. In 1918 he wrote, “Every voter has received a copy of the amendments and referred laws. Look them over before you go into the booth, and don’t forget to vote yes on Amendment E, which gives the vote to women, but denies it to aliens.” And this time they did.

55. C.E. Hager to Lillie Hubbell, declining invitation to church anniversary celebration in 1900, Gladys Gist, historian, memorabilia of Madison Methodist Church, Madison, S.Dak.
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