

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Murray, Judith Sargent

(May 5, 1751 – June 9, 1820)

Judith Sargent Murray, essayist, poet, and playwright, was the most prominent woman essayist of her day. She argued forcefully for improved female education and for women to be allowed a public voice. She was among the first Universalists in New England, a pioneer religious educator, and the wife of the distinguished Universalist preacher John Murray.



Judith was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the oldest child of Judith Saunders and Winthrop Sargent. Four of her sisters died in childhood, but three siblings survived to adulthood: Winthrop, Esther, and Fitz William. Both the Sargent and Saunders families had accumulated significant wealth through several generations of lucrative trade in England and the West Indies. They were cultured, politically aware, and civically active.

"An ill-taught old Woman" taught Judith rudimentary reading and writing skills; her mother provided her with "a pretty extensive acquaintance with needle work, in all its varieties, with a general idea of family business and arrangement" to prepare Judith for "the department it was presumed [she] should be called to fill," meaning, marriage. Contrary to Sargent family legend, Judith did not study alongside her brother Winthrop while he was tutored to enter Harvard. "In vain did I solicit to share, in those instructions, which were so liberally allowed to him," Judith explained years later to Mary Pilgrim. However, as Judith was "passionately fond of the pleasures to be derived from the page of narrative" she "seized by avidity" from the Sargent family library "every thing which fell in my way, and if I have acquired any literary information, it hath been attained through many difficulties." Judith never forgot the discrepancies between male and female education she had personally experienced. As she wrote to Winthrop, "I have, through life, mourned the want of early instruction."

Judith was also a "scribbler" from a very young age. "Ere I had completed my ninth year," she explained years later to the Reverend William Emerson, "I had written a little work, which in the simplicity of my years I determined an history." According to family legend, her father read her "humble attempts at poetry" to family members, making no secret of his pride in her ability. Along with prose and poetry Judith wrote numerous letters, maintaining a regular correspondence with family and friends.

The Sargent children were raised to be "good Christians" at the established Congregational First Parish Church where, according to Judith, they were taught that "benevolence should guide their every action, virtue will be the principle of their lives."

When she was eighteen, in 1769, Judith married the younger John Stevens, the son of a prominent Gloucester shipping family. The following year, Winthrop Sargent read James Relly's *Union*, published in London in 1759, and began to gather a group of friends and family in his Gloucester home to discuss Relly's Universalist theology. In 1774, when he learned that the British Rellyan preacher John Murray was traveling in the northern American colonies, he invited him to Gloucester. Judith knew right away that in Murray she had found a mentor, spiritual teacher, and intellectual companion. Soon after, she wrote, "I am not much accustomed to writing letters, especially to your sex, but if there be neither male nor female in the Emmanuel you promulgate, we may surely, and with the strictest propriety, mingle souls upon paper."

When in 1775 England and the American colonies went to war, Judith—who eventually supported separation from the mother country—prayed for a peaceful resolution. Many of her friends and family members had economic and familial ties to Great Britain. She abhorred violence, in any form, and despised the "lawless power" that now reigned over the colonies and the "hostile terror" that was fueling civil war, driving persons of "unblemished integrity" from their homes and families because their "sentiments correspond not with the popular measures."

In 1778 Judith Stevens was among those Universalists suspended from the First Parish for not attending church. The following year she was one of the signatories to Articles of Association, creating the Independent Church of Christ. The Universalists soon built their own meeting house and called John Murray as their pastor. A long legal struggle with First Parish ensued, in which Judith played her part. In 1786 the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of the Universalists, handing down the first ruling for freedom of religion in America.

Meanwhile, in 1780, Judith and John Stevens had adopted two orphan girls—Anna Plummer, John's niece, and Polly Odell, a young Saunders cousin. Judith's concern for their religious upbringing, and for that of the growing number of Universalist children in Gloucester, propelled her into the role of religious educator. Encouraged by the parents of these children to write down what she was teaching, in 1782 she privately published a Universalist catechism. It is considered the earliest writing by an American Universalist woman, and the first religious education material produced for Universalists. In its preface, she wrote, "If there is any thing that ought for a moment to take place of those exquisite sensations, which we boastfully term peculiarly feminine, it is surely a sacred attention to those interests that are crowned with immortality. Whatever is essential to the ethereal spark which animates these transient tenements, will exist when the distinction of male and female, shall be forever absorbed."

In 1784, Judith published her first essay, written under an assumed name according to eighteenth-century etiquette. "Constantia's" essay "Desultory Thoughts Upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, especially in Female Bosoms" appeared in the *Gentleman and Lady's Town and Country Magazine*. In it she laid the groundwork for future essays on women and girls: "I would, from the early dawn of reason address [my daughter] as a rational being" and "by all means guard [my daughters] against a low estimation of self."

At some point, it is not entirely clear when, Judith decided to copy her letters into blank volumes called "letter books." She did this in part "for affectionate posterity," but also to provide a window for future generations on what she knew were extraordinary times. Very few eighteenth-

century women had the ability or self awareness to document their lives. Judith's copied letters cover the years 1774 to 1818.

By 1786, the war had devastated John Stevens's merchant business. To avoid debtor's prison, he escaped Gloucester on board one of Winthrop Sargent's vessels. He died soon after, while attempting to set up a new business in the West Indies.

In 1788, as he was about to sail for England, John Murray wrote Judith a love letter from Boston Harbor. She reported that he "acknowledged he had long loved me, even from the commencement of our acquaintance, with ardour loved me, but that he would have sacrificed his life, rather than have admitted a thought in this regard to me, which my own guardian angel would blush to own, but that, as I had now for many months been released from my early vows, he presumed to calculate upon a favourable hearing."

Upon Murray's return Judith and John were married. Their first child, Fitz Winthrop (recorded incorrectly in the Sargent genealogy as George), born in 1789, died after only a few hours of life.

"Constantia" resumed writing, publishing poetry and a two-part essay, "On the Equality of the Sexes," in 1790, in the *Massachusetts Magazine*. "I would calmly ask," she wrote in the latter, "is it reasonable, that a candidate for immortality, for the joys of heaven, an intelligent being, who is to spend an eternity in contemplating the works of Deity, should at present be so degraded, as to be allowed no other ideas, than those suggested by the mechanism of a pudding, or the sewing [of] the seams of a garment? . . . Are we deficient in reason? we can only reason from what we know, and if opportunity of acquiring knowledge hath been denied us, the inferiority of our sex cannot fairly be deduced from thence."

In 1791, at forty years old, Judith gave birth to Julia Maria Murray. "Well, my Mamma," she wrote her mother, "how good is the God with whom we have to do—hardly for a single moment did I dare to indulge a hope of the blessing which is now in my possession." Although both mother and daughter survived, their health would always be fragile.

In 1792, Judith created a new essay series for the *Massachusetts Magazine* using a male persona, "observing," she explained, "in a variety of instances, the indifference, not to say contempt, with which female productions are regarded, and seeking to arrest attention." As "The Gleaner" she addressed a wide array of subjects including federalism, citizenship, and virtue, as well as female education and abilities. "His" identity was kept secret even from her husband. "Was I the father of a family," "The Gleaner" wrote, "I would give my daughters every accomplishment which I thought proper; and, to crown all, I would early accustom them to habits of industry and order" that "they should be enabled to procure for themselves the necessities of life," thus "independence should be placed within their grasp."

Later that year, 1792, Judith developed a second series for the *Massachusetts Magazine*. "The Repository" addressed more philosophical, reflective, and even Universalist subjects. In one revealing essay, she wrote, "What a censorious world says of me, cannot offend or permanently hurt me. Was it to commend me, it would do me no real service. I had rather have an unspotted

conscience . . . , the acquitting plaudit of my own breast, and the rational award of a serene mind, than to have worlds for my admirers."

In 1793 John Murray was called by the Boston Universalists. Upon Judith's arrival in Boston in 1794, the editor of the *Federal Orrery*, one of Boston's bi-weekly newspapers, approached her to develop a column. She obliged by submitting five entries as "The Reaper." But the editor, Thomas Paine (not the author of *Common Sense*), edited her work far too extensively for her taste and Judith severed their relationship. Paine was furious, and subsequently in his newspaper criticized Judith's work and accused John of writing most of it himself.

In 1795, after Boston lifted its ban on theatrical entertainment, Judith wrote her first play, *The Medium, or Happy Tea-Party* (later renamed *The Medium, or Virtue Triumphant*). It was performed at Boston's Federal Street Theatre, making Judith the first American to be so honored. Her second play, *The Traveller Returned*, appeared in 1796. Both plays were satirical investigations of American citizenship and virtue, and featured strong female characters.

In 1798 Judith self-published *The Gleaner*, a collection of her earlier "Gleaner" essays and her two plays. Subscribers included George Washington and John Adams, to whom she dedicated the book. In *The Gleaner*, Judith acknowledged "The Gleaner" and "Constantia" to be one and the same; in the public prints, however, she identified *The Gleaner's* author as Mrs. Judith Sargent Murray.

The book firmly established Judith Sargent Murray as an early advocate of progress for women in America. "We seem, at length, determined to do justice to THE SEX," she proclaimed in one of the essays. "[W]e are ready to contend for the quantity, as well as the quality, of mind . . . I expect to see our young women forming a new era in female history. . . . The noble expansion conferred by a liberal education will . . . give them a glance of those vast tracts of knowledge which they can never explore, until they are accommodated with far other powers than those at present assigned them."

During the early 1800s, due to her reputation as an advocate for quality female education, Judith was asked by her cousin Judith Saunders and Clementine Beach to help them start a female academy in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Judith obliged by placing advertisements, securing property, and recruiting students. The Ladies Academy opened in 1803 on Dorchester's Meeting House Hill. Students were taught scholarly subjects along with traditional domestic skills.

At home, Judith taught Julia Maria until she was old enough to attend academies in Boston. She also oversaw the education of a number of nieces, nephews, and sons of family friends. Some lived with her, others boarded at Pemberton Academy in Billerica, Massachusetts; Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire; and Harvard College in Cambridge. She visited "the boys" who were away at school regularly, and maintained a steady, loving correspondence as they were young and far from their homes.

Judith continued to publish poetry, this time as "Honora Martesia," in the *Boston Weekly Magazine*, until in 1809 John Murray suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. His mind was still alert, but he could no longer work. As the Boston Universalists found it difficult to

support the Murray family along with a new minister, Judith struggled to make ends meet. In 1812 the Murrays published John's two-volume *Letters and Sketches of Sermons* which they hoped would bring them income. They were disappointed.

That same year, Julia Maria married Adam Lewis Bingaman, a Harvard student from Natchez, Mississippi, who had boarded with the Murrays for a short time. Judith's first grandchild, Charlotte Bingaman, was born the following year.

In 1815 John Murray, Judith's "tender, delicate, and indulgent friend," passed away at the age of seventy-four and after twenty-seven years of marriage. Although bereft, she oversaw two funeral services for her husband, one in Gloucester and the other in Boston. She also completed and published John's autobiography, *Records of the Life of the Rev. John Murray*, in 1816.

Universalist theology had changed over the years since John Murray had first arrived in America in 1770, but Judith's had not altered in the slightest. She was increasingly unsympathetic with the current generation of Universalists, and found no minister of her choosing in Boston. In 1818, when Adam Bingaman sent for Julia Maria and Charlotte to move to Natchez, Judith went with them to live at the Bingaman family plantation, *Fatherland*. Nearby was her brother Winthrop's large family, including children she had helped raise years earlier in Boston. She died in 1820 and was buried at *Fatherland*. Her daughter inscribed on her gravestone, "Dear spirit, the monumental stone can never speak thy worth." Julia Maria and her daughter died within a few years. Her son's family line ended within a generation, leaving no direct descendants of Judith Sargent and John Murray.

Beginning with Alice Rossi's 1973 *The Feminist Papers*, historians have acknowledged the contribution Judith Sargent Murray made toward the progress of women. Her role in Universalist history, however, is still being explored. She was among its founders in Gloucester. Her catechism was an important early textbook for children. The assistance she provided to Murray before, during, and after their marriage, though probably significant, has yet to be documented. Some of Judith's "Repository" essays in the *Massachusetts Magazine* promoted the "good news" of Universalism, and she was certainly an outspoken champion of "the truth as it is in Jesus" among her many friends and family members. Her letters reflect a role in networking among the scattered adherents of Universalism up and down the Atlantic seaboard.

Judith Sargent Murray's letter books, discovered in 1984 in Natchez, Mississippi, by Unitarian Universalist minister Gordon Gibson, are at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi. They have been published on microfilm. Bonnie Hurd Smith has prepared *The Letters I Left Behind, Judith Sargent Murray Papers, Letter Book 10* (2005); a collection of letters from the journey Judith and John Murray made to Philadelphia to attend the first national Universalist convention, *From Gloucester to Philadelphia in 1790* (1998); and *Judith Sargent Murray, Her First 100 Letters*. Gordon Gibson published excerpts from the letters, and a description of how he found the letter books, in *The Rediscovery of Judith Sargent Murray* (1991). There are also letters in Caroline Turner Smith, *Caroline Augusta Sargent Turner* (1995). For an overview of the letter books see Bonnie Hurd Smith, "The Letter Books of Judith Sargent Murray," *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History* (2000).

Some of the actual letters Judith Sargent Murray wrote to friends and family may be found in the Winthrop Sargent Papers and the Wigglesworth Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society and in other collections. There are Judith Sargent Murray Papers at Andover Harvard Theological Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts. *The Gleaner* was reissued with an introduction by Nina Baym in 1992. There is a collection, Sharon M. Harris, ed., *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray* (1995). The following works have been reissued by the Judith Sargent Murray Society and are available at their website (www.hurdsmith.com/judith): *A Universalist Catechism by Judith Sargent Stevens*; *Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, Especially in Female Bosoms*; *On the Equality of the Sexes*; *On the Domestic Education of Children*; *The Repository* magazine series; and *The Reaper* newspaper series.

Information on Gloucester's early Universalists may be found in Richard Eddy, *Universalism in Gloucester, Mass.* (1892). Books in which Judith Sargent Murray has been featured include David McCullough, *John Adams* (2001); Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (2005); Cokie Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation* (2005); Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in early National Philadelphia* (2001); Dorothy Emerson, editor, *Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform* (2000); Therese B. Dykeman, *American Women Philosophers, 1650-1930* (1993); Ruth Barnes Moynihan, Cynthia Russett, and Laurie Crumpacker, *Second to None: A Documentary History of American Women* (1993); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (1980); and Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers* (1973).

Article by Bonnie Hurd Smith (<http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/judithsargentmurray.html>)

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady

(12 Nov. 1815-26 Oct. 1902)

Woman suffragist and writer, was born in Johnstown, New York, the daughter of Margaret Livingston and Daniel Cady, a distinguished lawyer, state assemblyman, and congressman. She received her education at the Johnstown Academy and Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary and studied Greek with a local minister. Her knowledge of the law began at home, in conversations with her father, at dinners with New York's legal establishment, and in the social life of five Cady daughters and the stream of young men who came to Johnstown to study with Daniel Cady. The strict Scotch Presbyterianism and social conservatism of Elizabeth's upbringing were mitigated by the radicalism of her first cousin Gerrit Smith, an eccentric philanthropist, abolitionist, and religious critic, for whom Daniel Cady acted as lawyer and adviser. Back at home at the end of her schooling, Elizabeth occupied herself for several years with the family-centered duties of a wealthy daughter, including visits to relatives. A stay of several months with Gerrit Smith's family in the fall of 1839 introduced her to the prominent abolitionist orator Henry Brewster Stanton.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton, c. 1897.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress
(LC-USZ62-29801).

Origin of the Women's Rights Movement

Elizabeth Cady married Henry Stanton in 1840, after the couple weathered the storm of Daniel Cady's disapproval. Henry Stanton had no means of support. He had cut short his professional training to work for immediate emancipation, loaned his savings to other antislavery agents, and worked for the financially troubled American Anti-Slavery Society without pay. After a wedding in Johnstown, the Stantons sailed to England to attend the World's Anti-Slavery Convention. Stanton later located the origins of the British and the American women rights movements in that convention's decision to bar American women, including Lucretia Mott, from taking their seats as delegates.

Marriage transformed Elizabeth's life in many ways. Henry agreed to complete his legal training with his father-in-law when the couple returned from abroad, but his preference for reform over his profession kept him poor and often away from home. Though Elizabeth Stanton lived a relatively prosperous life, she never attained the wealth that her parents and sisters enjoyed. Further, raising the seven children that she bore between 1842 and 1859 fell chiefly to her. Marriage, however, set in motion her metamorphosis into a reformer. Within months, she met all the leading women of the antislavery movement, who opened her mind to the puzzle of women's rights.

During the first seven years of her marriage Stanton lived variously in Johnstown and Albany with her parents and in Boston with her husband, while she deepened new friendships with Angelina Grimké, Sarah Grimké, Lucretia Mott, and members of the Boston and Philadelphia

female antislavery societies. The lessons she learned were complex. In Boston she was drawn to the abolitionists who favored William Lloyd Garrison's moral absolutism; she hosted her husband's allies in the Liberty party who opposed Garrison; and she struggled to understand Theodore Parker's Transcendentalism. In Albany she dined with lawyers, judges, and legislators who debated legal reform and the property rights of married women and anticipated New York's constitutional convention of 1846. In correspondence with Mott and the Grimké's, she confronted religious questions as well as themes of women's individualism. Everyone who met her in the 1840s seemed taken with her charm and potential, and if she were to become a reformer, her friends expected her to reject orthodoxy and discover her own understanding of the divine will.

Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls (1848)

In 1847 the Stantons moved to Seneca Falls, New York, their home until 1862. A year later Elizabeth Cady Stanton initiated the call for a women's rights convention. From that meeting at Seneca Falls, on 19-20 July 1848, women issued the demand that their sacred right to the elective franchise be recognized. They wrote a Declaration of Sentiments and resolutions, arguing that consistency with the fundamental principles of the American Revolution required an end to women's taxation without representation and government without their consent. It accused men of usurping divine power and denying women their consciences by dictating the proper sphere of womankind. To illustrate women's disabilities under the law, the authors echoed attacks by legal reformers on English common law, particularly the principle that a woman lost her individual identity and rights when she married. The largest group at the 1848 meeting were antislavery Quakers from Rochester and Waterloo, New York, dissidents in the Society of Friends who were establishing the Congregational (later Progressive) Friends. Among them the convention's message found its strongest support, at a second convention in Rochester a few weeks later, in a modest petition campaign for woman suffrage late in 1848, and in the yearly meetings of Progressive Friends thereafter. Decades later Stanton wrote that advocacy of suffrage for women met resistance and that Frederick Douglass helped her to sway the crowd in its favor. Though nothing in the contemporary record confirms that story, the opposition of Friends and Garrisonians to voting could explain why participants doubted the importance of suffrage.

Women elsewhere took note of events in New York. Petitions for property rights and suffrage circulated in several states, and beginning in the spring of 1850 conventions of women's rights advocates became commonplace from Indiana to New England. This fledgling reform movement recognized Elizabeth Cady Stanton as one of its leaders, although her co-workers knew her principally by her writing until the Civil War. She wrote for Amelia Bloomer's *Lily* and Paulina Wright Davis's *Una*, and the letters, speeches, and resolutions she sent to most of the antebellum conventions were published in the antislavery and women's press. In her articles and public letters she embraced a wide range of changes that women of her generation were pursuing--entering medical schools, wearing short hair, experimenting with more rational dress, writing novels, and taking unusual jobs--and interpreted this cultural upheaval as part and parcel of her own pursuit of women's autonomy.

Goals for Women's Political and Legal Rights

Stanton's goals were well defined (and controversial) before the Civil War. The right to vote measured how well society respected human rights, with disfranchisement signaling the refusal of white males to acknowledge equals. Women needed the vote because men could not represent them, she argued. She varied her explanations of why representation failed. When she indicted the laws of New York, she noted that the interests of men and women sometimes collided, in laws about child custody, for instance, and men legislated their own interests. At other times, especially but not exclusively after the war, she minimized conflict between the sexes to argue that neither men nor women could govern well alone, that a good society needed women's views to complement men's.

Stanton also developed early her demand that women's individualism be guaranteed within marriage. A married woman's right to property and wages should be inalienable, and her right to exit from an abusive or destructive marriage assured. Her right to decide with whom and when to bear children should be inviolate. Criticism of Stanton's views of marriage and divorce came not only from angry clergymen defending a sacrament and men unwilling to yield their marital rights, but also from erstwhile allies such as Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, who found her ideas too close to those of free lovers, and Caroline Dall of Boston, who wanted discussion of women's rights confined to education, jobs, and suffrage.

Though best known for exposing the legal and political bases of women's degradation, Stanton held churches accountable as well. When a local minister preached against the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, she boldly contested his interpretation of biblical passages and disputed his conviction that Christianity tolerated inequality. Like the radical abolitionists who demanded that churches condemn slavery, women, she believed, should renounce churches and ministers who proclaimed their inferiority. Until called to account by more cautious co-workers, she appealed to the women of New York to remember that constitutions and the words of St. Paul were mere parchments that should not limit their aspirations.

Agitating for Reform with Susan B. Anthony

Stanton's participation in the women's rights movement intensified when, in 1851, she met Susan B. Anthony, an activist in the temperance movement and a friend of Rochester's women's rights advocates. Tied down by children and an absent husband, Stanton depended on Anthony's greater mobility and her willingness to build a movement for women's rights. Together they made New York a laboratory for agitation. In their first collaboration in 1852, Stanton joined Anthony's cause and presided over the Women's New York State Temperance Society until she was voted out of office because of her views on equal rights and her conviction that women needed the right to divorce. In 1854 they launched their first campaign to change specific laws regarding women, and while Anthony circulated petitions and tracts, organized meetings, and lobbied the legislature, Stanton crafted the arguments. From a sampling of laws regarding women, wives, mothers, and widows, she portrayed women caught in an unjust system that limited their custody of children, took their earnings, kept them at the mercy of dissolute husbands, and deprived them as widows of a home. Yearly until the Civil War Stanton and Anthony renewed their pressure on the legislature, extracting favorable reports in some years and

mockery in others. In 1860, when Republicans controlled the legislature, they won a major revision in laws regarding the economic rights of married women, the custody rights of mothers, and equal rights for widows. When the war began, they were embarked on a similar campaign to rewrite New York's divorce law.

Stanton left Seneca Falls in 1862 to spend the next seven years in Brooklyn and New York City. When the Civil War brought women's rights meetings to a halt, she envisaged roles for women in the North's political mobilization. In 1863 she urged the loyal women of the North to prepare for the nation's reconstruction as a true republic and convened the Women's Loyal National League. Working with ladies' aid and antislavery societies as well as the league, Stanton and Anthony provided Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner with 400,000 signatures to petitions for the Thirteenth Amendment by the summer of 1864. Although the league copied women's earliest and least controversial antislavery activism as petitioners to Congress, its independence worried abolitionists. Rather than operating under the leadership of the American Anti-Slavery Society, the league pursued a strategy for emancipation that Garrison himself had not yet endorsed. Old alliances suffered further when Stanton identified the league with the presidential aspirations of John C. Frémont in 1864.

A New Direction after the Civil War

Beginning with the loyal league, Stanton gave new direction to the women's rights movement by making it a vehicle for expressing women's interests in politics, and during Reconstruction that new direction splintered the antebellum alliance of antislavery and women's rights forces. When Congress opened discussion of the Fourteenth Amendment at the end of 1865, Stanton joined the antislavery leadership in opposing educated suffrage or other restrictions on the voting rights to be granted to the former slaves. But when that leadership supported Republican proposals to enshrine manhood suffrage as the new standard of republican government, Stanton convened the American Equal Rights Association in the spring of 1866 to promote universal suffrage, competing directly with the American Anti-Slavery Society. In addition to petitioning Congress for universal suffrage, the association campaigned in most northern states where new suffrage requirements were under consideration. Stanton herself lectured in the campaigns of New York and Kansas. By the summer of 1867 abolitionists and Republican leaders openly opposed attempts to win woman suffrage in the states. A furious Stanton returned from Kansas in the company of the notorious George Francis Train, a Democrat and blatant racist, insisting that woman suffragists would find whatever allies they could and that no new voters should be added unless all citizens were given the right to vote. To make her point she lectured against the Fifteenth Amendment. This defiant political message shaped the *Revolution*, the newspaper she coedited with Parker Pillsbury from 1868 to 1870. It inspired the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), founded in 1869. It informed her tour of the Midwest in 1869, when she raised fears that enfranchising black men endangered white women.

Stanton never stepped back to explain her decision to abandon the tradition of human rights, though she believed that her former allies preceded her in betrayal. In their effort to enfranchise freedmen in the South, they divided the rights of men from those of women, distinguished citizenship from voting rights, and refused to establish as constitutional law the principle that the federal government should protect voters. She also never retracted the attacks on African

Americans that she leveled while mounting this fight. She did, however, stop herself. When time proved the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments inadequate protection for blacks' voting rights in the South, she mounted the biggest suffrage campaign of her lifetime for "National Protection for National Citizens," arguing that the voting rights of all citizens were too important to be left to the states and should be guaranteed by constitutional amendment.

National Protection Campaign

The national protection campaign, in which Stanton worked closely with Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage and through the NWSA, began at the centennial celebrations of 1876. For eight years they mobilized women nationwide to petition Congress for a sixteenth, woman suffrage amendment, introduced in 1878 and voted down in 1887. So impressive was their progress that the rival American Woman Suffrage Association, under the leadership of Lucy Stone, which had focused on changing state laws, circulated the congressional petitions. The campaign also caught the attention of Frances Willard and the enormous Woman's Christian Temperance Union, whose work for woman suffrage dated from this same period.

At age sixty-five Stanton began to reduce her workload. She toured the country as a lecturer for the last time in 1880, after eleven years on the lyceum circuit. Never fond of meetings, she found more excuses to avoid them. She also closed the house in Tenafly, New Jersey, where she had moved in 1868, and resided chiefly with her children. From May 1882 through November 1883, from November 1886 to March 1888, and again from February 1890 to August 1891, she lived abroad with two children who had married and started families in Europe. Stanton was hardly idle. Between 1881 and her death, she published five books and hundreds of articles, and she still averaged three or four major speeches each year. Freed from lecturing, she completed the historical project that she and Anthony and Gage had started in the centennial year. Volumes one and two of the *History of Woman Suffrage* were published in 1881 and 1882. She worked on the third volume (published in 1886) in 1884 and 1885, when she resumed housekeeping to take care of her aging husband. (Henry Stanton died in 1887, after his wife returned to England.)

Return to Universal Suffrage

A more private life allowed Stanton to become a critic of the woman suffrage movement. Nominally president of the NWSA and its successor, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, until 1892, she was increasingly an outsider to a movement drawing adherents from evangelical churches, attracting believers in women's moral superiority and southerners who abhorred federal protection of voting rights, and empowering women who understood nothing of the lessons of human rights. Only Susan B. Anthony's insistence kept her in the association formed by merging the National and American suffrage associations, and she was defiant on its platform. At the first joint convention in 1890 she reaffirmed the importance of federal protection for voting rights, disputed the faith of Americans in state-by-state campaigning, and tied both to the growing disfranchisement of African Americans in southern states. The retreat from Reconstruction, she proclaimed, and the Supreme Court's declarations "that the United States has no voters and that citizenship does not carry with it the right of suffrage, not only have prolonged woman's disfranchisement but have undermined the status of the freedmen and opened the way for another war of races" (Anthony and Harper, vol. 4, p. 165). She lent her

name to new, dissident suffrage societies carrying out the old goals of a secular movement for federal guarantees based on the argument of human equality. Her last appearance on the Washington stage came in 1892, when she addressed the House Judiciary Committee on "The Solitude of Self." Reprising themes of her speeches and articles since the 1850s, she spoke eloquently about woman's responsibility for herself and society's need to protect her individual rights.

In 1894 Stanton moved again off the center of universal suffrage. After a bitter defeat for woman suffrage in the New York State constitutional convention, she proposed educated suffrage as a reform more palatable to a generation of politicians who accepted Jim Crow in the South and dreaded the immigrant wave in the North. Educated suffrage, she argued, was fairer than existing standards, albeit a lowlier goal than universal suffrage. As many reformers had reasoned before her, she saw that education was not destiny, like gender or race, but a temporary status amenable to change.

What set Stanton apart most of all in her last decades was her conviction that the next great struggle would occur not against the state but against churches. In 1885 she tried to shepherd the NWSA into the fray and introduced resolutions "impeaching the Christian theology--as well as all other forms of religion, for their degrading teachings in regard to woman" (*Eighty Years and More*, p. 383). At about the same time she solicited contributors to a critical exegesis of the Bible. But when she published part one of the *Woman's Bible* in 1895, the suffrage association she had founded repudiated her ideas as damaging to the cause. Opposition from within the movement had no effect on her ambitions. In her mind critics of a struggle with orthodox religion simply echoed those who laughed at a woman's right to vote in 1848. By the 1890s Stanton's chief support came from the free thought movement. In 1898 she published parts one and two of the *Woman's Bible* and her autobiography, *Eighty Years and More*. They are in many respects companion volumes, the one containing commentaries on the Bible's treatment of women, the other casting Stanton's life and worldly work as a struggle against "the religious superstitions" that perpetuate women's "bondage more than all other adverse influences" (p. 471).

Final Legacy

By her eightieth birthday Stanton could barely stand. Always plump, she had become fat, and arthritic knees could not hold her. She rarely left an apartment in New York City. Her eyesight faded, and by 1899 she was blind. She dictated articles and tried to revise her best-known speeches orally. She died at home in New York, leaving unmailed a letter to Theodore Roosevelt seeking his endorsement of woman suffrage.

Stanton's legacy is complicated by her inexcusable (and to her argument, unnecessary) assaults on the rights and reputations of black men during Reconstruction. She coined the language that would mar the woman suffrage movement long after her death, expressing outrage that white men would give preference in voting rights to all manner of men over their educated white mothers, wives, and sisters. But more quickly than most Americans, she recognized the dire consequences of turning back to the states the power to regulate the electorate. Throughout her life Stanton believed that rights mattered, in everyday life and over the lifetime of every person,

and she worked hard as a writer and lecturer to expand the rights of individuals. She was a popular speaker with a sense of humor and a gift for connecting legal and political abstractions to their human consequences, both of which give her writing a timeless quality. Uncompromising and impatient as a reformer, and a democrat more in theory than in social practice, Stanton showed faulty judgment when she tried to set a political course.

Bibliography

Stanton's papers, compiled from archives and printed sources, are microfilmed and indexed as the *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, ed. Patricia G. Holland and Ann D. Gordon (1991). The first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* provide the best record of Stanton's political activity as well as her historical writing; vol. 4, by Susan B. Anthony and Ida Harper (1904), covers the late years of her suffragism. The autobiographical *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences, 1815-1897* is very readable, and the *Woman's Bible* still attracts critical attention. The reprints of both books (1993) contain useful essays by Ellen C. DuBois, Ann D. Gordon, and Maureen McCarthy. Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, As Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences* (2 vols., 1992), is heavily edited and unreliable. More valuable is the recent selection in DuBois, ed., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence Writings, Speeches*, rev. ed. (1992). Theodore Tilton wrote a charming biography of Stanton in *Eminent Women of the Age* (1868). The best modern biography is Alma Lutz, *Created Equal: A Biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1815-1902* (1940). Other useful biographies are Lois Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Woman's Rights* (1980), and Elisabeth Griffith, *In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (1984). For Stanton's early role in women's rights agitation, see two articles by Judith Wellman: "The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention: A Study of Social Networks," *Journal of Women's History* 3 (Spring 1991): 9-37, and "Women's Rights, Republicanism and Revolutionary Rhetoric in Antebellum New York State," *New York History* 69 (July 1988): 353-84. Stanton's home in Seneca Falls belongs to the National Park Service and is open to the public. Her role at the start of Reconstruction is explored in DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage* (1978), a work that should be read in conjunction with Bettina Aptheker's critical essay in *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History* (1982).

Article by Ann D. Gordon (<http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00640.html>)

Anthony, Susan B.

(15 Feb. 1820-13 Mar. 1906)

Reformer and organizer for woman suffrage, was born Susan Brownell Anthony in Adams, Massachusetts, the daughter of Daniel Anthony and Lucy Read. Her father built the town's first cotton mill. When Susan, the second of eight children, was six, the family moved to Battenville, New York, north of Albany, where Daniel prospered as manager of a larger mill and could send Susan and her sister to a Friends' seminary near Philadelphia. His good fortune, however, collapsed with the financial crisis of 1837; the mill closed, Susan left boarding school, the family lost its house, and for nearly a decade the family squeaked by, assisted by Susan's wages as a teacher. Looking for a new start in 1845, Daniel moved to a farm near Rochester, the city that would be Susan's permanent address for the rest of her life.



Susan B. Anthony.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-23933).

Susan taught for ten years in district schools, private academies, and families, concluding her career as head of the female department in the academy at Canajoharie, New York, from 1846 to 1849. This work had a lasting effect on her ideas as a reformer and on her views about equality. Having experienced women's unequal wages, she gave primacy, in later years, to their need for economic equality; "Woman Wants Bread, Not the Ballot" was the title of her best-known and favorite lecture about woman suffrage. She approached working women not as a philanthropist curious about their plight but as a veteran of their tribulations.

When she quit teaching in 1849 to run her father's farm, Anthony had already moved tentatively into the arena of women's reform. At Canajoharie she delivered her first speech to a meeting of the Daughters of Temperance. At home, however, her family introduced her to their new friends--including Frederick Douglass, Isaac and Amy Post, and others--who formed the core of Rochester's antislavery and women's rights radicals. These members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and participants in the women's rights convention at Rochester in 1848 conducted their private, religious, and political lives by a code of sexual equality that presented Anthony with unimagined alternatives for her own life.

The New York State Temperance Society (1852)

In 1851 Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and over the next year the two women discovered the sort of liberating partnership they could forge. Their ideas were converging. Anthony had found women welcome in the temperance movement as long as they confined themselves to a separate sphere and did not expect an equal role with men, while Stanton had focused her attention on the need for women to reform law in their own interests, both to improve their conditions and to challenge the "maleness" of current law. In 1852 Anthony and Stanton founded

the Women's New York State Temperance Society, which, even in its name, claimed an equality with the leading male society and featured women's right to vote on the temperance question and to divorce drunken husbands. Beginning as an agent for this society, Anthony became a full-time reformer.

Through the 1850s Anthony and Stanton made New York State the nation's showpiece of women's rights agitation. To the struggle for equality in the increasingly political temperance movement, they added campaigns for coeducation, modeled "Bloomers," a costume that freed women from the constraints of fashionable dress, and, through their New York State Woman's Rights Committee, presented the legislature with demands for suffrage, married women's property rights, mothers' custody rights, liberalized divorce laws, and rights associated with specific jobs performed by women.

Anthony proved to be an effective organizer and fell into a style of life centered on the demands of reform politics. On the road most of each year for the next four decades, she avoided keeping house and supported herself by work for her political causes. This willingness to live in perpetual motion made her a perfect partner in the 1850s for Stanton, whose children and household tied her down. Anthony supplied legs and voice for Stanton's ideas, or in Stanton's phrase, "I forged the thunderbolts and she fired them" (*Eighty Years and More*, p. 165). Anthony's persistence as a traveler and organizer was legendary; William Henry Channing dubbed her the movement's Napoleon. In an 1855 tour for women's rights she met her goal of lecturing at least once in every one of New York's sixty-two counties. (At age seventy-four, she insisted on repeating that feat in the service of a suffrage amendment to the state constitution.) Recognizing her talents, the American Anti-Slavery Society signed her up as its principal agent in New York State from 1856 until the Civil War.

The political methods that Anthony worked out in New York set the pattern she would follow nationally for the rest of her life. Her objectives were to change laws, and she took her arguments to the public through lectures, pamphlets, subscription newspapers, and personal appeals for signatures on petitions. Each year had its cycle: fieldwork with education and petitions paced to produce an annual presentation of opinion to the legislature. At Albany she would schedule the best speakers in a large meeting to coincide with the start of the legislative session in order to attract politicians and the press. As the movement gained importance, she could schedule hearings as well. When she left a town, she sought to leave behind some "wide-awake" individuals who would carry on the education. She did not, however, build organizations or solicit memberships.

Debut as a National Reformer

With the start of the Civil War, advocates of women's rights put their cause on hold and devoted their time to abolitionism. In 1863 Anthony, again with Stanton, founded the Women's Loyal National League to engage women in the political debates prompted by war, and for a year and a half Anthony circulated a national petition that urged Congress to abolish slavery by constitutional amendment. Employing a loose network of individuals and soldiers' aid and antislavery societies, the league gathered petitions with 400,000 signatures, which were presented to Congress by Senator Charles Sumner. This effort marked Anthony's debut as a

national reformer and was also the advent of a focus on the federal government for women's rights. The Thirteenth Amendment and subsequent debate about securing citizenship for freed slaves introduced Anthony and her co-workers to the potential for sweeping change through amendment to the national Constitution.

Anthony spent much of 1865 in Leavenworth, Kansas, at work on her brother's newspaper. Carefully following congressional debates, she became convinced that universal suffrage was the only just solution to the challenges of Reconstruction, yet Congress intended to limit rights by introducing the word "male" into the Fourteenth Amendment. With a lecture on universal suffrage, she worked her way east. By year's end, the core of women's rights activists in the Northeast had reassembled to launch their first national campaign for woman suffrage, petitioning Congress for an amendment to "prohibit the several States from disfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex" (Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 2, p. 91).

Hopes for universal suffrage from Congress bound former abolitionists together in the American Equal Rights Association, established in 1866. As its corresponding secretary Anthony oversaw petitions to Congress and coordinated several campaigns to amend state constitutions. She divided her time in 1867 between campaigns in New York and Kansas. Kansas voters defeated proposals for African-American and woman suffrage, but the campaign itself exposed profound differences within the equal rights coalition and drove a wedge among woman suffragists that would divide them until the end of the century. Republican party leaders and the reformers they influenced withdrew support for the woman suffrage amendment midway through the campaign, aligning the party's stance in Kansas with its national advocacy of suffrage for black males. Grasping for any support, Anthony accepted the assistance of George Francis Train, showman, financier, Democrat, and blatant racist, to complete the tour of Kansas. Moreover, while traveling home with Train, she and Stanton accepted his offer of capital to launch a newspaper. The *Revolution*, published in New York City by Anthony and edited by Stanton and Parker Pillsbury, appeared in January 1868.

In one sense, Anthony simply separated her cause from dependence on Republican leadership to test its political appeal. She signaled the same intention with an approach to the Democratic party's 1868 convention for an endorsement of suffrage. But she and Stanton crafted their move in terms that pitted the rights of women against the rights of freedmen and claimed a higher right for themselves.

Though the *Revolution* preserves the worst pronouncements of Anthony and Stanton in this period--opposing the Fifteenth Amendment and casting the enfranchisement of freedmen as a threat to the safety of white women--it also captures their excitement about women's potential and their growing rebelliousness. The paper attracted good poets, short story writers, and journalists; its columns reported grass-roots activism in California, Nevada, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia; and thorough reports about women's rights in Geneva, Paris, and London appeared regularly.

Formation of the National Woman Suffrage Association (1869)

Their convictions about an independent movement led Anthony and Stanton to form the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869, distinct from the equal rights movement. Henry Blackwell and his wife, Lucy Stone, set up the rival American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which took a more predictable and Republican line by calling for suffrage by state, rather than federal, law. Until their merger in 1890, the two associations rarely agreed on strategy and competed for suffragists' loyalty.

Although Anthony advocated a sixteenth amendment for woman suffrage as early as 1868, the strategy of the NWSA remained uncertain and subject to change until 1875. National suffragists sought legislative and judicial tests of the theory that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments together had, in fact, granted women the right to vote by linking citizenship--which women enjoyed--to the franchise. Through direct action in local elections dozens of women created test cases, and, on the initiative of Victoria Woodhull, the NWSA petitioned for an act of Congress to implement what the amendments had established in principle.

Anthony lectured and wrote about this "new departure," but she did not try to vote herself until 1872, when she joined a group (that included two of her sisters) to cast ballots on election day in Rochester. Within weeks she was arrested for violating federal law. Convicted by the judge, without a poll of the jury that heard her case, and fined, Anthony was not ordered to jail and thus could not take her case to the Supreme Court on a writ of habeas corpus. She never paid the fine. In another case, *Minor v. Happersett* (1874), the Court ruled that under the Constitution the states still could determine the political rights of women. In response to this ruling, Anthony revived the proposal for a constitutional amendment in 1876 and sustained a national campaign for the next decade.

By a cruel twist of fate, women's interest in their enfranchisement was mounting while politicians' willingness to assert federal authority over the states was waning. Floods of petitions produced modest gains among congressmen, and suffragists' best efforts could not produce a majority, or even a solid bloc, of legislative support. When an amendment finally reached the Senate floor in 1886, it lost decisively. From that point until after Anthony's death, supporters of the federal amendment went through the motions of petitions and hearings without much hope of sympathy from a Congress dominated by advocates of states' rights.

Women's support for suffrage came from constituencies that Anthony cultivated with her grueling schedule. From October through December and from February until the planting season, Anthony stayed on the lecture circuit, booked into towns and cities of every size. In January she convened her followers in Washington to make their case to Congress. Never comfortable as a lecturer, she labored hard to become adequate in the job, and eventually her reputation drew audiences that her style might not.

Anthony's dedication to the cause made her a celebrity whose speeches earned serious comment, and she gave hundreds of interviews to local newspapers. She came to personify the demand for woman suffrage to most Americans. As her fame mounted, Anthony used the power it gave her to link suffragists with groups of women organized for other purposes. By befriending Frances

Willard, she slowly won the permission of the conservative Woman's Christian Temperance Union to speak about voting rights at their meetings. She put together the International Council of Women and its affiliate, the National Council of Women, in 1888. Neither group endorsed suffrage, but in both suffragists collaborated with groups seeking to enhance women's opportunities. By the 1890s Anthony had access to the platform of any women's organization in the country.

Passing Her Legacy to the Next Generation of Suffragists

Two years of acrimonious negotiations with Lucy Stone's representatives from the AWSA succeeded in merging the rival associations as the National-American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890. Stanton presided over the new organization from 1890 to 1892, when Anthony replaced her. Anthony served until her eightieth birthday in 1900. Anthony cultivated the new talent coming up--people like Alice Stone Blackwell, Carrie Chapman Catt, Laura Clay, and Anna Howard Shaw--but none was ready to lead.

Without diminishing the contribution she continued to make toward public acceptance of suffrage, it is fair to say that by the 1890s Anthony was not up to meeting the challenges arising among suffragists themselves. Growth and merger had introduced new political cultures into the movement, often more conservative and more wedded to building strong state suffrage societies primed for local action. Pressure for campaigns to win suffrage by state legislation or referendum escalated after 1890, straining resources and diverting attention from the federal amendment. Serious conflicts about basic values threatened the goal of sustaining a single national organization for the cause. Veneration of Susan B. Anthony held the NAWSA together during some of its worst years.

Expecting to settle down, she had arranged with her sister to share housekeeping at Mary's house in Rochester, beginning in 1890. For the first time in her life she entertained, taking great pleasure in hosting friends with whom she had stayed across the country. But she did not really give up travel: South Dakota for seven months in 1890; Chicago for four months in 1893; the South for two months in 1895 and again in 1903; California in 1895, most of 1896, and then again in 1905; London in 1899; Berlin in 1904; Washington every year; and plenty of short trips in between. She was on the road until a month before her death in Rochester, having insisted on rising from her sickbed to attend the NAWSA's annual convention in Baltimore and proceeding to Washington for a birthday party at the Corcoran Gallery.

In 1902 Anthony wrote a public letter in advance of Stanton's birthday, not knowing that her friend would die before its publication. She conceded that neither she nor Stanton had expected in "the hope and buoyancy of youth" to leave their life's work for another generation, but she harbored "not a shadow of doubt that they will carry our cause to victory." The old pioneers would have to settle for "the next sphere of existence . . . where women will be welcomed on a plane of perfect intellectual and spiritual equality." When Anthony died, she left an enormous legacy to those other generations. Her image, words, and standards of work permeated the struggle for what women called the "Susan B. Anthony amendment." So thoroughly had she become the embodiment of women's aspirations for political equality that suffragists fought long after their victory in 1920 over their competing claims to be her true political descendants.

Another legacy lasted still longer; Anthony made certain that the movement's history survived. In the middle 1870s, with contributions to *Johnson's New Universal Cyclopaedia* (1879), she began a series of projects to ensure recognition of eminent individuals and documentation of critical events. Between 1881 and 1886, working alongside Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage, she produced three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, corralling contributors from each state and tracking down sources. In 1897 she brought Ida Husted Harper to live with her in Rochester to prepare two volumes of the *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* (1898), based on massive archives that had accumulated in the attic. With Harper she then produced a fourth volume of the *History* (1902). Anthony donated her books and scrapbooks to the Library of Congress and personally shipped thousands of volumes of the *History* and the biography to academic and public libraries.

Bibliography

Anthony's papers, compiled from archives and printed sources, are microfilmed and indexed as the *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, ed. Patricia G. Holland and Ann D. Gordon (1991). Not included there in their entirety are scrapbooks at the Library of Congress, a remarkable record of lifetime attention to political and social issues. The *History of Woman Suffrage* still provides the best record of Anthony's movement. A valuable selection of documents appears in Ellen C. DuBois, ed., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* (rev. ed., 1992). Stanton wrote several biographical chapters on Anthony in *Eminent Women of the Age* (1868), the *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 2 (1882), and *Eighty Years and More* (1898). Ida Husted Harper added vol. 3 to her *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* in 1908, and the principal biographies since then are by Rheta Childe Dorr (1928), Katherine Anthony (1954), Alma Lutz (1959), and Kathleen Barry (1988). Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* (1959; rev. ed., 1975) offers the best interpretative treatment of suffragism. For Anthony's campaigns in the immediate postwar years, Ellen C. DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage* (1978), is the basic work. Nancy A. Hewitt's work defines the context for Anthony's conversion to women's rights: *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York* (1984). Though obituaries appeared in hundreds of papers, the principal ones are those from Rochester, New York, 13 Mar. 1906, in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, the *Rochester Herald*, the *Post Express*, and the *Evening Times*.

Article by Ann D. Gordon (http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00021.html?from=../15/15-00640.html&from_nm=Stanton%2C%20Elizabeth%20Cady)