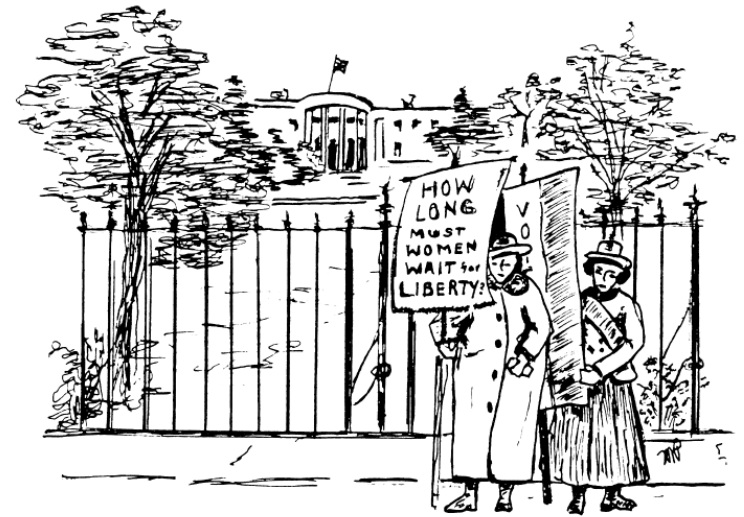


“Remember the Ladies...”



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area

“Remember the Ladies...”

Abigail Adams to John Adams

March 1776

In commemoration of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution in a tribute to the women of our nation whose extraordinary efforts achieved passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 and in particular the suffragists incarcerated in 1917 at the Occoquan Workhouse, Lorton, Virginia.

The League of Women Voters
of the Fairfax Area, Virginia

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Third Impression 2008

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The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, Virginia

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World Book map

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Dedication

As a devoted League member, citizen activist, and private person, Meg was a model of courage, integrity, and determination. Always capable, always ready to lend a hand, she touched each of us in her quiet, unassuming manner. We are richer for having known her.



In Remembrance

Lavinia Steele Voss
1934-2007

She was a dynamic force in her own right
and significantly enriched our lives.

Foreword

A commemoration ceremony was held on Saturday, March 6, 1982 at the District of Columbia's Rehabilitation Center in Lorton, Virginia, the former site of the Women's Division of the Occoquan Workhouse, to dedicate an historic marker recognizing a group of remarkable suffragist women who were confined at the Workhouse in 1917 for picketing the White House for their right to vote. The ceremony concurrently celebrated the first national Women's History Week in the USA.

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area and the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections worked together on the documentation of the mean-spirited treatment received by these women at the Occoquan Workhouse. The History Commissions of the County of Fairfax and the Commonwealth of Virginia were persuaded, over several years time, that these suffrage advocates, the first in the nation to be detained for such activities, should be honored by the placement and dedication of this historic marker at the present site of the D. C. Lorton Youth Center #2. This location was placed on their inventory of historic sites. According to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, this is the first marker in the Commonwealth of Virginia to recognize civil or women's rights.

The year 1987 is not only the Bicentennial of the Constitution, it is the centennial of the first, though unsuccessful, Senate vote on a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would have given women the right to vote. Moreover, 1987 is seventy years removed from the Occoquan ordeal. Perhaps it is this distance of time that

allows true appreciation of the civil disobedience and determination of so many implacable suffragists. They did indeed “cast their lot” the way Henry David Thoreau had urged: “Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper, merely, but your whole influence.”

During 1987, there will take place a worldwide acknowledgment of the bicentennial of the Constitution. As a part of the bicentennial celebration, The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area offers this documentary history of its commemorative plaque. Too many women have been ignored or forgotten in the elapsed years during which there has been a continuing struggle to achieve woman’s equal suffrage status under the law. The vigils and sufferings of these suffragists dramatized the Constitutional inequity inferred against women and contributed to an historic alteration to that document. The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution on August 26, 1920 was their vindication and their victory.

Two Hundred Years of Courage

Pioneers of Woman’s Rights

The breakaway colonies were a cauldron of new ideas. As men struggled to define new laws and institutions for the new nation, many mothers, wives and sisters looked over the shoulders of their menfolk, hopeful that the declaration “that all men are created equal” would, as “a right of human nature,” include them.

“...Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.... If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or Representation,” wrote Abigail Adams to her husband, John, in March of 1776 while he was in Philadelphia as a member of the Continental Congress.

From the earliest days on the new Continent women had begun to push against the conventional barriers placed before their sex and to participate in the intellectual ferment of their new land. Women like Anne Hutchinson of Rhode Island and Shaker leader Ann Lee would challenge established religious beliefs. Connecticut’s Sarah Knight and Philadelphian Mary Goddard pursued successful business careers. Goddard became an established editor and publisher credited with publishing the first signed edition of the “Declaration of Independence.” She may also have been the first woman appointed as a postmaster when in 1775 she took that position in Baltimore.

Mercy Otis Warren, the sister of James Otis, Jr., credited as father of the Fourth Amendment, was an early feminist and writer as was Judith Sargent Murray, who took up the cause of equal educational opportunities for women.

Margaret Brent, an unmarried landowner, businesswoman and attorney-in-fact, was the first woman on record to have asked for voting privileges, according to local historian Nan Netherton. On January 21, 1648, she appeared before the Maryland Assembly as Governor Leonard Calvert's appointed equitrix in charge of paying his considerable debts. She asked for two votes, one for herself as a major landowner and one as attorney for the proprietor, Cecil Calvert Lord Baltimore. She was refused. Lord Baltimore's later petulant behavior prompted her to join a brother and sister in Aquia Creek, Virginia, in 1650, where she would live for the remainder of her life. She was a substantial freeholder and an influential leader in Northern Virginia's early history.

The legal status of women in the early years of the Republic was primarily based on jurist William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the English Common Law* published in 1765. One of the results of this monumental work was to codify biases against women. His assertion that "women are civilly dead, and like infants, the insane and the infirm, have no rights except through their male relatives" was widely disputed in England but generally accepted in this country. However, the exclusion of women from the vote was based even more specifically on the same principle that disallowed males with unsubstantial property from voting. John Adams himself advised in the spring of 1776 that "...men in general, in every society, who are

wholly destitute of property, are also too little acquainted with public affairs to form a right judgment, and too dependent upon other men to have a will of their own."

The Constitution of the United States did not expressly deny women as voters. The text of the document usually spoke of **persons** and only rarely used the generic **he**. It essentially was neutral. The establishment of voting rights and requirements was left to the states. State constitutions generally reflected the prevailing notion that women, like children, slaves and males without property, could not be entrusted with public office or the franchise as they would be unable to exercise their vote independently. They would be coerced by their male relatives, employers and landlords.

At the time of Washington's inauguration in 1789, all the states but New Hampshire had a property qualification of some kind for voting. New Jersey was the only state in the Union that gave women the vote. Adopted in July 1776, New Jersey's Constitution opened its vote to "all inhabitants of this colony of full age who are worth fifty pounds...clear estate." Women in New Jersey voted for thirty-one years until a determined opposition managed passage of a new election law that excluded all women from the polls. Vermont, which entered the Union as the fourteenth state in 1791, recognized universal male suffrage as New Hampshire had done in 1775. Vermont was also the first state to drop the property qualification and tax paying restrictions from the right to vote.

Another factor discouraging attempts to broaden woman's rights was a generally conservative reaction among leaders

of eastern seaboard cities and villages in the period following the Revolution. The high costs of war, immigration and an economic depression tended to dampen attempts to continue broadening and extending democratic concepts and institutions in the more populous areas of the new Nation. Concern was expressed for needed measures to curb what Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts delegate to the first Continental Congress, termed the “evils we experience that flow from the excess of democracy.”

However, democracy was irresistibly on the rise. With the westward expansion of settlements and commerce beyond the Appalachian mountains from 1810 through the 1830s, political and social institutions in these areas were less likely to be influenced by those rooted in the east. Indeed, the independent spirit of frontier women was a necessary part of the westward movement where their strength, both physical and mental, was essential to settle and survive. Although suffrage had not yet been extended to women, many had been working long and patiently for equality under the law.

Two women, Frances Wright and Lucretia Coffin Mott, would ignite the initial spark of the movement for woman’s rights in the United States. Wright, born in Scotland in 1795, provided the role model that would unleash the pent-up frustrations of American women. She was the daughter of a wealthy political radical who championed the writing of Thomas Paine. An upper-class celebrity of sorts she smoothed the way for women to come out of the kitchens of America and onto its public platforms. She was the first woman to speak in public in the United States before mixed audiences of men and women.

Wright first visited the United States in 1818 and returned to this country in 1824 accompanying the Marquis de Lafayette who was making his triumphal tour. She remained in the states lecturing, writing and helping edit Robert Dale Owen's socialist New Harmony Gazette in Indiana. She spent a large part of her fortune on an experimental slave resettlement colony in Tennessee. On the lecture platform she attacked slavery, authoritarian education and religious institutions as well as the insufferable conditions to which women were subjected. She even advocated birth control and the equal treatment of illegitimate children. Wright’s boldness and unconventional appearances on public platforms were an object lesson to the painfully polite women reformers in American society.

Lucretia Mott, born Lucretia Coffin in 1793 of Quaker parents, was a Quaker minister and a school teacher. In 1811 she married James Mott, a fellow teacher and Philadelphian. Quaker principles, as early as the 1600s, had encompassed the concept of equality for both man and woman. Mott was among the first and, for over sixty years, one of the most influential advocates of social reforms. A fluent, moving speaker, she championed temperance, abolition of slavery, the franchise and educational opportunities for freedmen, equality before the law for women, and peace and religious toleration.

At the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London, Mott was one of eight women delegates rebuffed because of their sex. Despite the pleas of abolitionist leader Henry Stanton and a few other sympathetic conferees the women were declared “constitutionally unfit for public or business meetings” and seated in a curtained

gallery. During the convention, Mott became acquainted with the young Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was not a delegate. Newly married, Stanton had accompanied her husband to the meeting and was appalled at the convention's refusal to seat or recognize the prominent delegation of women. This meeting was the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

Mott joined forces with Stanton in calling for the first woman's rights convention in July of 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, where the Stantons were then living. Stanton electrified this first organized effort when she rewrote the Declaration of Independence as a "Declaration of Sentiments" detailing the injustices heaped upon women. The most daring proposition to come out of this Seneca Falls convention was "It is the duty of women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." The measure was narrowly adopted.

The Lyceum Years

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the daughter of a well-known lawyer and member of the New York legislature. Following the death of her only and elder brother, she was given access by her father to his offices and library. He taught her to perform legal research and, through observing his clients, she became acutely aware of the inequality of married women under the law. For example, all property of a married woman was subject to disposal by 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. The death of Stanton's father revealed to her, most indelibly, the changed legal

status of her mother when she regained complete control of her own substantial inheritance.

Her abolitionist cousin, Gerrit Smith, and his daughter, Elizabeth Smith Miller, brought her into anti-slavery circles and introduced her to Henry Brewster Stanton, another leading abolitionist speaker. Her marriage would serve to acquaint her with most of the emerging women of the rights movement.

Within a few years of the Seneca Falls convention, Stanton became friends with one of the most energetic reformers, Susan Brownell Anthony. Miss Anthony was working with the abolition and temperance movements in upper New York state and in 1852, rebuffed in her attempt to speak at a temperance meeting in Albany, she organized the Woman's New York State Temperance Society. Anthony persuaded her new acquaintance, Stanton, to become president. This amazing duo, so different in background, personality and appearance, collaborated for half a century. Anthony was the organizer and the engine that kept Stanton running, although with frequent pauses for childbirth and other family responsibilities. Stanton, an exceptional writer, composed her own and many of Anthony's speeches and articles.

In 1863, Stanton and Anthony organized the Woman's Loyal National League which urged abolition and the extension of the franchise. In a remarkable effort the League had grown to 5,000 members within fifteen months and had collected almost 400,000 signatures on petitions calling for immediate emancipation. The Thirteenth

Amendment, outlawing slavery, was ratified in 1865, but it did not create civil and political equality for all people.

Prior to enactment of the Fourteenth Amendment, citizenship, like suffrage, was considered a state matter. There was no clear definition of national citizenship. Proponents of states' rights held to the prevailing view of the time that national citizenship was dependent upon and derived from a state's definition. State citizenship was preeminent. The final triumph of their viewpoint came in the 1857 Dred Scott decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, which essentially nullified the 1850 Missouri Compromise. The proposed Fourteenth Amendment recognized two separate citizenships, national and state. Although it clarified the citizenship issue, suffrage still remained a matter for state regulation and the proposal's provisions introduced references to male citizens for the first time.

Encouraged by their successful efforts for Negro enfranchisement, Stanton and Anthony launched a strenuous campaign to get the proposed Fourteenth Amendment's provisions changed to include requirements for universal suffrage. In May 1866, they called a woman's rights convention at which Anthony proposed that the movement convert into an American Equal Rights Association which would work for universal suffrage. She proposed also that the new organization include the Anti-Slavery Society, since their goals were now the same. Her proposal was adopted, but not without some reservations as it was known that most of the members of the Anti-Slavery Society believed in concentrating efforts on the civil and political rights of freedmen rather than on suffrage for women. The Society refused to join forces.

The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868 without any of the changes sought by the Association. It was not until a 1934 U.S. Supreme Court decision that married women were accorded national citizenship apart from their husbands'.

Abandoned by the Anti-Slavery Society and desperately needing help, Anthony and Stanton would make unfortunate alliances. Anthony initiated an association with the eccentric, wealthy and financially unscrupulous George Francis Train. He offered financial support to the women and agreed to underwrite their short-lived periodical, *The Revolution*. Anthony and Stanton also cast their lot with Victoria Woodhull, a scandalous radical who had contacts with a number of men of wealth and position. Woodhull, considered a trollop by many of the activist women, was a feminist only because the status of women at that time circumscribed her personal ambitions. She began publication of *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly* in 1870 as a vehicle to seek the presidency of the United States.

It needs to be emphasized that key players in the woman's suffrage movement sharply disagreed on strategy for achieving change. A major severance of the woman's movement occurred immediately after a May 1869 meeting of the Equal Rights Association. Anthony and Stanton were asked to relinquish their official positions in the organization. The majority of the conferees objected to certain positions they had advocated and to their association with Train and his publication. The final blow to Anthony and Stanton was the Association's endorsement of the proposed Fifteenth Amendment. Immediately following adjournment of the Association meeting,

Anthony and Stanton established the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) with Stanton as president. Men could be members but not hold office.

Lucy Stone, an ally of the abolitionist and woman's rights movement since graduation from Oberlin College in 1843, did not subscribe to the maneuvering of Anthony and Stanton. Stone and her followers then organized the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in November 1869. Pointedly, men were not denied official positions in the organization.

There were other differences in the two organizations. The strategy embraced by NWSA was to attain suffrage for women by an amendment to the federal Constitution. The AWSA method sought attainment of suffrage by amendment to state constitutions. As to scope under Stanton's leadership, the NWSA was determined also to reform divorce laws, abolish or protect child labor and guarantee other broad reforms, while the AWSA concentrated most of its efforts on suffrage.

Anthony and Stanton were determined to defeat the proposed Fifteenth Amendment. The Amendment, which was proceeding through the ratification process, provided that no state may "deny the right of suffrage on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." NWSA supporters declared their opposition to the Amendment as no reference was made to sex. In early 1869 they proposed a new Sixteenth Amendment that would clearly establish that no one would be denied the right to vote on account of sex, a qualification that as Anthony argued "is permanent and insurmountable."

Stone's Association argued that this step was premature and should be delayed until the Fifteenth Amendment was law to assure voting rights for freedmen. The Amendment was ratified by the states, as adopted by Congress, in 1870.

Anthony's challenge in 1872 to both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the New York State Constitution's absence of any sexual qualifications for suffrage came to naught. Three years later in **Minor v. Happersett**, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision left open no question and no avenue for reform except either by an amendment to the U.S. Constitution or by an amendment to each state's constitution.

Following that Supreme Court decision in 1875, Anthony, with Stanton's help, drafted the Federal Suffrage Amendment, commonly called the Anthony Amendment. It was introduced in Congress in 1878. The provision that "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" was the exact wording finally added to the Constitution 45 years later as the Nineteenth Amendment. Both women lived well into their eighties but died before seeing the goal of suffrage for women realized.

The Anthony Amendment was introduced at each session of Congress thereafter, but did not reach the Senate floor until 1886. The Senate voted on the proposed amendment for the first time on January 25, 1887. Senators rejected the measure in a two to one vote, and in successive sessions of Congress for over a quarter of a century they refused to conduct another vote on Anthony's proposed amendment.

History tends to overlook the prodigious efforts of many other women in the suffrage movement, particularly those far removed from the centers of the national organizations' offices. For example, one of the wittiest crusaders, Abigail Scott Duniway of the Oregon Territory, entered the fray in early 1870. Born in Illinois in 1834, she was just seventeen when her father moved his family to the Oregon Territory. A year later in 1853, she married Benjamin Duniway, insisting that the word "obey" be left out of the vows. Less than ten years later her husband was badly injured and she had to support their growing family.

Duniway, a lively journalist, speaker and publisher of the weekly, *The New Northwest*, devoted 50 years of her life to championing woman's rights. Often heckled, pelted with eggs or excluded from meetings, she could hold her own. According to Elinor Richey, a man in one of her audiences rose to express his contempt for her suffrage idea. "He said he didn't know why he opposed it, but he had and guessed he always would. Her response was, I've always heard the difference between a man and a mule was that a man could change his mind."

It was Duniway who warned, to no avail, that the suffrage movement should steer clear of the over-zealous temperance movement. Her stand would prompt a sharp rebuke from Anthony eventually. Duniway's suffrage amendment, first introduced in the Oregon Territory in 1872, had been gaining ground. She had organized the Oregon Equal Suffrage Society in 1873 and had achieved a woman's rights law in 1878. At first she welcomed the help of the temperance society but became increasingly aware that the group supported suffrage for women, not as a just

cause, but as a shortcut to prohibition. In 1884, suffrage for women in the Territory was dealt a serious setback by the appearance of Frances E. Willard, a barnstorming speaker for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), who cried, "Vote for suffrage and pave the way to prohibition." Duniway had to spend the next sixteen years rebuilding the Oregon association.

In the early 1900s Duniway had been elected president in the National American Woman Suffrage Association. She persuaded NAWSA to hold its 1905 convention in Portland, Oregon. NAWSA members, unfortunately, elected as president Anna H. Shaw, the WCTU's veteran orator. Following the NAWSA convention, Shaw remained in Oregon to marshal her prohibition followers to work on the woman's suffrage question, which was on the 1906 ballot. The cross-purposes campaign was a disaster and the suffrage referendum was resoundingly defeated. Duniway, commenting on the referendum, said, "Dr. Shaw swamped and wrecked us." It is ironic that, unimpeded by the entanglements of temperance, Duniway was instrumental in achieving suffrage for women in Washington Territory of which Alaska was a part in 1883 and in Idaho in 1896. She was 78 years of age in 1912 when Oregon adopted universal suffrage, bringing the total of full suffrage states to nine.

The suffragists, stunned by the 1887 Senate vote, sought to strengthen their forces. During 1890, they brought back together the two factions, NWSA and AWSA, that had resulted from the 1869 split from the Equal Rights Association; they joined forces as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Their plan was to

concentrate their efforts on the attainment of enough women voters at the state level to force a federal constitutional amendment.

By the turn of the century only four states had enfranchised women. They were: Wyoming Territory, establishing its place in history as the first to grant full suffrage to women in 1869 and incorporating this right in law on admittance to statehood in 1890; Utah Territory in 1870 and in the state Constitution in 1896 where Mormon women extended their equality to the voting booth; Colorado in 1893, and Idaho in 1896. Despite almost two decades of effort, only five more states (all in the West) had passed complete woman's suffrage legislation at the time of Woodrow Wilson's inaugural and the first mass demonstrations by women for the vote.

The Successful Catalysts of Women's Suffrage

A groundswell of social and political reforms ushered in the twentieth century, resulting from urbanization and as a reaction to greedy financial and industrial empire building. Suffrage for women was part of the ripple and younger women would pick up the burdensome effort. Among these were: Jane Addams of Chicago's Hull House fame, a member of the 1912 National American Woman Suffrage Association board and one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union; Alice Stone Blackwell, Lucy Stone's daughter, who in 1890 effected a reconciliation of the NWSA and the AWSA that became the NAWSA of which she was secretary during those years of ferment; Harriot Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Stanton's daughter, who assisted her mother and Miss Anthony in writing their history and in 1907 founded the Equality League of Self-Supporting

Women; Carrie Lane Chapman Catt, Anthony's successor as president of NAWSA and founder of the League of Women Voters; Maud Wood Park, who in 1916 was NAWSA's chief congressional lobbyist and in 1920 became the first president of the National League of Women Voters; Mary Church Terrell, the first black woman graduate of Oberlin College and organizer of the participation in the suffrage march in 1913 of the National Association of Colored Women.

Lucy Burns and Alice Paul must be especially noted among these younger contributors. It was partly due to their efforts of directly confronting the political power of the White House that suffragists would finally gain the vote. Both women were well aware of the physical danger they faced. The American public, impressed with their unusual courage and horrified to learn how they had been treated, was aroused and began to send more demands to elected officials in Washington and state capitols that they pass and ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Historians, for the most part, have overlooked the contributions of Burns and Paul in the final push for adoption of the Amendment.

While both were in their early twenties, they had met in a London police station, incidental to a British suffrage confrontation, while Paul was a student at the London School of Economics. In 1909, they were arrested for confronting the Lord Mayor, imprisoned for 30 days and forcibly fed to break a hunger strike. In Robert Gallagher's 1974 interview with Paul she recalled, "Some people enjoyed getting up in public like that, but I didn't. I did it though. On the other hand, Lucy Burns was a very good speaker... and she was extremely courageous,...a thousand

times more courageous than I was ... Lucy became one of the pillars of our movement.”

Burns and Paul both returned to the United States as veteran suffragists. In 1912 NAWSA convention delegates appointed them to its Congressional Committee in Washington, D.C., with the caveat that they were to raise any funds necessary. Paul was appointed chairman and Burns the vice-chairman. They arrived in Washington early in December 1912, and within three months had successfully raised funds and organized the procession, an idea suggested at the convention. The parade was held on March 3, 1913, the day preceding Wilson’s inaugural, and attracted at least 5,000 women and their supporters carrying suffrage banners as they marched down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to Constitution Hall.

Following the successful parade, Paul decided to organize, in addition to their small committee, the Congressional Union for Woman’s Suffrage to help with lobbying, speech-making, and especially fund raising. NAWSA, during the 1913 summer convention, made bylaw changes that effectively expelled the Congressional Union as an affiliate of the organization.

In early 1914, NAWSA board members suddenly decided to switch strategy and direct its members’ energies and funds from emphasis on adoption of the Anthony Amendment to support of a proposal that would require each state to submit the question of suffrage for women to its electorate on petition by as few as eight per cent of voters. Known as the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment, this proposal was supported at the time by President Wilson. A

perceptible distancing had been taking place between the seasoned suffragists and the newly arrived firebrands, Burns and Paul. Most NAWSA board members considered Paul’s stated intention to campaign against Wilson and his Democratic Party candidates -- to hold the party in power responsible -- counter productive to the decades-long, nonpartisan effort to find allies to fight for woman’s suffrage within both major political parties. Rancor arose, as well, over the Committee’s successful fund raising.

Paul, Burns and Congressional Union members tried to accommodate for a time to NAWSA’s new directions. However, in 1916 there was a complete parting and the women organized as the National Woman’s Party (NWP). The loyal group around Paul felt that, “If we hadn’t continued, there would have been nobody in Washington speaking up for the original [Anthony] amendment.” Alva Smith Vanderbilt Belmont, socialite and activist, withdrew from NAWSA and threw her considerable resources and energies behind the struggling Woman’s Party.

Belmont was dedicated to pressuring the party in power to pass the suffrage amendment. By 1916, both the major political parties had adopted, at long last, a suffrage plank at their conventions. Both party resolutions, however, advocated adoption of woman’s suffrage state by state, as did President Wilson. That year, the NWP sent speakers all over the country campaigning against candidates uncommitted to the Anthony Amendment, particularly those of the Democratic party.

Special efforts were made in the western states where two million women were already voters -- where one fifth of the

Senate, one seventh of the House and one sixth of the electoral college votes potentially could be counted on. Among these NWP speakers was a young woman in her late twenties, Inez Milholland. Although quite ill, she insisted on touring the West. As she began a speech in Los Angeles she collapsed. Legend has it that, as she died ten weeks later, she uttered these last words, "Mr. President how long must women wait for liberty?" Her words became a rallying cry.

President Wilson finally agreed to meet with some of the women from all over the country who brought federal suffrage resolutions with them on January 9, 1917. He was gracious but firm and again declined to change his mind. That same day the NWP women decided to send a "perpetual delegation" to picket the White House, since Wilson had made it clear that no more delegations would be admitted to discuss the matter.

Picketing the White House, Arrest and Imprisonment

Historian Evelyn L. Pugh describes the series of events that started with picketing, the arrests that soon followed, and the conditions of imprisonment.

...On January 10, 1917, a dozen pickets with banners appeared at the gates of the White House. No matter the weather the pickets continued, day after day. Some of the banners asked the President: "How long must women wait for liberty?" Others read: "We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts. For democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a vote in their government." The source for the latter quotation came from the President's war message to

Congress, April 2, 1917. The continuous picketing became embarrassing to the Administration, and after six months of peaceful picketing, marred only by occasional verbal insults from passersby, the arrests began.

On June 26, six women were tried, found guilty on the charge of obstructing traffic, warned by the court of their "unpatriotic, almost treasonable behavior" and sentenced to pay a fine of \$25 or serve three days in jail. Refusing to pay the fine, they became the first women in the country to serve terms of imprisonment for demanding suffrage.

...Other arrests in July did not stop the pickets. The words on the banners increased in defiance as the war escalated between the suffragists and the President.

By the middle of August the banners read: "Kaiser Wilson! Have you forgotten how you sympathized with the poor Germans because they were not self-governed? Twenty million American women are not self governed. Take the Beam out of your own eye!" This banner was the beginning of mob violence against the pickets, for the most part with the police standing by. Some of the attackers were uniformed servicemen. Banners were destroyed, pickets dragged along the sidewalk, sashes torn off. One woman had her blouse torn from her body. The headquarters of the National Woman's Party, then opposite the White House, was attacked and police watched while on one occasion three sailors brought a ladder, climbed to a balcony, tore down banners as well as the flag. A bullet was even fired through one of the plate glass windows.



The Occoquan Workhouse Women's Dormitory

The pickets continued to be arrested during August, September, October and November. Charged with unlawful assembly, sentences ranged from 30, to 60, to 90 days and in some instances six months. Some were sent to the District of Columbia's jail but the majority [sic] were sent to Occoquan Workhouse.¹ Forty [sic] were sent to Occoquan on a single day in November.² While it is impossible to say precisely how many served at Occoquan, the best estimates indicate anywhere from a low of about 70 to a high of nearly 100. Some remained for only a few

1. Records indicate the pickets were sent to the D.C. Jail or the Occoquan Workhouse. The records do not indicate if a majority were sent to one location over another.
2. Records indicate on November 14, 1917, 30 women rather than 40, were sent to the Occoquan Workhouse.

days, others for more than 30 days. Arriving at the Occoquan Workhouse, their clothes were taken from them and they were given dresses and aprons of a coarse striped fabric, and shoes with no right or left feet. Ordered to perform prison work, they bitterly resented being forced to sew undergarments for male prisoners. Some refused to work and were placed in solitary confinement. One woman was on bread and water in solitary confinement for eleven days. Another, aged 73, was ordered to scrub floors. Practically all received unduly rough treatment at the hands of the guards. The worst ordeal was the food. The affidavit of a matron who lost her job because she tried to be kind to the prisoners, gave a graphic account of the coarse, half-cooked and contaminated food. It was, however, probably not much worse than that in most prisons of the day. And it must be admitted that Occoquan Workhouse was a facility poorly equipped to handle women who insisted they were not criminals, but political prisoners.

Their demands to be treated as political prisoners were refused and a number of women, led by Lucy Burns of the Executive Committee of the NWP, resorted to the ultimate weapon -- the hunger strike. Miss Burns had at one point been handcuffed for an entire night and on another occasion was manacled to the bars [sic].³ On the seventh day of the hunger strike she was held down by five guards and forcibly fed....

3. The Occoquan Workhouse did not have cells with bars. Therefore, this must have been in a different facility, such as the D.C. Jail.

According to History Professor Linda Simmons in *Fairfax Chronicles*, published in the quarterly Aug.- Oct. issue:

Clearly, women like Mrs. John Winters Brannan, wife of the president of New York's Bellevue Hospital's board of trustees, could afford the fine. But paying negated the Woman's Party strategy.... Age and regional background made no difference in their treatment. ...The workhouse leveled them, but their experiences made them more determined. Some inmates (such as Doris Stevens) became authors. Celebrated for refusing to wear the blue-checked regulation prison garb, Stevens survived forced feeding to write Jailed For Freedom in which she detailed her Occoquan experiences, such as being held incommunicado, held for two weeks without family visitors, and being allowed to send only one censored letter a month (if the warden approved); having incoming mail censored, eating "sour bread, half cooked vegetables, rancid soup with worms," sleeping under blankets washed once a year, ...of women kept in the men's section, of suffragists threatened with strait jackets and dogs. ...Like reformers before and since, the suffragists demanded status as political prisoners. Rebuffed in that attempt, they resorted to British suffragette's hunger strike technique. Determined not to let the women starve, the workhouse staff resorted to forced feeding. The women were tied down and their nostrils were held shut by a specially designed gadget. They soon gasped for air and got food shoved down their throats. The episodes exhausted them, produced sore noses, bleeding throats, and strengthened their resolve.

...Something had to give; but the women held. Soon the courts turned to a new technique aimed at circumventing

the unpleasantness of forced feeding – shorter sentences. Imagine the frustration the suffragists must have felt at the New York Times headline, "Militants Get 3 Days; Lack Time to Starve."

Public concern for the prisoners' plight began to be asserted. Pugh points out:

*As news of the extreme treatment at Occoquan began to emerge, public indignation mounted for the release of the prisoners. Jeannette Rankin, the only woman in Congress, introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of conditions at Occoquan. The Superintendent was dismissed from his job [sic]⁴ and on a writ of habeas corpus the suffrage prisoners were released late in 1917. On appeal the District Court of Appeals, in the case of **Hunter v. the District of Columbia** (1918), reversed the sentences of all women arrested the previous year, in effect saying that the suffrage pickets had committed no crime demanding the right to vote.....*

Historian Mary Oakey observed that based on knowledge of the treatment of persons arrested during more recent protests, it does not take any great stretch of the imagination to grasp how a largely untrained and unsympathetic group of workhouse employees would have behaved during 1917.

In January 1918, Burns mounted a protest march in New York City. A copy of a clipping from an unknown city

4. Other accounts do not substantiate that the Superintendent was dismissed.

newspaper provided by the daughter of Mrs. L. A. Green, who participated in the march and is noted as the first woman arrested in Washington, tells about the effort. The story is headed, "Seven Punished for Demonstrations at White House, Seek to Convert New York." The story reads, "Carrying the purple, white and gold banners they had when they picketed the White House in Washington, seven women, all of whom have been punished with jail sentences began to picket Fifth Avenue today in the interest of the Federal Suffrage Amendment 'We want to show the people of New York just what picket duty means,' said Miss Lucy Burns, who served a sixty-day sentence in the Occoquan workhouse. Then she shouldered her banner and began to walk her 'beat' in Fifth Avenue...."

The Final Stretch

Later in January 1918, the House of the 65th Congress passed the woman suffrage amendment 274 to 136. In October the Senate defeated the amendment by two votes; in 1919, another vote brought it one vote short of passage. Finally in May 1919, the House of the 66th Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment 304 to 90 and on June 4, the Senate passed it 66 to 30. The final battles took place during the ratification process. The crusaders had to win in thirty-six legislatures; opponents could defeat it in just thirteen.

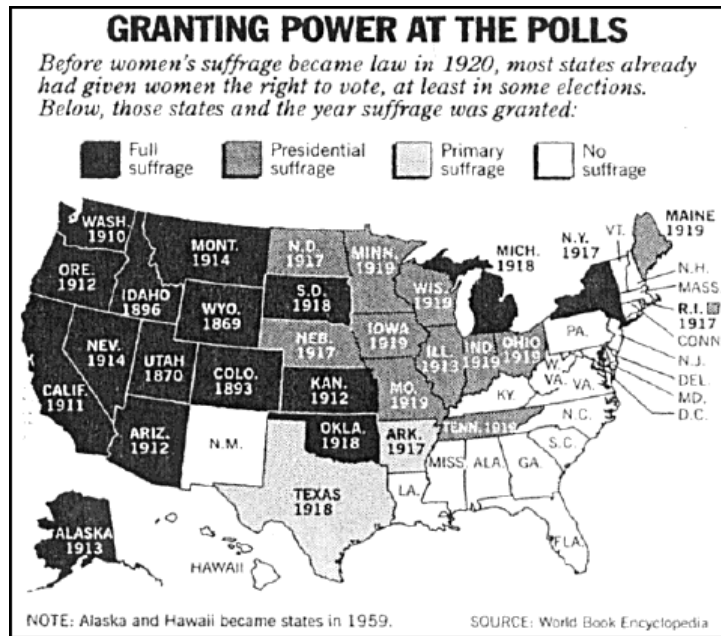
At the 49th Convention of NAWSA held in December 1917, President Carrie Chapman Catt outlined a plan for uniting enfranchised women. By 1919, Leagues of Women Voters had formed in the fifteen states that had adopted full suffrage amendments. Catt and Paul would combine their organizations' unequivocal strategies. Letter writing,

lobbying, speech-making and fund-raising intensified. The first ratification came quickly, although by June 1919 most state legislatures were no longer in session. Pleas went out for special ratification sessions. As 1920 arrived, twenty-two states had ratified and, as the one-hundredth anniversary of Susan B. Anthony's birth on February 15th was observed, ten more states joined bringing the total to thirty-two. By March 22, three more had been added, but the magic thirty-sixth was eluding the suffragists. Six states, all in the South, had already rejected ratification and only seven states had not acted, three of these in the deep South. Connecticut and Vermont had strong anti-suffrage governors. Delaware or Tennessee were the only hopeful choices. Tennessee's governor balked at calling a special session. Delaware's legislators became bogged down in an intra-party fight that promised to be long and drawn out, and several states, Ohio being one, were threatened with "recall" movements. In June ratification lost in Delaware.

Late in June, President Wilson, following NAWSA's pleading, wrote Tennessee's governor, Albert H. Roberts, urging a special session and ratification. After 14 months, on August 18, 1920, the Tennessee legislature ratified the Nineteenth Amendment by a single vote, that of 24-year-old Harry Burn, whose mother had written to him that morning, "Hurrah, and vote for suffrage!" When the United States Secretary of State was notified, he issued the Nineteenth Amendment's proclamation immediately before breakfast on August 26, 1920, in order to head off any final obstruction.

As historian Pugh observed in 1982, "It had been 72 years since Seneca Falls. In a poignant footnote to history, there

was one woman alive who had attended that convention and who voted in the 1920 election. The woman suffrage prisoners at Occoquan, by directing increased public attention to the cause, had contributed significantly to that victory. They were, in effect, standing on the shoulders of earlier leaders who had paved the way.”



BY BRAD WYE-THE WASHINGTON POST

Women’s Suffrage by State Prior to 1920

On February 14, 1920, the Chicago Convention was the last for the NAWSA; officially dissolved, the delegates voted to proceed under the banner of the National League of Women Voters with Maud Wood Park as the first president.

A Commemorative Marker

Remembering The Suffragists

Dedication of an historic marker at the site of the Occoquan Workhouse was spearheaded by Joseph T. Flakne, a former member of The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA). Flakne, born at the turn of the century in the Red River Valley in Minnesota, resided in the Occoquan area of Fairfax County, Virginia. In the December 1983 issue of *Ms. Magazine*, Susan G. Butruille states that he “... was 80 years old when he read *Jailed For Freedom* ...and learned of the imprisonment and force-feeding of women during the last years of the suffrage campaign....Flakne received another shock when he learned that women were detained at Occoquan Workhouse, now Lorton Reformatory... He began asking others if they knew about the suffragists’ imprisonment. They didn’t so Flakne decided to do something about what he saw as this blind spot in our history.”

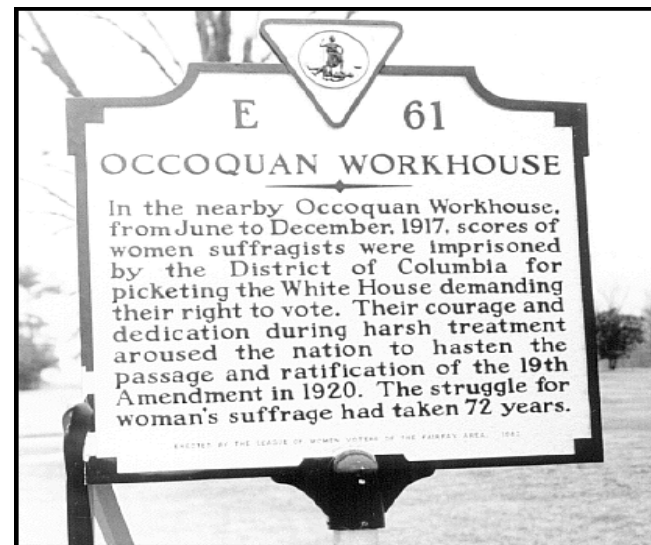
Flakne launched a one-man campaign. He cornered citizens, legislators and public officials. Early efforts, for the most part, were met with polite interest but little action. Flakne joined the Fairfax Area League of Women Voters and a short time later was asked to chair its Occoquan Workhouse Historic Marker Committee. In addition to League members, the Committee was assisted by a seven member advisory board of recognized historians.

By March 1980, the committee had been in touch with Delbert C. Jackson, Director of the District of Columbia’s Department of Corrections, who offered the Department’s support and the invaluable help of the agency’s historian,

Mary Oakey. Her efforts turned up the original handwritten, November 14-18, 1917 journal/log of the workhouse admitting officer, which lists the name of each suffragist, her fine or sentence, or both. An original photograph of the frame buildings where the women were incarcerated also was discovered. The initial steps then were taken to have the event and site officially recognized by the Fairfax County History Commission and the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. A first appeal for a historic marker elicited interest but was turned down by the County History Commission for lack of specific documentation. Additional documentation was gathered over the ensuing months. The National Woman's Party offered financial assistance and help with the wording to be inscribed on the marker.

On August 4, 1981, by Joint Resolution, the 97th Congress designated the week beginning March 7, 1982, the first "Women's History Week." Congress called on the President "...to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such week with appropriate ceremonies and activities." The Resolution provided the local League with an opportunity to make the commemorative marker dedication a part of the new national celebration.

By November 1981, the committee had completed the documentation necessary for submission to the Fairfax County History Commission. The LWVFA made a formal request on December 2, 1981, to the Commission to include the site of the Women's Division of the Occoquan Workhouse on the Commission's Inventory of Historic Sites.



*Occoquan Workhouse
Historic Marker*

The request was unanimously approved. Application was made to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission on December 18, along with suggested wording to be used on the marker. On January 25, 1982, the League was informed that the Landmarks Commission had approved the text that was submitted and that the marker would be ordered by the state agency when its specific location was agreed to by the LWVFA and the State Highway Department. Elizabeth Chittick, president of the NWP, suggested that the word **suffragist** be used, instead of **women**, as more historically accurate in describing those who were confined. With this final change to the text, the marker was ordered in mid-February.

LWVFA, in the meantime, initiated a fund-raising campaign to pay for the marker. Preparations went forward for the dedication ceremony on March 6, 1982, which would coincide with the commencement of National Women's History Week. The D.C. Department of Corrections offered one of its Lorton education facilities for the ceremony which was directly across the highway from the location of the new marker.

The Dedication Ceremony - March 6, 1982

The program opened on a rain-drenched Saturday afternoon with the Presentation of the Colors and the National Anthem by the United States Marine Corps Color Guard and Band from Quantico, Virginia. Following an invocation by the Reverend Frank R. Johnson, LWVFA's president, Leslie Byrne, introduced Mount Vernon District Supervisor Sandra Duckworth and John F. Herry, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

Merilyn Reeves, representing the League of Women Voters of the United States, spoke of the opposition to the Anthony Amendment that was widespread among women in the 1917 - 1919 period. She observed that, "They believed claims that the amendment would topple women's pedestals, end chivalry, and threaten the family," and compared that struggle with the status-quo opposition forces allied today against the Equal Rights Amendment drafted by Paul in 1923.

Pugh followed with remarks on conditions at Occoquan in 1917 and summarized the events leading to passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Her remarks ended with a quote

from Susan B. Anthony, "Failure is impossible and there is an army of women out there."

Imogene Stewart, of the D.C. Commission for Women and a volunteer minister at the Lorton Institution, sang her own lyrics, "Oh, Women," and a current song, "I am Woman" by Helen Reddy. Byrne and Flakne then unveiled the historic marker honoring the suffragists.

California Congressman Norman Y. Mineta delivered the main address. Describing his family's experience of being relocated during World War II because of his Japanese ancestry, he praised the women suffragists of 1917 for advancing the cause of civil rights, not only for women, but for all in the nation, saying, "A victory for one is a victory for all. Together we are not a minority, together we are a majority."

The Luther Jackson Intermediate School Chorus sang the "Woman's Party Song" by Josephine Preston Peabody and Ethel Smyth's "March of the Women," often called "Shoulder to Shoulder." The manuscripts for these historic songs were supplied by the NWP, who also made available an award-winning 55-minute film, "How We Got The Vote," narrated by television personality, Jean Stapleton.

The Occoquan Regional Park Story Boards

Adjacent to the Lorton Reformatory complex, the Occoquan Regional Park was dedicated May 13, 1983. The park, about 200 acres of woods, picnic areas and playing fields along the Occoquan River on Fairfax County's southern boundary, is operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

The original outdoor story board with text by Dr. Pugh telling of the events of 1917 at the Occoquan Workhouse and a photo of the Workhouse complex is being replaced by new wayside displays. The first, designated **Voices for Votes**, briefly traces women's rights from Abigail Adams in 1776 to ratification of the Anthony (suffrage) Amendment in 1920. The second, **Jailed for Freedom**, retells the suffragists' story at the Occoquan Workhouse and the D.C. Jail in 1917. It has a large photo of the Workhouse complex, plus smaller photos, and shows the jailhouse pin designed by Alice Paul and given to those suffragists who chose to be confined for their cause. The third display, **The March Continues**, briefly covers 1920 with the formation of the League of Women Voters and the continuing saga of women's push for equal rights. It notes that concerted efforts to pass Alice Paul's Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first introduced in Congress in 1923, is ongoing and finally asks "what next?"

Endnotes

Dramatic changes have occurred since the League of Women Voters dedication of the historic roadside marker in 1982 and initial publication of *Remember the Ladies...* five years later. Suffragist authority Dr. Evelyn L. Pugh died in 1987 at age 57. The Fairfax League lost a devoted member and prime motivator behind erecting the historical marker, Joseph T. Flakne (1900-1999). Change continues with the closing of the D.C. Department of Corrections Lorton facilities by the end of 2001.

A purchase price of \$4,230,000 was negotiated between the federal government and Fairfax County. In July 2002 two thousand three hundred twenty-four acres of prime land in

the southern part of the county was transferred. About one hundred sixteen additional acres were granted at no cost for a high school and a middle school, as well as several hundred acres west of Rte. 123 for a new water treatment plant. Fairfax County has been working with consultants and the community to define options for "adaptive reuse" of the property in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan Amendment of 1999. The property has been renamed Laurel Hill in honor of revolutionary war patriot William Lindsay's home located there.

The historic suffrage roadside marker was removed for safe storage by Fairfax County Water Authority and resited at the entrance gate to their Griffith Water Treatment Plant on newly-widened Ox Road ((Rte.123). Rededication ceremonies took place on July 15, 2006. A five-foot bench was added near the marker. The bench is inscribed to the memory of dedicated League of Women Voters members Dottie Ganahl, Janet Hays, Carol Steere, Lavinia Voss and Virginia Young. On July 27, 2008, Turning Point Plaza, so designated to reflect a major turning point in the long struggle for the vote, is the focal point of League activity at Occoquan Regional Park's first annual festival. (The park is located across Rte., 123 from the historic marker.) The new wayside displays will honor those intrepid women who came before us. Truly, we stand on the shoulders of giants.

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