

A Century Celebration

Woman Suffrage in South Dakota, 1868–1918

Ruth Page Jones

The Women Voted. The [Rapid City] Republican city convention endorsed the women candidates for the school board nominated by a woman's meeting held last week, and, with the assistance of the woman vote, elected five out of eight school trustees, two of them being women. About one-fourth of the women in the city voted.¹

School elections like the one held in Rapid City in the spring of 1890 gave South Dakota women their first but limited opportunity to participate in public voting. Guaranteed by the South Dakota Constitution of 1889, women's right to vote on school matters was but one step forward in a long quest for full enfranchisement that began with the introduction of the first woman suffrage bill in 1868. Over the next fifty years, suffragists struggled through a number of unsuccessful campaigns to advance arguments that would persuade voters to expand the electorate. Inexperience, infighting, and powerful enemies contributed to their failures. Finally, in 1918, with the endorsement of both major political parties, weakened opponents, and a persuasive "good citizen" argument, women secured their voting rights through a state constitutional amendment, making South Dakota the sixteenth and final state or territory to approve full woman suffrage. Two years later, the United States would make equal suffrage the law of the land with the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution.²

The desire for female enfranchisement developed in the 1800s in tandem with women's changing roles in society. Growing cities and increasing demand for consumer goods brought many women into the workforce. Starting in 1814, the clothing industry in Lowell, Massachusetts, established the first large-scale factory, employing women to weave cloth. Women workers, usually from poor urban and rural fami-

1. *Mitchell Capital*, 18 April 1890.

2. Dakota Territory, *Journal of the House* (1869), p. 34; Sally Roesch Wagner, ed., *Fighting for the Vote in South Dakota* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: Sky Carrier Press, 1995), pp. 90–98.

lies, experienced low wages, labor abuses, and unfair treatment. At the same time, middle- and upper-class women, now freed from having to produce all items needed in the home, found more time for leisure, child-rearing, and pursuing causes to improve the lives of other women and children. They often focused on addressing problems resulting from women's unequal status as workers or as wives and widows. For example, many widows and abandoned wives lived in abject poverty due to their inferior legal status and lack of opportunity to generate sufficient income. Married women faced disadvantages under laws that prevented them from controlling their own earnings, holding property in their own names, signing legal papers such as wills, and retaining custody of their children in case of divorce. The societal changes of the early nineteenth century exacerbated the inequality women faced, which underscored the need for reform.³

3. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, rev. ed. (1959; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1975), pp. 3-40, 62-64; Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), pp. 60-65, 70-72, 102-4. Flexner explores the changing status of women in American society that led to demands for equal rights (pp. 1-70). Although written in 1959, Flexner's book remains a classic and provides comprehensive coverage of the events leading up to ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.



Poor pay and working conditions in the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, pictured here, helped to spark the early movement for women's rights.

Along with their changing roles, developments in education for females heightened women's awareness of their inferior legal status and gave them needed tools and confidence to argue for improvements. By the early 1800s, Americans believed in basic education for girls, so that, when they became mothers, they could raise sons to be good citizens for the republic. This goal led to the growth of public schools, then known as common schools, established to teach a basic curriculum to all children. These institutions, along with a growing population, increased the need for teachers. Because society considered women the keepers of moral values, they were deemed particularly suited to guiding the moral education of children. Moreover, they could be paid less than men. With the opening of the first endowed women's seminary in New York in 1821, women's education moved away from teaching housewife and hostess skills exclusively and toward the study of academic subjects to prepare the students for work as teachers. Seminary experiences fostered networks of women who recognized the unjustness of their status and believed in their moral superiority. Many newly educated women, mostly middle-class and living in northern and midwestern states, such as New York and Ohio, felt supported and justified in expanding their sphere beyond the home to pursue legal and social reform.⁴

Before women could publicly fight on their own behalf, they needed to acquire some expertise in organizational and public advocacy. At first, women organized among themselves in church sewing circles, in which members solicited money for charitable purposes and gained basic fundraising skills. While studying and debating current events in literary organizations, women also learned meeting etiquette. Prior to the Civil War, many women from middle-class New England families and Quaker communities joined anti-slavery or abolitionist organizations, introducing them to political activism and opening possibilities for public speaking. With these newfound competencies, members of these groups began working for legal reform to expand women's rights.⁵

4. Evans, *Born for Liberty*, pp. 65, 70–73; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 23–31; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 212–13; W. Elliot Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee, *Women in the American Economy: A Documentary History, 1675 to 1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 18–19. Lerner describes the ideology of “Republican Motherhood,” in which women would educate future citizens for the good of the Republic.

5. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 41–70; Evans, *Born for Liberty*, pp. 79–80.

Although a growing number of women were developing needed skills and pursuing worthy causes, they still required effective leadership and a unifying platform to bring them together on the issue of equal suffrage. In fighting to change legislation through persuasion, their only political power, many women came to see voting rights as a matter of equal justice. One event that helped develop that platform was the Seneca Falls Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 to “discuss the social, civil, and religious rights of women.”⁶ Two early suffrage leaders, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, assisted with organizing the meeting. Attendees voted on a number of resolutions, including one stating, “It is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.”⁷ While all other proposals passed unanimously, the suffrage resolution gained the support of only a small majority. At the time, the idea of women voting seemed too daring. Nonetheless, the meeting concluded with sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signing their names to a Declaration of Sentiments that included the demand for enfranchisement. Only one woman who signed the declaration, Charlotte Woodward, lived to see women vote in 1920. Sadly, illness prevented her from exercising that hard-won right.⁸

Women continued to hold meetings and gain converts to the suffrage cause, but they did not organize and develop strategies to change the laws until after the Civil War ended. In 1866, abolitionists and equal rights advocates, both men and women, established the American Equal Rights Association. Initially, they worked to include universal suffrage in the Fifteenth Amendment that ultimately gave the ballot to black men, but not to women of any race. Three years later, having failed to attain their goal, the woman suffrage organization separated into two groups that pursued different strategies. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, leaders of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), concentrated primarily on achieving full

6. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 71, 74; Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 2–14.

7. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 77.

8. Ibid., pp. 71–77; Judith Wellman, “Charlotte Woodward,” [nps.gov/wori/learn/history-culture/charlotte-woodward.htm](https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/history-culture/charlotte-woodward.htm), accessed 10 July 2018.



Charlotte Woodward was the only signer of the Declaration of Sentiments who lived to see full woman suffrage in the United States.

voting rights through a national amendment. Meanwhile, Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, and Henry Blackwell of the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) focused on achieving enfranchisement state by state. As their principles and tactics converged to focus on state actions, the two organizations merged into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890. Other women pursued partial suffrage through grassroots campaigns organized by local activists

and supported by sympathetic legislators, rather than through any coordinated nationwide efforts.⁹ The suffrage movement, therefore, encompassed three strategies to change laws to obtain voting rights: a national campaign for a constitutional amendment, statewide crusades to change laws, and grassroots operations to acquire limited suffrage.

9. Angelica Shirley Carpenter, *Born Criminal: Matilda Joslyn Gage, Radical Suffragist* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2018), pp. 69-70, 78-79, 171-74; Gaylynn Welch, "Local and National Forces Shaping the American Woman Suffrage Movement, 1870-1890" (Ph.D. diss., Binghamton University, 2009), pp. 4, 68-70.

A WOMAN SUFFRAGE CATECHISM.

BY LUCY STONE.

At the woman suffrage hearing before the Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature, on the 17th of February, 1883, Lucy Stone presented the following statement, with questions and answers which illustrate some phases of the movement for the equal legal and political rights of women that are not as visible now as they will be hereafter:

Gentlemen of the Committee:—We have come up to this room for many years, vainly asking for equal rights with yourselves. We have quoted the great principles on which our government is based: the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. We have found that those principles are not respected in their application to women. We have answered over and over all objections that have ever been offered against the ballot for woman. We have quoted the successful working of woman suffrage wherever it has been tried, in England, Scotland, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and in our own Western Territories, without avail. I propose now, to show the historic record the Massachusetts Legislature has made for itself, on this question, by the following questions and answers:

Question—Shall the men and women who are to obey the laws have a right to make them?

Answer—No. Only the men shall have that right.

Q.—But there must be laws that especially concern women. Who shall make those laws?

A.—Only men shall make them.

Q.—May not mothers help make the laws that settle their legal relation to their children?

A.—They shall not. The men shall have the sole right to make such laws.

Q.—May not married women help make the laws that decide what share of the property acquired by a husband and wife during marriage shall belong to the wife?

A.—They shall not.

Q.—May not a married woman help make the laws that decide how much of her property acquired before her marriage shall belong to her husband after her death?

A.—No. The men shall decide it.

Q.—Who shall make the laws that decide how much of the property of the husband shall go to the wife?

A.—The men shall make them.

Q.—Who shall make the laws that decide how, and how much, a wife may will of her own property?

A.—The men.

Q.—Who shall make the laws that decide the rights of married partners in case of marriage and divorce and alimony?

A.—The men.

Q.—By the laws the men have made, do the father and mother have an equal legal right to their children?

A.—No. The right of the father is supreme so long as he lives with his wife.

Q.—What share shall a husband have in the real estate of his wife?

A.—He shall have the use of the whole of it as long as he lives, if his wife has ever had a living child.

Q.—What is his right to that property called?

A.—"The estate by the courtesy."

Q.—What share shall a wife have in the real estate of her husband?

A.—She shall have the use of one-third after her husband's death.

Q.—What is the right to that property called?

A.—It is commonly called "the widow's incumbrance," "dower," or "widows' thirds."

Lucy Stone's "A Woman Suffrage Catechism" listed the numerous ways in which Massachusetts lawmakers had failed to address issues vital to women.

Leaders pursuing a national solution waited nearly fifty years between the first appearance of a suffrage bill in the United States Congress and both houses voting on a suffrage measure in the same session. The initial milestone occurred in 1868, when Indiana congressman George Julian introduced a federal woman suffrage amendment. After enrollment of the bill in the Senate in December, a joint resolution was offered to both houses the following March, but neither chamber scheduled a vote. The next submission came nine years later. This 1878 Senate bill, which came to be known as the Anthony Amendment, established the language of the measure that finally passed in 1919: "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."¹⁰ After numerous women testified at the two-day committee hearing, the measure failed with no Senate vote. While lawmakers introduced the amendment many times over the years, they never voted on the resolution in both houses during the same session until 1914–1915. That bill failed to pass the Senate by one vote in March 1914 and was defeated by thirty votes in the House in January 1915. Four years later, both houses approved the voting rights bill, with the House giving approval in May and the Senate in June. With that victory, suffragists faced their final challenge, pushing for ratification in two-thirds of the country's state legislatures. Finally, after Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify, by a two-vote margin, the Nineteenth Amendment became law on 26 August 1920, just in time for women to vote that November.¹¹

The state-by-state strategy yielded some successes but many failures. In 1867, in the first attempt at a state referendum campaign, Kansas suffrage proponents garnered only one-third of the vote. The first victory came two years later when Wyoming Territory granted full suffrage through legislative action. Although Utah Territory approved woman suffrage in 1870, Congress revoked that right in 1887 as part of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which effectively banned polygamy. In Washington Territory, women voted from 1883 to 1887, but lost the right when the territorial supreme court overturned the legislature's

10. Tetraault, *Myth of Seneca Falls*, pp. 32–33, 102–3; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 149, 173–75. Senate Resolution 12 was introduced by Aaron Sargent, a Republican from California, on 10 January 1878.

11. Tetraault, *Myth of Seneca Falls*, p. 104; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 175, 268–69, 321–24.



Susan B. Anthony worked for decades to advance women's voting rights as a founder of the National Woman Suffrage Association and later president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

suffrage act. Multiple states, including Michigan, Colorado, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and South Dakota, tried unsuccessfully to amend their constitutions between 1874 and 1890.¹²

By 1890, the state strategy finally began to succeed. Women in four states gained the ballot before the turn of the century. In 1889, representatives at Wyoming's constitutional convention included woman suffrage in the new state constitution, which Congress approved the following year. Four years later, voters in Colorado approved a suffrage

12. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 146–47, 159–60, 162–63, 175, 222; Jennifer M. Ross-Nazzari, *Winning the West for Women: The Life of Suffragist Emma Smith DeVoe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), p. 114.

referendum, making it the first state to admit woman suffrage by popular vote. In 1895, Utah included women's voting rights in its constitution as well. One year later, Idaho voters followed Colorado's lead. Several other states held referenda votes in the subsequent years, but none succeeded until 1910. From that year through 1918, eleven states and one territory, mostly in the West, guaranteed women equal voting rights: Washington in 1910; California in 1911; Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon in 1912; Alaska Territory in 1913; Montana and Nevada in 1914; and New York in 1917. The final states to pass suffrage amendments included Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, all in 1918.¹³

Meanwhile, women pursuing partial suffrage convinced some state legislators to grant them limited voting rights. The first successes gave women the franchise in school elections. Later, women in some states obtained the ballot in municipal elections, on taxing and bonding issues, or in presidential and primary elections. At the local level, rather than demanding equal rights for women, school suffrage advocates maintained that voting on school matters was simply an extension of women's role in childhood education and would not compromise their femininity. Clarina Howard Nichols, one of the first women to promote school suffrage, originally developed the argument when lobbying the Vermont legislature in 1852. That attempt failed. Later, after moving to Kansas, Nichols successfully led the effort to include the right in the state constitution in 1861, thereby creating an opening for similar victories elsewhere. Local leaders promoted school suffrage as a chance for women to engage in politics in a non-threatening manner and to prove their value as voting citizens.¹⁴ The partial suffrage strategy worked. Starting with Kentucky as early as 1838 and then Kansas in 1861, most states had granted some type of limited franchisement before 1920. By 1900, twenty-five states and territories, including Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota, had secured school suffrage for women. Several other states allowed municipal or

13. Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, rev. ed. (2000; New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 368. Wyoming, Utah, and Arizona were the only states that guaranteed full woman suffrage in their original state constitutions.

14. Marilyn Schultz Blackwell, "The Politics of Motherhood: Clarina Howard Nichols and School Suffrage," *New England Quarterly* 78 (Fall 2005): 572-74.

other limited voting privileges. Between 1913 and 1919, seventeen states passed laws permitting women to vote in presidential primaries. Only eight states, all in the South, did not give women access to the ballot in any form before 1920.¹⁵

During the decades-long fight for full suffrage in Dakota Territory and then South Dakota, women used their right to vote in school elections to engage in public politics. The story of school suffrage in the state, told separately from the larger movement, reveals how women took advantage of their limited voting rights to cast ballots, run for office, build leadership skills as elected officials, and prove their value as voting citizens.¹⁶

15. Keyssar, *Right to Vote*, pp. 365–68. The list of states that never approved any type of woman suffrage (prior to the Nineteenth Amendment) was determined by identifying the absence of state names in Keyssar's tables, A.17–A.20, which list all states that allowed full and partial suffrage before 1920. Those with no prior type of woman suffrage include Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.

16. For more detailed discussion of school suffrage in South Dakota, see Ruth Page Jones, "The Women Voted": School Suffrage in Dakota Territory and South Dakota," in *Equality at the Ballot Box: Votes for Women on the Northern Great Plains*, ed. Lori Ann Lahlum and Molly P. Rozum (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2019), pp. 191–217.



This 1909 political cartoon from an Aberdeen newspaper illustrates one of the points suffragists used in pressing for the vote.

Prior to 1883, Dakota Territory law called for local voters to make decisions on education at district school meetings, rather than through the ballot box. Legislators wrote and amended any laws that governed schools under the unified Education Act, commonly called school law. The Education Act of 1879 changed the definition of voters at district school meetings to include women, with the phrase “all persons over the age of twenty-one” replacing “free white males.” The law still required voters to meet citizenship and residency rules. According to school law, women could vote at district meetings on school officers, tax issues, teacher’s wages, schoolhouse locations, and other items. They could also hold offices related to education. In 1881, school law changed to allow women to run for county superintendent of public instruction.¹⁷

The Public Education Act of 1883, a complete rewrite of school law, changed the method of school governance from district meetings to elected township school boards. The new law exempted fifteen of the older counties, which allowed women in some areas to continue voting at school meetings. In all other counties, the law effectively barred women—who could not vote in township elections—from making decisions on school matters, a right they had held since 1879. Legislators restored school suffrage for women in 1887, allowing them to cast ballots and run for related offices. When South Dakota became a state in 1889, the constitution granted women the right to vote in local school elections as well as to hold any school office. They could not, however, vote in county or general elections for county and state superintendents of public instruction, even though they could still be elected to those positions.¹⁸

Women in South Dakota used their limited rights to cast ballots long before passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. In 1890, the *Turner Coun-*

17. Dakota Territory, *Laws Passed at the First Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota* (1862), chap. 32, sec. 51 (hereafter cited *Session Laws*); *ibid.* (1879), chap. 14, secs. 29–30; *ibid.* (1881), Chap. 65, sec. 1; Dakota Territory, *Annotated Revised Codes of the Territory of Dakota* (1877), vol. 2, chap. 40, secs. 21, 42 (hereafter cited *Revised Codes*). For more on the school laws in 1862, 1877, and 1879, see Jones, “The Women Voted,” p. 213n14.

18. Dakota Territory, *Revised Codes* (1883), vol. 2, chap. 40, secs. 30–31, 66–68; Dakota Territory, *Session Laws* (1887), chap. 46, sec. 2, chap. 47, secs. 10, 20; South Dakota, *Constitution and the Laws Passed at the First Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (1890), art. 7, sec. 9.

ty *Herald* described how women in Hurley reacted to their first voting experience: “Tuesday’s election for school officers was something new in the line of elections for Dakota. For the first time the women were placed on an equal footing with the men in the matter of suffrage, and that they appreciated the responsibility placed upon them is evident from the fact that 47 of their number went to the voting place in Hurley and polled their maiden vote.” The editor also captured how women may have felt about that momentous occasion: “Some of the women approached the ballot box with fear and trembling and at first refused to pass their ballots over to the judge to be deposited. They soon gained courage, however, and when they again take part in an election they will be ready to corner an opponent, male or female and talk for their favorite candidate.”¹⁹ Numerous South Dakota newspapers documented similar events in their communities, providing evidence that women did participate when given the opportunity.²⁰

Many women also took the chance to run for school board seats, although their numbers remained small. Dr. Nettie C. Hall, elected school trustee of Wessington Springs Township, Jerauld County, in 1887, presented uncommon leadership qualities in the public sphere as a practicing physician, pharmacist, and dedicated temperance advocate. Writing in the *Wessington Springs Herald* a year after winning her election, Hall detailed her role as school trustee and listed all purchases and improvements made to the school. Reporting an income of one dollar, she then itemized her personal expense of seventy-nine cents to cover the costs of stabling her team of horses during meetings and to pay for postage and stationery. She also “furnished extra kindling to the amount of 25cts besides the strategic movements I made to get the male portion of my household to prepare the kindling.”²¹

Women also enjoyed numerous electoral successes as superintendents, taking advantage of the new opportunities for leadership roles in the public arena. While laws changed regarding the duties of the position, county superintendents in general were responsible for the administration of all the schools in their county except for those incor-

19. *Turner County Herald* (Hurley, S.Dak.), 19 June 1890.

20. *Hot Springs Star*, 27 June 1890; *Wessington Springs Herald*, 3 Oct. 1890.

21. *Wessington Springs Herald*, 27 June, 26 Sept. 1884, 15 June 1888; N. J. Dunham, *A History of Jerauld County, South Dakota* (Wessington Springs, S.Dak., 1910), pp. 113, 133, 204, 244.

porated as independent districts. At that time, a superintendent might administer dozens of one-room schools. They reported statistics to the state office of public instruction, held public examinations, issued teaching certificates, visited schools, provided guidance to teachers, and worked with trustees to ensure each district followed the laws.²² Voters' seemingly growing confidence in female superintendents led to women winning election to that position in fifty-two out of sixty-six counties in South Dakota in 1918.²³ Constituents appear to have agreed with the sentiment expressed by State Superintendent of Schools Gilbert L. Pinkham, as reported in the *Rapid City Republican* in 1890: "Women superintendents of schools exert a better influence than do men, they visit the schools oftener and have more pride in their mission."²⁴

School superintendent positions opened the door for ambitious women to acquire public leadership skills. One of those women, Kate Taubman, a well-educated teacher from Iowa, moved to Aurora County in 1882. Hired as a teacher for Plankinton, she rose to the position of principal and later served two terms as county superintendent, from 1890 to 1894. She also held leadership positions in the South Dakota Education Association, becoming the first woman elected as president of that organization. In 1896, while serving as the high school principal in Aberdeen, Taubman came close to being the first woman elected to a statewide public office in South Dakota when she received 49.6 percent of the vote for state superintendent.²⁵ Although term limits restricted

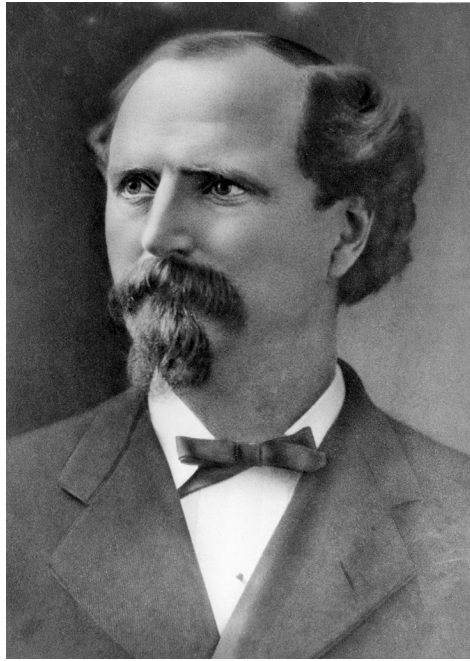
22. Dakota Territory, *Revised Codes* (1883), vol. 2, chap. 40, secs. 10–22, 94.

23. Dakota Territory, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1884), pp. 14–15; *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1885), pp. 30–31; *Seventeenth Annual Report* (1886), pp. 63–64; *Nineteenth Annual Report* (1888), pp. 66–67; South Dakota, *First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1892), p. 68; *Second Biennial Report* (1894), p. 126; *Third Biennial Report* (1896), pp. 24–51; *Fourth Biennial Report* (1898) pp. xiii–xiv; *Fifth Biennial Report* (1900) p. 19; *Sixth Biennial Report* (1902), p. 35; *Seventh Biennial Report* (1904), p. 197; *Eighth Biennial Report* (1906), p. 97; *Ninth Biennial Report* (1908), p. 26; *Tenth Biennial Report* (1910), p. 33; *Eleventh Biennial Report* (1912), pp. 328–29; *Twelfth Biennial Report* (1914), pp. 276–77; *Thirteenth Biennial Report* (1916), pp. 141–42, 207–8; *Fifteenth Biennial Report* (1918), pp. 264–65. I tabulated the counts for female county superintendents elected from 1882 through 1918 based upon female first names.

24. *Rapid City Republican*, 11 Apr. 1890.

25. *Waterloo (Iowa) Courier*, 26 Oct. 1896; *Mitchell Daily Republican*, 13 Mar. 1886; South Dakota, *First Biennial Report* (1892), p. 68; *Second Biennial Report* (1894), p. 126; South Dakota, *Biennial Address of Governor Charles N. Herreid to the Ninth Legislative Session* (1905), p. 182; South Dakota, *Fifth Biennial Report of the Secretary of State* (1900), p. 142.

Governor Gilbert A. Pierce argued in 1885 that adopting woman suffrage would jeopardize Dakota Territory's chances for achieving statehood.



women from serving as superintendents for longer than four years, the post still provided an opportunity for some to gain political experience.

As women exercised their limited voting rights and won some elections, they continued to fight for equal suffrage at the territorial and, later, state level. For territories, the power to grant uniform voting rights belonged solely to the legislature. Dakota Territory nearly became the first territory to enfranchise women a year before Wyoming achieved that milestone. The territorial house of representatives passed a suffrage bill in 1868, but the session ended without a vote in the senate. Two more times, Dakota Territory missed its opportunity to establish full suffrage. In 1872, the legislature came within one vote of enfranchising women. Thirteen years later, when lawmakers approved the measure, Governor Gilbert A. Pierce vetoed the bill, arguing that it would hurt efforts for statehood.²⁶

26. Dakota Territory, *Journal of the House* (1869), p. 34; Wagner, *Fighting for the Vote*, pp. 90–98; Patricia O’Keefe Easton, “Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota” (master’s thesis, University of South Dakota, 1975), pp. 2–7.

Although territorial legislatures could award full suffrage, states needed their voters to approve constitutional amendments to expand the franchise. The steps for getting amendments on the ballot differed in each state. South Dakota had the lowest bar, requiring only the passage of a joint resolution by majority vote in any session. When South Dakota became a state in 1889, the new constitution stipulated that it would hold a public vote on woman suffrage the following year. That 1890 amendment failed to gain more than 33 percent of the vote. In 1894, only 43 percent of voters backed a school suffrage amendment to allow women to vote for county and state superintendent. The 1898 full enfranchisement legislation came close with 46 percent of the vote. Proponents fell short again in 1910, 1914, and 1916, but increased their support from 38 percent to 44 percent to 48 percent. Finally, in 1918, the woman suffrage amendment succeeded with 63 percent approving the measure.²⁷

Throughout their campaigns, suffragists across the country employed two different and seemingly counterintuitive arguments, one based on women being like men, and the other on women being different from men. Proponents of the egalitarian argument claimed that women had the same natural rights as men and therefore should receive equal political power to protect those rights. Alternatively, the expediency argument maintained that female enfranchisement would improve society, given women's roles as mothers and guardians of moral and religious values. Prominent women, such as Jane Addams, founder of the settlement house movement, cited those domestic responsibilities to justify their expanding role in progressive political and reform movements. Calling their activity "civic" or "municipal housekeeping," those reformers sought solutions to problems caused by poverty, pollution, overcrowding, and unfair labor practices toward women and children. Temperance advocates, seeking to reduce the manufacture and sale of alcohol, also used the expediency argument to support woman suffrage. Reformers and prohibitionists believed the women's vote would make it possible to enact temperance laws. While the egalitarian and expediency arguments gained some converts, neither proved fully

27. Wagner, *Fighting for the Vote*, pp. 90–98; Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 2–7.

effective in persuading legislators or voters to expand the electorate.²⁸

When suffragists refined their message and connected citizenship with civic responsibility, they found more receptive audiences. World War I gave women the opportunity to establish this argument. During the conflict, many women enthusiastically engaged in supporting the troops. Women throughout the country sold war bonds, conserved food, and joined the American Red Cross, actions they felt demonstrated their devotion to the nation. They used their patriotism to earn respect as dedicated civilians who deserved the vote. As loyal citizens of the United States, they claimed that women had a duty to vote and that their performance in improving their communities proved their fitness.²⁹

Those arguing against suffrage based their stance on either a different view of the role of women or concern about how full enfranchisement would impact other issues. Some opponents asserted that women's gentle nature had a "higher and holier mission" in the home, making voting rights for women unnecessary.³⁰ They also believed that women voting against men would disrupt society. In addition, anti-suffragists claimed women did not really want the vote, as husbands already voted in their wives' best interest.³¹ Organized opposition often included liquor interests, which feared women voters would hurt their industry, and some immigrant communities, especially from cultures more tolerant of drinking, such as German Americans.³²

28. Welch, "Local and National Forces," pp. 26–27, 73; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 153–55; Celeste K. Carruthers and Marianne H. Wanamaker, "Municipal Housekeeping," *Journal of Human Resources* 50 (Fall 2015): 331; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press at Harvard University, 1992), pp. 321, 337. Skocpol explains how women used the domestic ideal—women's accepted maternal role as keepers of morality—to expand their sphere from private to public as they sought social reform.

29. Sara Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest, 1870–1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2018), pp. 126–31, 153, 157–60. Egge explores the link between community, citizenship, and suffrage as she examines the suffrage movement in three midwestern counties, including Yankton County in South Dakota. She shows how midwestern women's experiences in civic responsibility shaped their fight for voting rights.

30. Matilda Joselyn Gage, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 2 (Rochester, N.Y.: Susan B. Anthony, 1887), p. 135. Frederick T. Frelinghuysen of New Jersey used the phrase "higher and holier mission" when arguing against a woman suffrage measure in the United States Senate on 11 December 1866.

31. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 148–49.

32. Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 1, 74–75.

Campaigns for the South Dakota woman suffrage amendments can be separated into two eras, differentiated by how the proponents organized their arguments. Before 1911, suffrage leaders used the expediency argument while promoting both prohibition and voting rights. Many advocates of the 1890 campaign came from the ranks of the state's active temperance organization, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). A year before the vote, supporters organized the first state suffrage organization, the Equal Suffrage Association (ESA). Four men and three women assumed leadership roles. Those leaders included Democrat Samuel A. Ramsey; Republican Alonzo Wardall, also a member of the Farmers' Alliance; staunch prohibitionists Rev. William Fielder and Rev. Moses Barker as well as Barker's wife, Helen M. Barker, president of the state WCTU; businesswoman Sara A. Richards; and temperance advocate Emma Smith DeVoe. Barker, of Huron, took on the role of state lecturer with DeVoe, a young woman from Faulkton, as her assistant. DeVoe later used her skills as an organizer to play a key role in the successful passage of the suffrage amendment in Washington State. The ESA also sponsored lecture tours for temperance advocate Dr. Nettie Hall. In addition, NAWSA helped raise funds and brought speakers to the state, including Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman, and Anna Howard Shaw, to educate the populace.³³

Inexperience, infighting, and better-funded opposition all contributed to the defeat of the 1890 amendment. When coordination between the state and national suffrage organizations fell apart over differences in strategy, the discontent played out in the newspapers. Additionally, Marietta Bones of Webster, an early proponent of suffrage in South Dakota, fought a messy public battle with Anthony, the national leader. Among many disagreements, they argued about the role temperance should play in the campaign. Anthony advocated focusing on voting rights alone. Bones also fought with the local and national WCTU, believing that the temperance groups should remain nonpartisan. In later

33. Ross-Nazzari, *Winning the West*, pp. 6, 16, 33, 36–37, 56; For more about the 1890 campaign, see Cecelia M. Wittmayer, "The 1889–1890 Woman Suffrage Campaign: A Need to Organize," *South Dakota History* 11 (Fall 1982): 199–225; Dorinda Riessen Reed, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, 2d ed. (Brookings: South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women, 1975), pp. 20–47; Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 22–53.

Emma Smith DeVoe, pictured here in her later years, toured the state extensively as a lecturer for the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association.



years, Bones turned on the movement and became an outspoken member of the opposition.³⁴

Another, more powerful enemy emerged from South Dakota suffrage leaders' unwillingness to separate voting rights and temperance issues. Fearing that woman suffrage would impede their effort to repeal Prohibition, the well-funded and politically savvy liquor interests actively engaged to defeat the amendment. Other considerations impacting the campaign included a lack of support from political parties, a three-year drought, and voter interest focused on the contest over the location of

34. Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 29, 38-40; Nancy Tystad Koupal, "Marietta Bones: Personality and Politics in the South Dakota Suffrage Movement," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, ed. Yvonne Johnson (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2010), pp. 74-79.

SOUTH DAKOTA

EQUAL SUFFRAGE

MASS CONVENTION,

OPERA HOUSE

MITCHELL, AUGUST 25-26, 1890

"UNDER GOD THE PEOPLE RULE"---WOMEN ARE PEOPLE.

Officers of the Association:

| | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| PHILENA EVERETT JOHNSON, | - - | PRESIDENT. |
| IRENE G. ADAMS, | - - - - | VICE-PRESIDENT. |
| WILL F. BAILEY, | - - - - | SECRETARY. |
| SARAH A. RICHARDS, | - - - - | TREASURER. |
| ALICE M. A. PICKLER, | } | MEMBERS EX. COM. |
| HON. D. C. THOMAS, | | |
| SUSAN B. ANTHONY, | | |
| EMMA SMITH DEVOE, | - - - - | STATE LECTURER. |
| ELIZABETH M. HAMMER, | SUP'T. ORATORICAL CONTEST. | |
| ELIZABETH MURRAY WARDALL, | SUP'T. PRESS WORK. | |

Headquarters Room 9 Mills' Block, Huron, South Dakota.

By the time the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association held its “mass convention” in Mitchell in 1890, internal struggles had reconstituted the organization’s leadership.

the state capital. Politically naïve and battling themselves, the suffragists lost by 22,890 votes in 1890, failing to convince two-thirds of the voters.³⁵

In 1894, the South Dakota ballot included an amendment to expand school suffrage by allowing women to vote for county and state superintendents of public instruction. Once again, the suffragists’ zeal for prohibition contributed to defeat. In that election, Anna R. Simmons of Faulkton and Emma A. Cranmer of Aberdeen, longtime temperance advocates, held executive positions in both the state ESA and the state WCTU. Concerned about public attempts to reverse state prohibition, Simmons, Cranmer, and their followers focused on promoting the elec-

35. Paula M. Nelson, “Defending Separate Spheres: Anti-Suffrage Women in South Dakota Suffrage Campaigns,” in *Equality at the Ballot Box*, ed. Lahlum and Rozum, p. 132; Wittmayer, “The 1889-1890 Woman Suffrage Campaign,” pp. 214-16, 220, 223-24; Easton, “Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota,” pp. 31-32, 43.

tion of legislators sympathetic to the temperance cause.³⁶ With their attention thus diverted, suffrage leaders did not organize a campaign that year, likely assuming the measure would pass on its own merits. In her 1902 history of the state suffrage movement, Alice Alt Pickler of Faulkton, another suffrage leader of that era, confirmed this viewpoint, explaining, “As there seemed to be no objection to women’s voting for

36. Ida Husted Harper and Susan B. Anthony, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4 (Rochester, N.Y.: Susan B. Anthony, 1902), p. 557; George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, and George Martin Smith, *South Dakota: Its History and Its People*, 5 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1915), 3:768–69, 789; *Minutes of the National WCTU at the Twenty-first Annual Meeting, Cleveland, Ohio* (Chicago: Woman’s Temperance Publishing Association, 1894), p. 197; *Evanston (Ill.) Union Signal*, 30 Mar. 1893, 29 Nov. 1894.



Anna R. Simmons and other temperance advocates linked woman suffrage to prohibition, to the detriment of both causes.

school trustees it was not supposed there would be any to extending the privilege for the other school officers.”³⁷ Lack of an active campaign undoubtedly contributed to the defeat of the amendment in 1894, which fell short by 5,672 votes in a low-turnout election. Two years later, temperance advocates lost their fight when the voters repealed state prohibition.³⁸

In 1898, the Populist movement delivered support for another woman suffrage vote. Two years earlier, state voters had elected the Populist governor Andrew E. Lee and given the party a majority of seats in the legislature. Those legislators approved joint resolutions to put both equal suffrage and the regulation of alcohol on the 1898 ballot. The liquor dispensary amendment specified strict regulations regarding the sale and manufacture of intoxicating beverages. Simmons and Cranmer, still serving as executives in the WCTU, deliberately and defiantly mingled the two issues. While their position may have helped garner support from men who backed prohibition, their insistence on that strategy cost them assistance and money from the national organization. With both voting and alcohol on the ballot, the well-funded liquor lobby publicly connected suffrage and temperance, even financing the national anti-suffrage speaker Mrs. W. Winslow Crannel to lecture throughout the state. In addition, Marietta Bones provided a vocal and effective voice in arguing against the measure. These efforts contributed to the defeat of suffrage once again.³⁹

A lack of enthusiasm also may have contributed to the defeat. Many counties had lost population due to drought and depression and those who remained focused their energy more on recovery than politics. In Plankinton, Aurora County, where a devastating bank failure exacerbated the misery, the pastor of the Methodist Church, W. S. Shepherd,

37. Harper and Anthony, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, p. 557.

38. Wagner, *Fighting for the Vote*, p. 93; *Fifth Biennial Report of the Secretary of State* (1900), pp. 147, 153, 159; Chuck Vollan, “‘Bone Dry’: South Dakota’s Flawed Adoption of Alcohol Prohibition,” *South Dakota History* 45 (Fall 2015): 193–95.

39. Nelson, “Defending Separate Spheres,” pp. 138–45; Sara Egge, “Ethnicity and Woman Suffrage on the South Dakota Plains,” in *Equality at the Ballot Box*, ed. Lahlum and Rozum, pp. 232–33; Easton, “Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota,” pp. 67–73; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 50–52; Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 3:751–52. The liquor amendment passed in 1898, but the legislature killed the measure in 1899 rather than making it more effective.

declined to organize county meetings. As he explained to the state suffrage organization in August 1898, “The interest flagged and so few manifested any enthusiasm whatever, that the work was dropped and has not been resumed since.” He added, “Scarcely a woman in this town has put forth a single effort to push the work, hence the lack of interest in general.”⁴⁰ With a stubborn insistence on mingling suffrage and temperance, little help from the national organization, an uninspired population, and strong, well-funded opposition, the campaign failed to gain a majority but had grown their overall support. In the final tally, they obtained almost 46 percent of voters, losing by only 3,285 votes, suggesting that the suffragists’ leadership ultimately cost them the election.⁴¹

Discouraged by that defeat, the South Dakota ESA dissolved and remained inactive until 1901. When reformed as the Political Equality Association, suffragists once again brought in leadership from the WCTU. The organization elected Alice Pickler president and Philena Everett Johnson of Highmore vice president. Since moving to the territory in 1881, Pickler was active in many state causes, including suffrage, temperance, child welfare reform, and the Woman’s Relief Corp, an organization that assisted Civil War veterans. As a territorial legislator in 1885, her husband, Major John Pickler, had introduced the equal voting measure that the governor later vetoed. He also served as a United States congressman once South Dakota became a state. Johnson, while vice president of the new state suffrage organization, served as franchise superintendent for the state WCTU for several years as well. In 1903, Alice Pickler led a major effort to collect signatures for equal suffrage to appear on the ballot, using the recently adopted initiative and referendum law. Unfortunately, the state rejected the petition, as the initiative law could not be used to amend the constitution. To prove that women wanted the vote, the group again collected signatures in 1906. This time they delivered a list of names thirty-six yards in length to the

40. Rev. W. S. Shepherd to Clare M. Williams, 12 Aug. 1898, Folder 5, Box 6676, Pickler Family Papers, 1865–1976, State Archives Collection, South Dakota State Historical Society (SDSHS), Pierre.

41. Easton, “Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota,” pp. 67–73; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 50–52; Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 3:751–52; *St. Paul (Minn.) Daily Globe*, 3 Mar. 1895.



Active in numerous organizations, Alice Alt Pickler held offices in both the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

legislature. The lawmakers voted but did not approve a suffrage resolution.⁴²

In 1909, the South Dakota suffragists succeeded in convincing the legislature to place a woman suffrage amendment on the 1910 ballot. Beginning to understand the need to separate women's voting rights

42. O. W. Coursey, "Mrs. John Pickler (Alice M. Alt)," Faulk County, Box 6829, Pioneer Daughters Collection, SDSHS; Ida Husted Harper, ed., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6 (Rochester, N.Y.: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1922), pp. 585-87; *Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the WCTU of South Dakota: Watertown, S.Dak.* (1901), p. 124; *Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the WCTU of South Dakota: Milbank, S.Dak.* (1907), p. 103; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 53-56.

and temperance, advocates selected Lydia B. Johnson, a Fort Pierre lawyer, to lead the statewide effort. Simmons and Pickler moved WCTU activities to Faulkton to create physical distance. Unfortunately, the opposition still connected prohibition with women having the ballot and organized to defeat the measure. Aligning with the liquor interests, the German-American Alliance, an organization representing the largest immigrant population in the state, disapproved of both prohibition and suffrage. This group accepted regular alcohol consumption and believed women had no need or interest in participating in public affairs. The state's many German-language newspapers reflected these views. Writers argued against women's voting rights, citing their more important role as mothers, and some articles linked alcohol restrictions with suffrage.⁴³ Alien voting laws also worked against the women. State law allowed immigrants to vote before becoming naturalized citizens, requiring them only to have declared their intent to become citizens, often referred to as "taking out first papers."⁴⁴ The opposition actively worked to persuade new immigrants to become voters, which helped them defeat the 1910 measure by 22,419 votes.⁴⁵

After that loss, discouraged suffragists sought a fresh face for their movement and found it in Mary I. ("Mamie") Shields Pyle, a former schoolteacher from Huron with no previous ties to any advocacy group. In 1902, Pyle's husband John L. Pyle, the state's attorney general at the time, died of typhoid fever, leaving her with four children to raise.⁴⁶ Soon after, Pyle personally witnessed the inequity of voting laws when she watched what she described as a "railroad chain gang" of "Italian male immigrants, non-citizens on their way to vote" walk past her home on election day. As her daughter Gladys recounted many years later, "She stamped her foot. She said, 'if they can vote taxes on me,

43. Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 74-78; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 52-57; Kelly O'Dea, "Frauenstimmrecht in Sud-Dakota: German-Language Newspapers in South Dakota on Woman Suffrage," in *Equality at the Ballot Box*, ed. Lahlum and Rozum, pp. 180-85.

44. Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest*, pp. 9-11.

45. Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 74-78; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 52-57.

46. Patricia O'Keefe Easton, "Woman Suffrage in South Dakota: The Final Decade, 1911-1920," *South Dakota History* 13 (Fall 1983): 208; *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 22 Feb. 1902, 23 Dec. 1949.

well, I can vote too.’”⁴⁷ In that moment, Mamie Pyle dedicated herself to the cause of women’s enfranchisement.

As the newly elected president of the state suffrage organization, Pyle called for a convention in 1911. There, she disbanded the old organization and created a new one, the South Dakota Universal Franchise League (SDUFL). Recognizing that entwining temperance with suffrage only strengthened their adversaries, especially the liquor lobby, Pyle pursued a policy that separated the two causes. Under her leadership, the group located their permanent headquarters in Huron and promoted suffrage exclusively. She also developed strategies to counter anti-suffrage sentiment and increase support among male voters. Pyle managed the last three campaigns, in 1914, 1916, and 1918, gradually building support until finally achieving victory.⁴⁸

The SDUFL started building their new argument that, as good citizens, voting was women’s civic responsibility. Wisconsin suffragist

47. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 7 Apr. 1982.

48. Easton, “Woman Suffrage in South Dakota,” pp. 207–9; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, p. 58.



Huron is pictured here in the 1910s, around the time Mary Shields Pyle established headquarters for the South Dakota Universal Franchise League in the city.

Belle La Follette, speaking in Yankton, South Dakota, in 1914, connected women's progressive reform efforts to their role as citizens. She argued that men and women shared the duty to improve communities through better laws. For that, women needed the vote.⁴⁹ Rather than play defense, the SDUFL developed an offensive strategy for the next amendment campaign of 1914, including publishing a newspaper, the *Messenger*, edited by Ruth Hipple, and promoting slogans such as "Under God, the People Rule. Women are People." In an effort to counter strong anti-suffrage sentiment among Germans, the group delivered pro-enfranchisement messages to counties with large numbers of German immigrants. While the measure failed by 11,914 votes, it had gained ten thousand backers since 1910.⁵⁰

Encouraged by the increased support, the SDUFL successfully lobbied for another South Dakota amendment vote in 1916. For the first time, both the Democratic and Republican parties endorsed the measure. In addition, national and state sentiment for prohibition grew more favorable, and the state added an anti-liquor measure to the ballot. With a total of nine measures for consideration that year, supporters and opponents of the suffrage and temperance amendments planned strong campaigns. Women anti-suffragists, with their own organization in South Dakota, voiced the strongest opposition, while the liquor lobby focused their efforts on defeating prohibition. Suffrage proponents ran petition campaigns and worked to counter the argument that women did not want the vote. While the prohibition amendment passed, suffrage failed but garnered an encouraging 48 percent of the electorate, being defeated by only 4,934 votes. Analyzing the result by location, the SDUFL noted that their lowest level of support came from counties with significant German populations. They therefore blamed the German vote for their loss. For example, in McPherson County, with a German-heritage population of 75 percent, only 16 percent of voters approved the measure.⁵¹

49. Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest*, pp. 127–29.

50. Easton, "Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 206–15; Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 58–92; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 7 Apr. 1982.

51. Easton, "Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 215–23; Easton, "Opposition to Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 133–35.


In their winning campaign of 1918, the suffragists refined their good citizen argument, initiated four years earlier, and finally succeeded in motivating voters to include them in the electorate. With prohibition weakening the liquor lobby, the SDUFL focused on attacking immigrants' pre-citizenship right to vote in order to undermine German opposition. The campaign for Amendment E, as the measure was known, took place as the war in Europe ended, and suffragists connected their wartime work to acts of patriotism and proof of loyalty. They exploited anti-immigrant and especially anti-German sentiment to make the case that women, as loyal citizens, were more deserving of the vote than suspect foreigners. Pyle's earlier experience watching such men vote when she could not likely influenced the way she pursued this argument.⁵²

In response to public concern, Governor Peter Norbeck called a special session of the legislature in March to modify the woman suffrage amendment, scheduled for the November ballot. Legislators agreed to add a citizenship clause requiring immigrant voters to have completed the naturalization process. The suffrage amendment in 1918, therefore, included two components, one enfranchising women and the other disenfranchising non-citizen voters. Much of the campaign messaging then revolved around discussions of loyalty and citizenship, with the suffragists embracing nativism to contrast their wartime loyalty with potentially disloyal non-citizen male voters. The added clause hampered the anti-suffrage element by connecting it to sympathy for the enemy. That argument effectively silenced the opposition. Other campaign tactics included a county-by-county petition drive and mailing campaign literature to every voter.⁵³

Five days before the armistice ending World War I was signed, South Dakota voters finally approved full suffrage. Whether voting to reward women's patriotism or to punish immigrants, electors strongly approved the measure, and South Dakota's fight for woman suffrage finally succeeded. The amendment, combined with the citizenship clause, obtained a 63 percent majority and a plurality of 20,384 votes. In a telegram from New York, dated 8 November 1918, NAWSA president Car-

52. Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest*, pp. 165-69.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-67; Easton, "Woman Suffrage in South Dakota," pp. 223-25.

| CLASS OF SERVICE SYMBOL | | Form 1218 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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RECEIVED AT 50 NA Z 9

NEWYORK NY 347 PM NOV 9 1918

MRS JOHN PYLE HURON S D

SINCEREST CONGRATULATIONS ON SPLENDID SOUTHDAKOTA VICTORY IT IS GLORIOUS

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

536

Carrie Chapman Catt wired her congratulations to Pyle after Amendment E granting South Dakota women the right to vote passed in November 1918.

rie Chapman Catt, who had campaigned in South Dakota for the 1890 suffrage amendment, wrote, “Sincerest Congratulations on Splendid South Dakota Victory. It is Glorious.”⁵⁴

The following year, in June 1919, the United States Congress approved the Nineteenth Amendment. South Dakota lawmakers then met in a special session, called for the specific purpose of ratifying the amendment, and approved it without dissent on 5 December 1919, becoming the twenty-first state to do so. Following ratification by thirty-six states, the measure became law on 26 August 1920.⁵⁵

Although the right to vote could no longer be denied on the basis of sex, barriers to the ballot box still existed, especially among American Indians, non-white citizens, and women who married non-citizens. Under the Expatriation Act of 1907, women who were American citizens lost that status when they married a foreign national. The law was not repealed until 1922, two years after ratification of the Nineteenth

54. Carrie Chapman Catt to Pyle, 9 Nov. 1918, Folder 1918, Nov. 8–14, Box 5, Mamie Shields Pyle Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota, Vermillion; Easton, “Woman Suffrage in South Dakota,” pp. 223–26. For more about the 1918 campaign, see Reed, *Woman Suffrage Movement in South Dakota*, pp. 95–113.

55. Amy L. McKinney, “‘Wake Up, Wyoming:’ The Push to Ratify the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in the Northern Great Plains States,” in *Equality at the Ballot Box*, ed. Lahlum and Rozum, pp. 274–75.

Amendment. Suffrage for American Indians took much longer, as they did not receive citizenship status until 1924, after which several states continued to pass laws restricting their ability to vote. Not until 1951 did South Dakota repeal laws denying American Indians the franchise. Black Americans and other minorities did not gain meaningful voting rights until ratification of the Twenty-fourth Amendment outlawing poll taxes in 1964 and passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Debates on voting rights issues continue into the present.⁵⁶

During a span of fifty years, South Dakota women made numerous attempts to obtain full suffrage, succeeding first in obtaining school suffrage and using those limited rights to participate as voters and leaders in the public arena. Starting with the first introduction of a bill for full woman suffrage in 1868 and ending with the granting of equal voting rights in 1918, women promoted their message, learned from their political mistakes, and outlasted their enemies. Failing to convince voters with the egalitarian and expediency arguments, proponents then associated woman suffrage with the concept of citizenship. Using patriotism and anti-German war sentiment to demonstrate their fidelity, suffragists successfully convinced male voters to include them in the electorate. With passage of the woman suffrage amendment in November 1918, South Dakota's female citizens could now fulfill their duty to vote.

56. Meg Hacker, "When Saying 'I Do' Meant Giving Up Your U.S. Citizenship," *Prologue Magazine* 46 (Spring 2014): 56–61; Molly P. Rozum, "Citizenship, Civilization, and Property: The 1890 South Dakota Vote on Woman Suffrage and Indian Suffrage," in *Equality at the Ballot Box*, ed. Lahlum and Rozum, p. 256; Dee Garceau, "A Right to Help Make the Laws," *ibid.*, pp. 344–48. For more information on American Indian Suffrage, see Jeffrey Sanders, review of *Native Vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the Right to Vote*, by Susan M. Olson, Daniel McCool, and Jennifer L. Robinson, *Political Science Quarterly* 123 (Spring 2008): 190–91.