



# **History of Woman Suffrage, Volume III**

**Matilda Joslyn Gage,  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
Susan B. Anthony**

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE CENTENNIAL YEAR—1876.

The Dawn of the New Century—Washington Convention—Congressional Hearing—Woman's Protest—May Anniversary—Centennial Parlors in Philadelphia—Letters and Delegates to Presidential Conventions—50,000 Documents sent out—The Centennial Autograph Book—The Fourth of July—Independence Square—Susan B. Anthony reads the Declaration of Rights—Convention in Dr. Furness' Church, Lucretia Mott, Presiding—The Hutchinson Family, John and Asa—The Twenty-eighth Anniversary, July 19, Edward M. Davis, Presiding—Letters, Ernestine L. Rose, Clarina I. H. Nichols—The *Ballot-Box*—Retrospect—The Woman's Pavilion.

DURING the sessions of 1871-72 congress enacted laws providing for the celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of American independence, to be held July 4, 1876, in Philadelphia, the historic city from whence was issued the famous declaration of 1776.

The first act provided for the appointment by the president of a "Centennial Commission," consisting of two members from each State and territory in the Union; the second incorporated the Centennial Board of Finance and provided for the issue of stock to the amount of \$10,000,000, in 1,000,000 shares of \$10 each. It was at first proposed to distribute the stock among the people of the different States and territories according to the ratio of their population, but subscriptions were afterward received without regard to States. The stockholders organized a board of directors, April 1, 1873. The design of the exhibition was to make it a comprehensive display of the industrial, intellectual and moral progress of the nation during the first century of its existence; but by the earnest invitation of our government foreign nations so generally participated that it was truly, as its name implied, an "International and World's Exposition."

The centennial year opened amid the wildest rejoicing. In honor of the nation's birthday extensive preparations were made for the great event. Crowds of people eager to participate in the

celebration, everywhere flocked from the adjacent country to the nearest village or city, filling the streets and adding to the general gala look, all through the day and evening of December 31, 1875. From early gas-light upon every side the blowing of horns, throwing of torpedos, explosion of fire-crackers, gave premonition of more enthusiastic exultation. As the clock struck twelve every house suddenly blossomed with red, white and blue; public and private buildings burst into a blaze of light that rivaled the noon-day sun, while screaming whistles, booming cannon, pealing bells, joyous music and brilliant fire-works made the midnight which ushered in the centennial 1876, a never-to-be-forgotten hour.

Portraits of the presidents from Washington and Lincoln laurel-crowned, to Grant, sword in hand, met the eye on every side. Stars in flames of fire lighted the foreign flags of welcome to other nations. Every window, door and roof-top was filled with gay and joyous people. Carriages laden with men, women and children in holiday attire enthusiastically waving the national flag and singing its songs of freedom. Battalions of soldiers marched through the streets; Roman candles, whizzing rockets, and gaily-colored balloons shot upward, filling the sky with trails of fire and adding to the brilliancy of the scene, while all minor sounds were drowned in the martial music. Thus did the old world and the new commemorate the birth of a nation founded on the principle of self-government.

The prolonged preparations for the centennial celebration naturally roused the women of the nation to new thought as to their status as citizens of a republic, as well as to their rightful share in the progress of the century. The oft-repeated declarations of the fathers had a deeper significance for those who realized the degradation of disfranchisement, and they

queried with each other as to what part, with becoming self-respect, they could take in the coming festivities.<sup>[1]</sup> Woman's achievements in art, science and industry would necessarily be recognized in the Exposition; but with the dawn of a new era, after a hundred years of education in a republic, she asked more than a simple recognition of the products of her hand and brain; with her growing intelligence, virtue and patriotism, she demanded the higher ideal of womanhood that should welcome her as an equal factor in government, with all the rights and honors of citizenship fully accorded. During the entire century, women who understood the genius of free institutions had ever and anon made their indignant protests in both public and private before State legislatures, congressional committees and statesmen at their own firesides; and now, after discussing the right of self-government so exhaustively in the late anti-slavery conflict, it seemed to them that the time had come to make some application of these principles to the women of the nation. Hence it was with a deeper sense of injustice than ever before that the National Suffrage Association issued the call for the annual Washington Convention of 1876:

CALL FOR THE EIGHTH ANNUAL WASHINGTON CONVENTION.—The National Woman Suffrage Association will hold its Eighth Annual Convention in Tallmadge Hall, Washington, D. C., January 27, 28, 1876. In this one-hundredth year of the Republic, the women of the United States will once more assemble under the shadow of the national capitol to press their claims to self-government.

That property has its rights, was acknowledged in England long before the revolutionary war, and this recognized right made "no taxation without representation" the most effective battle-cry of that period. But

the question of property representation fades from view beside the greater question of the right of each individual, millionaire or pauper, to personal representation. In the progress of the war our fathers grew in wisdom, and the Declaration of Independence was the first national assertion of the right of individual representation. That "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," thenceforward became the watchword of the world. Our flag, which beckons the emigrant from every foreign shore, means to him self-government.

But while in theory our government recognizes the rights of all people, in practice it is far behind the Declaration of Independence and the national constitution. On what just ground is discrimination made between men and women? Why should women, more than men, be governed without their own consent? Why should women, more than men, be denied trial by a jury of their peers? On what authority are women taxed while unrepresented? By what right do men declare themselves invested with power to legislate for women? For the discussion of these vital questions friends are invited to take part in the convention.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, *President*, Fayetteville, N. Y.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, *Ch'n Ex. Com.*, Rochester, N. Y.

At the opening session of this convention the president, Matilda Joslyn Gage, said:

I would remind you, fellow-citizens, that this is our first convention in the dawn of the new century. In 1776 we inaugurated our experiment of self-government. Unbelief in man's capacity to govern himself was freely expressed by every European monarchy except France. When John Adams was Minister to England, the newspapers of that country were filled with prophecies that the new-born republic would soon gladly return to British allegiance. But these hundred years have taught them the worth of liberty; the Declaration of Independence has become the alphabet of nations; Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and the isles of the sea, will unite this year to do our nation honor. Our flag is everywhere on sea and land. It has searched the North Pole, explored every desert, upheld religious liberty of every faith and protected political refugees from every nation, but it has not yet secured equal rights to women.

This year is to be one of general discussion upon the science of government; its origin, its powers, its history. If our present declaration

cannot be so interpreted as to cover the rights of women, we must issue one that will. I have received letters from many of the Western States and from this District, urging us to prepare a woman's declaration, and to celebrate the coming Fourth of July with our own chosen orators and in our own way. I notice a general awakening among women at this time. But a day or two since the women of this District demanded suffrage for themselves in a petition of 25,000 names. The men are quiet under their disfranchisement, making no attempt for their rights—fit slaves of a powerful ring.

The following protest was presented by Mrs. Gage, adopted by the convention, printed and extensively circulated:

*To the Political Sovereigns of the United States in Independence Hall assembled:*

We, the undersigned women of the United States, asserting our faith in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and in the constitution of the United States, proclaiming it as the best form of government in the world, declare ourselves a part of the people of the nation unjustly deprived of the guaranteed and reserved rights belonging to citizens of the United States; because we have never given our consent to this government; because we have never delegated our rights to others; because this government is false to its underlying principles; because it has refused to one-half its citizens the only means of self-government—the ballot; because it has been deaf to our appeals, our petitions and our prayers;

Therefore, in presence of the assembled nations of all the world, we protest against this government of the United States as an oligarchy of sex, and not a true republic; and we protest against calling this a centennial celebration of the independence of the people of the United States.

Letters<sup>[2]</sup> were read and a series of resolutions were discussed and adopted:

*Resolved*, That the demand for woman suffrage is but the next step in the great movement which began with *Magna Charta*, and which has ever since tended toward vesting government in the whole body of the people.

*Resolved*, That we demand of the forty-fourth congress, in order that it may adequately celebrate the centennial year, the admission to the polls of the women of all the territories, and a submission to the legislatures of the several States of an amendment securing to women the elective franchise.

*Resolved*, That the enfranchisement of women means wiser and truer wedlock, purer and happier homes, healthier and better children, and strikes, as nothing else does, at the very roots of



pauperism and crime.

*Resolved*, That if Colorado would come into the Union in a befitting manner for the celebration of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence, she should give the ballot to brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and thus present to the nation a truly free State.

*Resolved*, That the right of suffrage being vested in the women of Utah by their constitutional and lawful enfranchisement, and by six years of use, we denounce the proposition about to be again presented to congress for the disfranchisement of the women in that territory, as an outrage on the freedom of thousands of legal voters and a gross innovation of vested rights; we demand the abolition of the system of numbering the ballots, in order that the women may be thoroughly free to vote as they choose, without supervision or dictation, and that the chair appoint a committee of three persons, with power to add to their number, to memorialize congress, and otherwise to watch over the rights of the women of Utah in this regard during the next twelve months.

BELVA A. LOCKWOOD presented the annual report: The question of woman suffrage is to be submitted to the people of Iowa during the present centennial year, if this legislature ratifies the action of the previous one. Colorado has not embodied the word "male" in her constitution, and a vigorous effort is being made to introduce woman suffrage there. In Minnesota women are allowed to vote on school questions and to hold office by a recent constitutional amendment. In Michigan, in 1874, the vote for woman suffrage was 40,000, about 1,000 more votes than were polled for the new constitution. The Connecticut legislature, during the past year appointed a committee to consider and report the expediency of making women eligible to the position of electors for president and vice-president. The committee made a unanimous report in its favor, and secured for its passage 82 votes, while 101 votes were cast against it. In Massachusetts, Governor Rice, in his inaugural address, recommended to the legislature to secure to women the right to vote for presidential electors. An address to the legislature of New York by Mesdames Gage, Blake and Lozier upon this question, was favorably received and extensively quoted by the press. At an agricultural fair in Illinois the Hon. James R. Doolittle advocated household suffrage. In the Senate of the thirteenth legislature of the State of Texas, Senator Dohoney, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, made a report strongly advocating woman suffrage; and in 1875, when a member of the Constitutional Convention, he advocated the same doctrine, and was ably assisted by Hon. W. G. L. Weaver. The governor of that State, in his message, recommended that women school teachers should receive

equal pay for equal work. The word "male" does not occur in the new constitution. In the territories of Wyoming and Utah, woman suffrage still continues after five years' experiment, and we have not learned that households have been broken up or that babies have ceased to be rocked.

Women physicians, women journalists and women editors have come to be a feature of our institutions. Laura De Force Gordon, a member of our association, is editing a popular daily—the *Leader*—in Sacramento, Cal. Women are now admitted to the bar in Kansas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Utah, Wyoming and the District of Columbia. They are eligible and are serving as school superintendents in Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. Illinois allows them to be notaries public. As postmasters they have proved competent, and one woman, Miss Ada Sweet, is pension agent at Chicago. Julia K. Sutherland has been appointed commissioner of deeds for the State of California. In England women vote on the same terms as men on municipal, parochial and educational matters. In Holland, Austria and Sweden, women vote on a property qualification. The Peruvian Minister of Justice has declared that Peru places women on the same footing as men. Thus all over the world is the idea of human rights taking root and cropping out in a healthful rather than a spasmodic outgrowth.

The grand-daughter of Paley, true to her ancestral blood, has excelled all the young men in Cambridge in moral science. Julia J. Thomas, of Cornell University, daughter of Dr. Mary F. Thomas, of Indiana, in the recent inter-collegiate contest, took the first prize of \$300, over eight male competitors, in Greek. The recent decision in the United States Supreme Court, of *Minor vs. Happersett*, will have as much force in suppressing the individuality and self-assertion of women as had the opinion of Judge Taney, in the *Dred-Scott* case, in suppressing the emancipation of slavery. The day has come when precedents are made rather than blindly followed. The refusal of the Superior Court of Philadelphia to allow Carrie S. Burnham to practice law, because there was no precedent, was a weak evasion of common law and common sense. One hundred years ago there was no precedent for a man practicing law in the State of Pennsylvania, and yet we have not learned that there was any difficulty in establishing a precedent. I do not now remember any precedent for the Declaration of Independence of the United Colonies, and yet during a century it has not been overturned. The rebellion of the South had no precedent, and yet, if I remember,

there was an issue joined, and the United States found that she had jurisdiction of the case.

The admission of women to Cornell University; their reception on equal footing in Syracuse University, receiving in both equal honorary degrees; the establishment of Wellesley College, with full professorships and capable women to fill them; the agitation of the question in Washington of the establishment of a university for women, all show a mental awakening in the popular mind not hitherto known. A new era is opening in the history of the world. The seed sown twenty-five years ago by Mrs. Stanton and other brave women is bearing fruit.

SARA ANDREWS SPENCER said it was interesting to pair off the objections and let them answer each other like paradoxes. Women will be influenced by their husbands and will vote for bad men to please them. Women have too much influence now, and if we give them any more latitude they will make men all vote their way. Owing to the composition and structure of the female brain, women are incapable of understanding political affairs. If women are allowed to vote they will crowd all the men out of office, and men will be obliged to stay at home and take care of the children. That is, owing to the composition and structure of the female brain, women are so exactly adapted to political affairs that men wouldn't stand any chance if women were allowed to enter into competition with them. Women don't want it. Women shouldn't have it, for they don't know how to use it. Grace Greenwood (who was one of the seventy-two women who tried to vote) said men were like the stingy boy at school with a cake. "Now," said he, "all you that don't ask for it don't want it, and all you that do ask for it sha'n't have it."

REV. OLYMPIA BROWN, pastor of the Universalist church in Bridgeport, Conn., gave her views on the rights of women under the constitution, and believed that they were entitled to the ballot as an inalienable right. In this country, under existing rulings of the courts as to the meaning of the constitution, no one appeared likely to enjoy the ballot for all time except the colored men, unless the clause, "previous condition of servitude," as a congressman expressed it, referred to widows. That being true, the constitution paid a premium only on colored men, and widows. If the constitution did not guarantee suffrage, and congress did not bestow it, then the republic was of no account and its boast devoid of significance and meaning. Its life had been in vain—dead to the interests for which it was created. She wanted congress to pass a sixteenth amendment, declaring all its citizens enfranchised, or a

declaratory act setting forth that the constitution already guaranteed to them that right.

Hon. FREDERICK DOUGLASS said he was not quite in accord with all the sentiments that had been uttered during the afternoon, yet he was willing that the largest latitude should be taken by the advocates of the cause. He was not afraid that at some distant period the blacks of the South would rise and disfranchise the whites. While he was not willing to be addressed as the ignorant, besotted creature that the negro is sometimes called, he was willing to be a part of the bridge over which women should march to the full enjoyment of their rights.

Miss PHOEBE COUZINS of St. Louis reviewed in an able manner the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Virginia L. Minor.

Mrs. DEVEREUX BLAKE spoke on the rights and duties of citizenship. She cited a number of authorities, including a recent decision of the Supreme Court, to prove that women are citizens, although deprived of the privileges of citizenship. Taking up the three duties of citizenship—paying taxes, serving on jury, and military service—she said woman had done her share of the first for a hundred years; that the women of the country now contributed, directly and indirectly, one-third of its revenues, and that the House of Representatives had just robbed them of \$500,000 to pay for a centennial celebration in which they had no part. As for serving on jury, they did not claim that as a privilege, as it was usually regarded as a most disagreeable duty; but they did claim the right of women, when arraigned in court, to be tried by a jury of their peers, which was not accorded when the jury was composed wholly of men. Lastly, as to serving their country in time of war, it was a fact that women had actually enlisted and fought in our late war, until their sex was discovered, when they were summarily dismissed without being paid for their services.

Hon. Aaron A. Sargent, of California, in the United States Senate, and Hon. Samuel S. Cox, of New York, in the House of Representatives, presented the memorial asking the enfranchisement of the women of the District of Columbia, as follows:

IN THE SENATE, Tuesday, January 25, 1876.

Mr. SARGENT: I present a memorial asking for the establishment of a government in the District of Columbia which shall secure to its women the right to vote. This petition is signed by many eminent ladies of the country: Mrs. Matilda Joslyn Gage, President of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and the following officers of that society: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Henrietta Payne Westbrook, Isabella Beecher Hooker, Mathilde F. Wendt, Ellen Clark Sargent; also by Mary F. Foster, President of the District of Columbia Woman's Franchise Association; Susan A. Edson, M. D.; Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, the distinguished authoress; Mrs. Dr. Caroline B. Winslow; Belva A. Lockwood, a practicing lawyer in this District; Sara Andrews Spencer, and Mrs. A. E. Wood.

These intelligent ladies set forth their petition in language and with facts and arguments which I think should meet the ear of the Senate, and I ask that it be read by the secretary in order that their desires may be known.

The PRESIDENT *pro tempore*: Is there objection? The chair hears none, and the secretary will report the petition. The secretary read:

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:*

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States has affirmed the decision of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia in the cases of Spencer vs. The Board of Registration, and Webster vs. The Judges of Election, and has decided that "by the operation of the first section of the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, women have been advanced to full citizenship and clothed with the capacity to become voters; and further, that this first section of the fourteenth amendment does not execute itself, but requires the supervision of legislative power in the exercise of legislative discretion to give it effect"; and whereas the congress of the United States is the legislative body having exclusive jurisdiction over the District of Columbia, and in enfranchising the colored men and refusing to enfranchise women, white or colored, made an unjust discrimination against sex, and did not give the intelligence and moral power of the citizens of said District a fair opportunity for expression at the polls; and whereas woman suffrage is not an experiment, but has had a fair trial in Wyoming, where women hold office, where they vote, where they have the most orderly society of any of the territories, where the experiment is approved by the executive officers of the United States, by their courts, by their press and by the people generally, and where it has "rescued that territory from a state of comparative lawlessness" and rendered it "one of the most orderly in the Union"; and whereas upon the woman suffrage amendment to Senate bill number 44 of the second session of the forty-third congress, votes were recorded in favor of woman suffrage by the two senators from Indiana, the two from Florida, the two from Michigan, the two from Rhode Island,



one from Kansas, one from Louisiana, one from Massachusetts, one from Minnesota, one from Nebraska, one from Nevada, one from Oregon, one from South Carolina, one from Texas, and one from Wisconsin; and whereas a fair trial of equal suffrage for men and women in the District of Columbia, under the immediate supervision of congress, would demonstrate to the people of the whole country that justice to women is policy for men; and whereas the women of the United States are governed without their own consent, are denied trial by a jury of their peers, are taxed without representation, and are subject to manifold wrongs resulting from unjust and arbitrary exercise of power over an unrepresented class; and whereas in this centennial year of the republic the spirit of 1776 is breathing its influence upon the people, melting away prejudices and animosities and infusing into our national councils a finer sense of justice and a clearer perception of individual rights; therefore,

We pray your honorable body to establish a government for the District of Columbia which shall secure to its women the right to vote.

Mr. SARGEANT: Even if this document were not accompanied by the signatures of eminent ladies known throughout the land for their virtues, intelligence and high character, the considerations which it presents would be worthy of the attention of the senate. I have no doubt that the great movement of which this is a part will prevail. It is working its progress day by day throughout the country. It is making itself felt both in social and political life. The petitioners here well say that there has been a successful experiment of the exercise of female suffrage in one of our territories; that a territory has been redeemed from lawlessness; that the judges, the press, the people generally of Wyoming approve the results of this great experiment. I know of no better place than the capital of a nation where a more decisive trial can be made, if such is needed, to establish the expediency of woman suffrage. As to its justice, who shall deny it? I ask, for the purpose of due consideration, that this petition be referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia, so that in preparing any scheme for the government of the District which is likely to come before this congress, due weight may be given to the considerations presented.

The PRESIDENT *pro tempore*: The petition will be referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Friday, March 31, 1876.

Mr. COX: Mr. Speaker, I am requested to present a memorial, asking for a form of government in the District of Columbia which shall secure to its women the right to vote; and I ask the grace and favor to have this memorial printed in the *Record*.

Mr. BANKS: Mr. Speaker, I beg the privilege of saying a few words in favor of the request made by the gentleman from New York who presents this memorial. It is a hundred years this day since Mrs. Abigail Adams, of Massachusetts, wrote to her husband, John Adams, then a member of the continental convention, entreating him to give to women the power to protect their own rights and predicting a general revolution if justice was denied them. Mrs. Adams was one of the noblest women of that period, distinguished by heroism and patriotism never surpassed in any age. She was wife of the second and mother of the sixth president of the United States, and her beneficent influence was felt in political as well as in social circles. It was perhaps the first demand for the recognition of the rights of her sex made in this country, and is one of the centennial incidents that should be remembered. It came from a good quarter. This memorial represents half a million of American women. They ask for the organization of a government in the District of Columbia that will recognize their political rights. I voted some years ago to give women the right to vote in this District, and recalling the course of its government I think it would have done no harm if they had enjoyed political rights.

Mr. KASSON: I suggest that the memorial be printed without the names.

Mr. COX: There are no names appended except those of the officers of the National Woman Suffrage Association; and I hope they will be printed with the memorial.

Mr. HENDEE: I trust the gentleman will allow this petition to be referred to the committee of which I am a member: the Committee for the District of Columbia. There being no objection, the memorial was read and referred to the Committee for the District of Columbia, and ordered to be printed in the *Record*.

At the close of the convention a hearing was granted to the ladies before the committees of the Senate and House of Representatives on the District of Columbia.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, of New York, said: *Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Committee:* On behalf of the National Association, which has its officers in every State and territory of the Union, and which numbers many thousands of members, and on behalf of the Woman's Franchise Association of the District of Columbia, we appear before you, asking that the right of suffrage be secured equally to the men and women of this District. Art. 1, sec. 8, clauses 17, 18 of the Constitution of the United States reads:

Congress shall have power to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such district as may become the seat of government of the United States, \* \* \* \* \* to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers.

Congress is therefore constitutionally the special guardian of the rights of the people of the District of Columbia. It possesses peculiar rights, peculiar duties, peculiar powers in regard to this District. At the present time the men and women are alike disfranchised. Our memorial asks that in forming a new government they may be alike enfranchised. It is often said as an argument against granting suffrage to women that they do not wish to vote; do not ask for the ballot. This association, numbering thousands in the United States, through its representatives, now asks you, in this memorial, for suffrage in this District. Petitions from every State in the Union have been sent to your honorable body. One of these, signed by thirty-five thousand women, was sent to congress in one large roll; but what is the value of a petition signed by even a million of an unrepresented class?

The city papers of the national capital, once bitterly opposed to all effort in this direction, now fully recognize the dignity of the demand, and have ceased to oppose it. One of these said, editorially, to-day, that the vast audiences assembling at our conventions, the large majority being women, and evidently in sympathy with the movement, were proof of the great interest women take in this subject, though many are too timid to openly make the demand. The woman's temperance movement began two years ago as a crusade of prayer and song, and the women engaged therein have now resolved themselves into a national organization, whose second convention, held in October last, numbering delegates from twenty-two States, almost unanimously passed a resolution demanding the ballot to aid them in their temperance work. We who make our constant demand for suffrage, knew that these women were in process of education, and would soon be forced to ask for the key to all reform.

The ballot says yes or no to all questions. Without it women are prohibited from practically expressing their opinions. The very fact that the women of this District make this demand of you more urgently than men proves that they desire it more and see its uses better. The men of this District who quietly remain disfranchised have the spirit of slaves, and if asking for the ballot is any proof of fitness for its use, then the

women who do ask for it here prove themselves in this respect superior to men, more alive to the interests of this District, and better fitted to administer the government. Women who are not interested in questions of reform would soon become so if they possessed the ballot. They are now in the condition we were when we heard of the famine in Persia two years ago. Our sympathies were aroused for a brief while, but Persia was far away, we could render it no certain aid, and the sufferings of the people soon passed from our minds.

Our approaching centennial celebration is to commemorate the Declaration of Independence, which was based on individual rights. For ages it was a question where the governing power rightfully belonged; patriarch, priest, and monarch each claimed it by divine right. Our country declared it vested in the individual. Not only was this clearly stated in the Declaration of Independence, but the same ground was maintained in the secret proceedings upon framing the constitution. The old confederation was abandoned because it did not secure the independence and safety of the people. It has recently been asked in congressional debates, "What is the grand idea of the centennial?" The answer was, "It is the illustration in spirit and truth of the principles of the Declaration of Independence and of the constitution."

These principles are:

*First*—The natural rights of each individual.

*Second*—The exact equality of these rights.

*Third*—That rights not delegated are retained by the individual.

*Fourth*—That no person shall exercise the rights of others without delegated authority.

*Fifth*—That non-use of rights does not destroy them.

Rights did not come new-born into the world with the revolution. Our fathers were men of middle age before they understood their own rights, but when they did they compelled the recognition of the world, and now the nations of the earth are this year invited to join you in the celebration of these principles of free government.

We have special reasons for asking you to secure suffrage to the women of the District of Columbia. Woman Suffrage has been tried in Wyoming, and ample testimony of its beneficial results has been furnished, but it is a far distant territory, and those not especially interested will not examine the evidence. It has been tried in Utah, but with great opposition on account of the peculiar religious belief and customs of the people. But the District of Columbia is directly under the eye of congress. It is the capital of the nation, and three-fifths of the property of the District belongs to the United States. The people of the whole

country would therefore be interested in observing the practical workings of this system on national soil. With 7,316 more women than men in this District, we call your special attention to the inconsistency and injustice of granting suffrage to a minority and withholding it from a majority, as you have done in the past. If the District is your special ward, then women, being in the majority here, have peculiar claims upon you for a consideration of their rights. The freedom of this country is only half won. The women of to-day have less freedom than our fathers of the revolution, for they were permitted local self-government, while women have no share in local, State, or general government.

Our memorial calls your attention to the Pembina debate in 1874, when senators from eighteen States recognized the right of self-government as inhering in women. One senator said: "I believe women never will enjoy equality with men in taking care of themselves until they have the right to vote." Another, "that the question was being considered by a large portion of the people of the United States." When the discussion was concluded and the vote taken, twenty-two senators recorded their votes for woman suffrage in that distant territory. During the debate several senators publicly declared their intention of voting for woman suffrage in the District of Columbia whenever the opportunity was presented. These senators recognize the fact that the ballot is not only a right, but that it is opportunity for woman; that it is the one means of helping her to help herself. In asking you to secure the ballot to the women of the District we do not ask you to create a right. That is beyond your power. We ask you to protect them in the exercise of a right.

Mrs. SARA ANDREWS SPENCER, Secretary of the District of Columbia Woman's Franchise Association, said: For no legal or political right I have ever claimed in the District of Columbia do I ask a stronger, clearer charter than the Declaration of Independence, and the constitution of the United States as it stood before the fourteenth amendment had entered the minds of men. A judicial decision, rendered by nine men, upon the rights of ten millions of women of this republic, need not, does not, change the convictions of one woman in regard to her own heaven-endowed rights, duties, and responsibilities.

We have resorted to all the measures dictated by those who rule over us for securing the freedom to exercise rights which are sacredly our own, rights which are ours by Divine inheritance, and which men can neither



confer nor take away. We are not only daughters of our Father in heaven, and joint heirs with you there; but we are daughters of this republic, and joint heirs with you here. Every act of legislation which has been placed as a bar in our way as citizens has been an act of injustice, and every expedient to which we have resorted for securing recognition of citizenship has been with protest against the existence of these acts of unauthorized power.

When any man expresses doubt to me as to the use that I or any other woman might make of the ballot if we had it, my answer is, What is that to you? If you have for years defrauded me of my rightful inheritance, and then, as a stroke of policy, or from late conviction, concluded to restore to me my own domain, must I ask you whether I may make of it a garden of flowers, or a field of wheat, or a pasture for kine? If I choose I may counsel with you. If experience has given you wisdom, even of this world, in managing your property and mine, I should be wise to learn from you. But injustice is not wont to yield wisdom; grapes do not grow of thorns, nor figs of thistles.

Born of the unjust and cruel subjection of woman to man, we have in these United States a harvest of 116,000 paupers, 36,000 criminals, and such a mighty host of blind, deaf and dumb, idiotic, insane, feeble-minded, and children with tendencies to crime, as almost to lead one to hope for the extinction of the human race rather than for its perpetuation after its own kind. The wisdom of man licenses the dram-shop, and then rears station-houses, jails, and gibbets to provide for the victims. In this District we have 135 teachers of public schools and 238 police officers, and the last report shows that public safety demands a police force of 900. We have 31,671 children of school age; 31,671 reasons why I want to vote. We have here 7,000 more children of school age than there are seats in all the public schools, and from the swarm of poor, ignorant, and vagrant children, the lists of criminals and paupers are constantly supplied. To provide for these evils there is an annual expenditure of \$350,000, not including expenses of courts, while for education the annual expenditure is \$280,000.

Will you say that the wives and the mothers, the house and homekeepers of this small territory, have no interest in all these things? If dram-shops are licensed and brothels protected, are not our sons, our brothers, tempted and ruined, our daughters lured from their homes, and lost to earth and heaven? Long and patiently women have borne wrongs too deep to be put into words; wrongs for which men have provided no redress and have found no remedy. When five years ago,

with our social atmosphere poisoned with vices which as women we had no power to remove, men in authority began a series of attempts to fasten upon us by law the huge typical vice of all the ages—the social evil—in a form so degrading to all womanhood that no man, though he were the prince of profligates, would submit to its regulations for a day; then we cried out so that the world heard us. We know the plague is only stayed for a brief while. The hydra-headed monster every now and then lifts a new front, and must be smitten again. Four times in four successive years a little company of women of the District have appeared before committees and compelled the discussion and defeat of bills designed to fasten these measures upon the community under the guise of security for public health and morality. The last annual report of the board of health speaks tenderly of the need of protecting vicious men by these regulations, and says:

The legalization of houses of ill-fame for so humane a purpose, startling as it may be to the moral sense, has many powerful advocates among the thoughtful, wise, and philanthropic of communities.

The report quotes approvingly Dr. Gross, of Philadelphia, who says in behalf of laws to license the social evil:

The prejudices which surround the subject must be swept away, and men must march to the front and discharge their duty, however much they may be reproached and abused by the ignorant and foolish.

Aside from the higher ground of our inherent right to self-government, we declare here and now that the women of this District are not safe without the ballot. Our firesides, our liberties are in constant peril, while men who have no concern for our welfare may legislate against our dearest interests. If we would inaugurate any measure of protection for our own sex, we are bound hand and foot by man. The law is his, the treasury is his, the power is his, and he need not even hear our cry, except at his good will and pleasure.

If man had legislated justly and wisely for the interests of this District, if its financial condition was sound, its social and moral atmosphere pure, and all was well, there would be some show of reason in your refusing to hazard a new experiment, even though we could demonstrate it to be founded upon eternal justice. But the history of the successive forms of

government in the District of Columbia is a history of failures. So will it continue to be until you adopt a plan founded upon truly republican principles. When, a few years ago, you put the ballot into the hands of the swarming masses of freedmen who had gathered here with the ignorance and vices of slaves, and refused to enfranchise women, white or colored, you gave this District no fair trial of a republican form of government. You did not even protect the interests of the colored race. You admitted that the colored man was not really free until he held the ballot in his hand, and therefore you enfranchised him and left the woman twice his slave. I know colored women in Washington far the superiors, intellectually and morally, of the masses of men, who declare that they now endure wrongs and abuses unknown in slavery.

There is not an interest in this District that is not as vital to me as to any man in Washington—that is not more vital to me than it can be to any member of this honorable body. As a citizen, seeking the welfare of this community, as a wife and mother desiring the safety of my children, which of you can claim a deeper interest than I in questions of markets, taxes, finance, banks, railroads, highways, the public debt and interest thereon, boards of health, sanitary and police regulations, station-houses (wherein I find many a wreck of womanhood, ruined in her youth and beauty), schools, asylums, and charities? Why deny me a voice in any or all of these? Do you doubt that I would use the ballot in the interests of order, retrenchment, and reform? Do you deny a right of mine, which you will admit I know how to prize, because there are women who do not appreciate its value, do not demand it, possibly might not (any better than men) know how to use it? What a mockery of justice! What a flagrant violation of individual rights! I would cry out against it if no other woman in the land felt the wrong. But among the 10,000,000 of mothers of 14,000,000 of children in this country, vast numbers of thoughtful, philanthropic, and pure women have come to see this truth, and desire to express their mother love and home love at the ballot-box!

Frederick Douglass once said: "Whole nations have been bathed in blood to establish the simplest possible propositions. For instance, that a man's head is *his* head; his body is *his* body; his feet are *his* feet, and if he chooses to run away with them it is nobody's business"; and all honor to him, he added, "Now, these propositions have been established for the colored man. Why does not man establish them for woman, his wife, his mother?"

Determined to surround the colored man with every possible guarantee of protection in the possession of his freedom, congress stopped the

wheels of legislation, and made the whole country wait, while day after day and night after night his friends fought inch by inch the ground for the civil rights bill. During that debate Senator Frelinghuysen said:

When I took the oath as senator, I took the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, which declares equality for all: and in advocating this bill I am doing my sworn duty in endeavoring to secure equal rights for every citizen of the United States.

But where slept his "sworn duty" when he recorded his vote in the Senate against woman suffrage? With marvelous inconsistency, as a reason for opposing woman suffrage, during the Pembina debate, May 27, 1874, Senator Merrimon said of the relation of women to the Constitution of the United States:

They have sustained it under all circumstances with their love, their hands, and their hearts; with their smiles and their tears they have educated their children to live for it, and to die for it.

Therefore the honorable gentleman denies them the right to vote.

Upon the civil rights bill, Senator Howe said:

I do not know but what the passage of this bill will break up the common schools. I admit that I have some fear on that point. Every step of this terrible march has been met with a threat; but let justice be done although the common schools and the heavens do fall.

In reply to the point made by Mr. Stockton that the people of the United States would not accept this bill, Mr. Howe said:

I would not turn back if I knew that of the forty million people of the United States not one million would sustain it. If this generation does not accept it there is a generation to come that will accept it. What does this provide? Not that the black man should be helped on his way; not at all; but only that, as he staggers along, he shall not be retarded, shall not be tripped up and made to fall.

Brave and tender words these for our black brother; but see how prone men are to invert truth, justice, and mercy in dealing with women. During the Pembina debate, Senator Merrimon said:

I know there are a few women in the country who complain; but those who complain, compared with those who do not complain, are as one to a million.

As a literal fact, the women who have complained, have petitioned, sued, reasoned, plead, have knocked at the doors of your legislatures and courts, are as one to fifty in this country, as we who watch the record know; and even that is a small proportion of those who would, but dare not; who are bound hand and foot, and will be bound until you make them free. But if no others feel the wrong but those who have dared to complain; if the poor, the ignorant, the betrayed, the ruined do not understand the question, and the well-fed and comfortable "have all the rights they want," do you give that for answer to our just demand? What do we ask? Not that poor woman "shall be helped on her way"—

not at all; but only that, "as she staggers along, she shall not be retarded, shall not be tripped up, shall not be made to fall."

And here on this national soil, for the women of this District of Columbia—your peculiar wards—I ask you to try the experiment of exact, even-handed justice; to give us a voice in the laws under which we must live, by which we are tried, judged and condemned. I ask it for myself, that I may the better help other women. I ask it for other women, that they may the better help themselves. As you hope for justice and mercy in your hour of need, may you hear and answer.

Rev. Olympia Brown, of Connecticut; Belva A. Lockwood, of Washington; and Phoebe Couzins, of St. Louis, also addressed the committees; enforcing their arguments with wit, humor, pathos and eloquence.

On her way home from Washington, Mrs. Gage stopped in Philadelphia to secure rooms for the National Association during the centennial summer, and decided upon Carpenter Hall, in case it could be obtained. This hall belongs to the Carpenter Company of Philadelphia, perhaps the oldest existing association of that city, it having maintained an uninterrupted organization from the year 1724, about forty years after the establishment of the colonial government by William Penn, and was much in use during the early days of the revolution. The doors of the State House, where the continental congress intended to meet, were found closed against it; but the Carpenter Company, numbering many eminent patriots, offered its hall for their use; and here met the first continental congress, September 5, 1774. John Adams, describing its opening ceremonies, said:

Here was a scene worthy of the painter's art. Washington was kneeling there, and Randolph, Rutledge, Lee and Jay; and by their side there stood, bowed in reverence, the Puritan patriots of New England, who at that moment had reason to believe that an armed soldiery was wasting their humble households. It was believed that Boston had been bombarded and destroyed.<sup>[3]</sup> They prayed fervently for America, for the congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the



town of Boston. Who can realize the emotions with which in that hour of danger they turned imploringly to heaven for Divine interposition. It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I saw the tears gush into the eyes of old, gray, pacific Quakers of Philadelphia.

The action of this congress, which sat but seven weeks, was momentous in the history of the world. "From the moment of their first debate," said De Tocqueville, "Europe was moved." The convention which in 1781 framed the constitution of the United States, also met in Carpenter Hall in secret session for four months before agreeing upon its provisions. This hall seemed the most appropriate place for establishing the centennial rooms of the National Woman Suffrage Association, but the effort to obtain it proved unavailing<sup>[4]</sup> as will be seen by the following correspondence:

*To the President and Officers of the Carpenter Company of Philadelphia:*

The National Woman Suffrage Association will hold its headquarters in Philadelphia the centennial season of 1876, and desires to secure your historic hall for that purpose. We know your habit and custom of denying its use to all societies, yet we make our request because our objects are in accord with the principles which emanated from within its walls a hundred years ago, and we shall use it in carrying out those principles of liberty and equality upon which our government is based. We design to advertise our headquarters to the world, and old Carpenter Hall, if used by us, would become more widely celebrated as the birth-place of liberty. Our work in it would cause it to be more than ever held in reverence by future ages, and pilgrimages by men and women would be made to it as to another Mecca shrine.

We propose to place a person in charge, with pamphlets, speeches, tracts, etc., and to hold public meetings for the enunciation of our principles and the furtherance of our demands. Hoping you will grant this request,

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE

*President of the National Woman Suffrage Association.*

I am respectfully yours,

Two months afterward, the following reply was received:

HALL, CARPENTER COURT, 322 Chestnut St., }

PHILADELPHIA, April 24, 1876. }

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, *President of the Woman Suffrage Association*:

Your communication asking permission to occupy Carpenter Hall for your convention was duly received, and presented to the company at a stated meeting held the 16th instant, when on motion it was unanimously resolved to postpone the subject indefinitely.

GEORGE WATSON, *Secretary*.

[Extract of minutes].

It was a matter of no moment to those men that women were soon to assemble in Philadelphia, whose love of liberty was as deep, whose patriotism was as pure as that of the fathers who met within its walls in 1774, and whose deliberations had given that hall its historic interest.

In the midst of these preparations the usual May anniversary was held:

CALL FOR THE MAY ANNIVERSARY, 1876.—The National Woman Suffrage Association will hold its Ninth Annual Convention in Masonic Hall, New York, corner of Sixth avenue and Twenty-third street, May 10, 11, 1876.

This convention occurring in the centennial year of the republic, will be a most important one. The underlying principles of government will this year be discussed as never before; both foreigners and citizens will query as to how closely this country has lived up to its own principles. The long-debated question as to the source of the governing power was answered a century ago by the famous Declaration of Independence which shook to the foundation all recognized power and proclaimed the right of the individual as above all forms of government; but while thus declaring itself, it has held the women of the nation accountable to laws they have had no share in making, and taught as their one duty, that doctrine of tyrants, unquestioning obedience. Liberty to-day is, therefore, but the heritage of one-half the people, and the centennial will be but the celebration of the independence of one-half the nation. The men alone of this country live in a republic, the women enter the second hundred years of national life as political slaves.

That no structure is stronger than its weakest point is a law of mechanics that will apply equally to government. In so far as this

government has denied justice to woman, it is weak, and preparing for its own downfall. All the insurrections, rebellions, and martyrdoms of history have grown out of the desire for liberty, and in woman's heart this desire is as strong as in man's. At every vital time in the nation's life, men and women have worked together; everywhere has woman stood by the side of father, brother, husband, son in defense of liberty; without her aid the republic could never have been established; and yet women are still suffering under all the oppressions complained of in 1776; which can only be remedied by securing impartial suffrage to all citizens without distinction of sex.

All persons who believe republican principles should be carried out in spirit and in truth, are invited to be present at the May convention.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, *President.*

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, *Chairman Executive Committee.*

This May anniversary, commencing on the same day with the opening of the centennial exhibition, was marked with more than usual earnestness. As popular thought naturally turned with increasing interest at such an hour to the underlying principles of government, woman's demand for political equality received a new impulse. The famous Smith sisters, of Glastonbury, Connecticut, attended this convention, and were most cordially welcomed. The officers<sup>[5]</sup> for the centennial year were chosen and a campaign<sup>[6]</sup> and congressional<sup>[7]</sup> committee appointed to take charge of affairs at Philadelphia and Washington. The resolutions show the general drift of the discussions:<sup>[8]</sup>

WHEREAS, The right of self-government inheres in the individual before governments are founded, constitutions framed, or courts created; and  
WHEREAS, Governments exist to protect the people in the enjoyment of their natural rights, and when any government becomes destructive of this end, it is the right of the people to resist and abolish it; and

WHEREAS, The women of the United States, for one hundred years, have been denied the exercise of their natural right of self-government and self-protection; therefore,

*Resolved*, That it is the natural right and most sacred duty of the women of these United States to rebel against the injustice, usurpation and tyranny of our present government.

WHEREAS, The men of 1776 rebelled against a government which did not claim to be of the people, but, on the contrary, upheld the "divine right of kings"; and

WHEREAS, The women of this nation to-day, under a government which claims to be based upon individual rights, to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people," in an infinitely greater degree are suffering all the wrongs which led to the war of the revolution; and WHEREAS, The oppression is all the more keenly felt because our masters, instead of dwelling in a foreign land, are our husbands, our fathers, our brothers and our sons; therefore,

*Resolved*, That the women of this nation, in 1876, have greater cause for discontent, rebellion and revolution, than the men of 1776.

*Resolved*, That with Abigail Adams, in 1776, we believe that "the passion for liberty cannot be strong in the breasts of those who are accustomed to deprive their fellow-creatures of liberty"; that, as Abigail Adams predicted, "We are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by laws in which we have no voice or representation."

WHEREAS, We believe in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of the United States, and believe a true republic is the best form of government in the world; and

WHEREAS, This government is false to its underlying principles in denying to women the only means of self-government, the ballot; and

WHEREAS, One-half of the citizens of this nation, after a century of boasted liberty, are still political slaves; therefore,

*Resolved*, That we protest against calling the present centennial celebration a celebration of the independence of the people of the United States.

*Resolved*, That we meet in our respective towns and districts on the Fourth of July, 1876, and declare ourselves no longer bound to obey laws in whose making we have had no voice, and, in presence of the assembled nations of the world gathered on this soil to celebrate our nation's centennial, demand justice for the women of this land.

WHEREAS, The men of this nation have established for men of all nations, races and color, on this soil, at the cost of countless lives, the proposition (in the language of Frederick Douglass) "that a man's head is his head, his body is his body, his feet are his feet"; therefore,

*Resolved*, That justice, equity and chivalry demand that man at once establish for his wife and mother the corresponding proposition, that a woman's head is her head, her body is her body, her feet are her feet, and that all ownership and mastery over her person, property, conscience, and liberty of speech and action, are in violation of the supreme law of the land.

*Resolved*, That we rejoice in the resistance of Julia and Abby Smith, Abby Kelly Foster, Sarah E. Wall and many more resolute women in various parts of the country, to taxation without representation.

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the National Woman Suffrage Association are hereby tendered to Hon. A. A. Sargent, of California, for his earnest words in behalf of woman suffrage on the floor of the United States Senate, Jan. 25, 1876; and to Hon. N. P. Banks, of Massachusetts, for his appeal in behalf of the centennial woman suffrage memorial in the United States House of Representatives, March 31, 1876.

*Resolved*, That the repeated attempts to license the social evil are a practical confession of the weakness, profligacy and general unfitness of men to legislate for women, and should be regarded with alarm as a proof that their firesides and liberties are in constant peril while men alone make and execute the laws of this country.

WHEREAS, There are 7,000 more women than men in the District of Columbia, and no form of government for said District has allowed women any voice in making the laws under which they live; therefore,

*Resolved*, That in this centennial year the congress of the United States having exclusive jurisdiction over that territory should establish a truly republican form of government by granting equal suffrage to the men and women of the District of Columbia.

Immediately at the close of the May convention Mrs. Gage again went to Philadelphia to complete the arrangements in regard to the centennial headquarters. Large and convenient rooms were soon found upon Arch street, terms agreed upon and a lease drawn, when it transpired that a husband's consent and signature must be obtained, although the property was owned



by a woman, as by the laws of Pennsylvania a married woman's property is under her husband's control. Although arrangements for this room had been made with the real owner, the terms being perfectly satisfactory to her, the husband refused his ratification, tearing up the lease, with abuse of the women who claimed control of their own property, and a general defiance of all women who dared work for the enfranchisement of their sex. Thus again were women refused rooms in Philadelphia in which to enter their protest against the tyranny of this republic, and for the same reason—they were slaves. Had the patriots of the revolutionary period asked rooms of King George, in which to foster their treason to his government, the refusal could have been no more positive than in these cases.

The quarters finally obtained were very desirable; fine large parlors on the first floor, on Chestnut street, at the fashionable west end, directly opposite the Young Men's Christian Association. The other members of the committee being married ladies, Miss Anthony, as a *feme sole*, was alone held capable of making a contract, and was therefore obliged to assume the pecuniary responsibility of the rooms. Thus it is ever the married women who are more especially classed with lunatics, idiots and criminals, and held incapable of managing their own business. It has always been part of the code of slavery, that the slave had no right to property; all his earnings and gifts belonging by law, to the master. Married women come under this same civil code. The following letter was extensively circulated and published in all the leading journals:

NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE PARLORS, }

1,431 Chestnut Street, PHILADELPHIA, PA. }

The National Woman Suffrage Association has established its centennial headquarters in Philadelphia, at 1,431 Chestnut street. The parlors, in

charge of the officers of the association, are devoted to the special work of the year, pertaining to the centennial celebration and the political party conventions; also to calls, receptions, conversazioni, etc. On the table a centennial autograph book receives the names of visitors. Friends at a distance, both men and women, who cannot call, are invited to send their names, with date and residence, accompanied by a short expressive sentiment and a contribution toward expenses. In the rooms are books, papers, reports and decisions, speeches, tracts, and photographs of distinguished women; also mottoes and pictures expressive of woman's condition. In addition to the parlor gatherings, meetings and conventions will be held during the season in various halls and churches throughout the city.

On July Fourth, while the men of this nation and the world are rejoicing that "All men are free and equal" in the United States, a declaration of rights for women will be issued from these headquarters, and a protest against calling this centennial a celebration of the independence of the people, while one-half are still political slaves.

Let the women of the whole land, on that day, in meetings, in parlors, in kitchens, wherever they may be, unite with us in this declaration and protest. And, immediately thereafter, send full reports, in manuscript or print, of their resolutions, speeches and action, for record in our centennial book, that the world may see that the women of 1876 know and feel their political degradation no less than did the men of 1776.

The first woman's rights convention the world ever knew, called by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, met at Seneca Falls, N. Y., July 19, 20, 1848. In commemoration of the twenty-eighth anniversary of that event, the National Woman Suffrage Association will hold in — hall, Philadelphia, July 19, 20, of the present year, a grand mass convention, in which eminent reformers from the new and old world will take part. Friends are especially invited to be present on this historic occasion.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, *Chairman Executive Committee.*

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, *Corresponding Secretary.*

From these headquarters numberless documents were issued during the month of June. As the presidential nominating conventions were soon to meet, letters were addressed to both the Republican and Democratic parties, urging them to recognize the political rights of women in their platforms.