

Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was a well-known civil rights activist and prominent leader of the **women's suffrage movement**. She made her first visit to Colorado in 1877 to advocate for women's suffrage before an upcoming referendum. Although she spent little time in Colorado, Susan B. Anthony played a significant role in making it one of the first states to grant women the vote.

Early Life

Susan Brownell Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, in Adams, Massachusetts. As the second child of eight within a Quaker household, she was imbued early on with the importance of social equality. When she was six years old, the family moved from Massachusetts to Battenville, New York. In 1845, they moved to Rochester, New York, to take part in the antislavery movement.

Anthony worked as a teacher in New York for ten years, spending time at various public and private schools. While working as a teacher in Canajoharie, New York, she noticed a severe gender pay gap among the staff and decided to join the teachers' union in 1848.

Women's Rights Movement

When Anthony heard the abolitionist and suffragist [Lucy Stone](#) speak at the 1852 National Women's Rights Convention in Syracuse, she was inspired to become a women's rights activist. Shortly after the convention, she began traveling the country and campaigning for women's rights. In 1854 Anthony addressed the National Women's Rights Convention in Philadelphia.

In 1866 Anthony and her fellow activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the American Equal Rights Association. They sought to establish rights and universal suffrage for all individuals regardless of race or sex. Debates over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments—which would be ratified over the next several years and extend both citizenship and the vote to formerly enslaved black people—spurred women to rally for their right to suffrage. In May 1869, Anthony, Stanton, and others formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) to focus on gaining support for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the vote.

Work in Colorado

When Colorado joined the union in 1876, the Wyoming Territory was the only place in the United States that allowed women to vote. In 1877 Colorado held a referendum to determine whether it would grant women the vote. Susan B. Anthony, along with fellow women's rights leader **Lucy Stone**, jumped on the opportunity to advocate for suffrage and traveled across the country to Colorado ahead of the referendum. They joined other advocates, such as Margaret Campbell and Henry Blackwell, who needed help delivering speeches around the state.

The suffragists traveled across the state, speaking anywhere there were men, from farms to mines and ranches. They frequently encountered hostile crowds filled with men who held strong

opposition to women's suffrage, mostly because they believed women would vote to prohibit alcohol. Rejecting that motivation, Anthony couched the argument for suffrage in terms of equality and full citizenship.

Anthony's speeches and grievances focused on the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. She argued that the Fourteenth Amendment's definition of US citizenship included women; thus, states were depriving women of full citizenship by not allowing them to vote. She then argued that the Fifteenth Amendment included women when it referred to "the right of citizens of the United States to vote." She believed that if Colorado passed women's suffrage, then the rest of the west would follow. Despite her efforts, the 1877 referendum in Colorado was soundly defeated.

Later Years

Sixteen years later, in 1893, Colorado became the first state to enact women's suffrage by popular referendum. In 1895 Anthony, then seventy-five years old, returned to **Boulder** for the first time since 1877 to thank the men of Colorado. She told the women that they should use their right to vote "for the still further advancement of their sex." Anthony firmly believed that once women gained suffrage, they would advance their sex not only economically but in political hierarchies. She advocated that once women achieved the right to vote, then they would contribute to a more equitable society.

Susan B. Anthony died on March 13, 1906, in Rochester, New York, with the attainment of women's suffrage still incomplete across the United States. Nevertheless, she was so sure of ultimate victory that in her last speech in New York, given a month before her death, she famously declared, "failure is impossible." Fourteen years later, her confidence was vindicated when the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 gave women in the United States the vote. The amendment has become widely recognized as the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment" because of her lifelong work on behalf of women's suffrage.

Legacy

Susan B. Anthony remains the most iconic leader of the women's suffrage movement. While the Nineteenth Amendment is the crown jewel of her legacy, she also helped write a voluminous history of the suffrage movement. Throughout her years of activism, she saved newspaper clippings, letters, and other historical artifacts that were valuable to the women's movement. Then, from 1881 to 1922, Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Anthony's biographer Ida Husted Harper wrote *The History of Woman Suffrage*. In more than 5,700 pages, the six-volume set recounted the entire history of the women's suffrage movement, from the very first speeches to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

The United States recognized Anthony as an essential member of history and placed her on all the silver dollar coins minted from 1979 to 1981, and again in 1999, making her the first American woman to appear on a circulating coin. Her Colorado legacy consists of having spurred on the local suffrage movement in 1877, as well as her continued leadership until the

referendum passed in 1893. General Federation of Women's Clubs in Colorado build projects and collect donations for the Susan B. Anthony Museum & House in Rochester, New York.

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