

## **WOMEN VOTING! HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?**

1.

**NARRATOR:** In the summer and fall of 1917 nearly 100 women were arrested and confined to the Occoquan Workhouse, a prison in Fairfax County, Virginia. Their treatment was inhumane and deplorable.

**SPEAKER 1:** One woman was in solitary confinement for 11 days receiving only bread and water.

**SPEAKER 2:** Another woman was handcuffed for an entire night and on another occasion was manacled to the bars.

**SPEAKER 3:** Some women were threatened with strait jackets and fed rancid soup with worms.

**SPEAKER 4:** Women who were fasting were tied down and their nostrils held shut till they gasped for air and then got food shoved down their throats.

**NARRATOR:** Why were these ladies incarcerated? What was their crime? *Simply, THEY WANTED THE RIGHT TO VOTE!*

Our purpose here today is to refresh your memory...to remind you what pains some women endured to get the vote and who they were. So you will not only be energized to vote in November, but you will treasure the right.

The history of the oppression of women goes back to the beginning of recorded history. The thinking was that women must forever occupy an inferior position because of their inherent frailties, as demonstrated for all time by the Fall of Eve.

**SPEAKER 1:** Women are civilly dead, and like infants, the insane and the infirm, have no rights except through their male relatives. From Commentaries on the English Common Law 1765.

**SPEAKER 2:** From the Young Lady's Book of 1830.

in whatever situation of life a woman is placed from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind, are required of her.

**SPEAKER 3:** From an 1848 Lowell MA newspaper:

"The women folk have just held a convention up in N.Y. and passed a sort of Women's Bill of Rights affirming their right to vote! to become teachers! legislators! lawyers! divines! and do all the sundry the lords do! they should have resolved at the same time it was obligatory for the LORDS...to wash dishes, handle the broom, don stockings, wear trinkets, look beautiful and be fascinating.

**SPEAKER 4:** The slave as a property of the master could be bought and sold and THAT was the only real distinction between a slave and a white woman. Neither could own property; have control and/or guardianship of children; had any right to earnings; could not vote nor handle money;; but both could be beaten.

**NARRATOR:** So who were some of these courageous women who revolutionized human history?



SPEAKER #1

Lucretia Coffin Mott, born and educated in Massachusetts, was a school teacher and a Quaker. Quaker principles as early as the 1600's had encompassed the concept of equality for both man and woman. She was the first American woman to speak at a meeting of men. For over 60 years Mott, a fluent and moving speaker, championed important social reforms, among them equality of women before the laws. As a delegate to the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, she was refused seating because of her sex. Women were declared constitutionally unfit for public or business meetings. But it was there that she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton who was attending the same Convention while on her honeymoon.

## SPEAKER #2

4.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's father was a well-known lawyer and member of the New York legislature. Following the death of his only son, he gave Elizabeth access to his offices and library where she learned legal research and became acutely aware of the inequality of married women under the law. For example, all property of a married woman was subject to disposal <sup>law</sup> of her husband. A wife who left an abusive husband could be charged not only with desertion, but also with theft if she took any property, including her clothing. It was Stanton's idea to organize a Woman's Rights Convention in 1848 and she is called the Mother of the Women's Rights movement.

## SPEAKER #3

Susan Brownell Anthony was born February 15, 1820 in Adams, MA, to Quaker parents. Their religious tenets stressed self-reliance, self-discipline and self-worth. She taught school in New York State where she protested the inequality of pay for male and female teachers and lost her job.

In 1872, Anthony challenged the accepted interpretation of the 14th amendment pointing out that all people born in the United States were citizens, not just white males, thereby no legal privileges could be denied a citizen. She voted in the election that year and was arrested and brought to trial.

The presiding judge opposed women's suffrage and wrote his decision before the trial started. Anthony was not allowed to speak at her trial. The judge ordered the jury to find her guilty and sentenced her to pay a \$100 fine. She refused. One New York newspaper observed, "If it is a mere question of who got the best of it, Miss Anthony is still ahead. She has voted and the American constitution has survived the shock."



**NARRATOR:** Anthony and Stanton met for the first time in 1851 at an Anti-Slavery Lecture at Seneca Falls, N.Y.. Perhaps the meeting went something like this.

**SBA:** It's a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Stanton.

**ECS:** Please call me Elizabeth, Susan. I've been apprised that we might be of like mind and meeting you here has confirmed it.

**SBA:** I tend to agree. I'm not married, but frankly when I learned that you refused to use the word "obey" in your marriage vows, I was greatly impressed.

**ECS:** Yes, I do believe women should be emancipated from these old superstitions that render us unequal to men, and we, of course, know better.

**SBA:** Well, it can only happen once we achieve our political rights. Get the vote! I see that as our first priority.

**ECS:** Oh, no, it's religious bigotry that's holding us back, eliminate that and political rights will follow!

**SBA: How so?**

**ECS: Women's supposed inferiority starts with Eve. Her weakness as shown in Genesis damns our sex eternally!**

**SBA: Overturn religious indoctrination as a first step to equality of the sexes? I don't think so! It makes much more sense to me to fight for political equality first - and work from there!**

**ECS: Sorry, Susan, I am convinced that we must confront these religious ideologies that have socialized women into submission before we can wield political power.**

**SBA: I disagree, Elizabeth, we must get our political rights first, then inequality will melt like dew before the morning sun.**

**ECS: So, can we then work together for Women's Rights?**

**SBA: We have to - we're all we've got!**

**Narrator: Anthony and Stanton worked together for over 50 years despite strong disagreements on strategy. The Federal Suffrage amendment, commonly called the Anthony Amendment was introduced in Congress in 1875 and rejected or ignored every session thereafter till it was finally embraced by President Woodrow Wilson and became law in 1920. By then both Anthony and Stanton were gone but new leaders carried the torch.**



CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT was born in Wisconsin in 1859 but grew up in Iowa where she graduated at the top of her class at Iowa State University. Her work as a law clerk, school teacher and principal resulted in her becoming one of the first women in the nation to be appointed superintendent of schools.

After the death of her husband Leo Chapman, she joined the Iowa Woman Suffrage Assn and rose to become the state organizer. Her writing and speaking engagements established her as a leading suffragist nationally. She addressed Congress on the proposed suffrage amendment and succeeded Susan B. Anthony as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Assn.

Grief stricken after the dual deaths of her second husband George Catt and Susan Anthony, she spent nine years travelling abroad organizing the International Woman Suffrage Alliance promoting equal suffrage rights worldwide.

In 1915 she returned to the United States to resume national leadership and spearhead support for the amendment which became law on August 26, 1920. After that, Catt continued her work by founding the League of Women Voters where she served as honorary president for the rest of her life. ~~We of the League of Women Voters of Flagler County are proud to carry on Carrie Chapman Catt's work - educating both men and women on the issues and encouraging citizens to vote. And we invite all of you who are not members to join us.~~

**NARRATOR:**

We've only skimmed the surface of this revolutionary movement. If you want to learn more, the League has presented the Flagler County Library with a copy of Ken Burns' documentary **NOT FOR OURSELVES ALONE** which covers the story in detail.

Finally, we leave you with the words of the 19th amendment: **"THE RIGHT OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES TO VOTE SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR BY ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX."**

**WE'VE GOT THE VOTE, LET'S USE IT!**

**Narrator & Speaker #4: WE'VE GOT THE VOTE, LET'S USE IT!**

**Narrator & Speakers 3&4: WE'VE GOT THE VOTE, LET'S USE IT!**

**Narrator & Speakers 2,3&4: WE'VE GOT THE VOTE, LET'S USE IT!**

**Narrator&All Speakers: WE'VE GOT THE VOTE, LET'S USE IT!**