

The Female Voice of Enfranchisement:
A Reassessment of Woman Suffrage in Iowa

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
In
History

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2018

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2018

The early history of woman suffrage in Iowa has been largely viewed through the lens of the Eastern suffrage movement. By perpetuating the importance of Eastern connections, local women's efforts in Iowa suffrage has been replaced with lack luster individuals who promote the Eastern narrative. Iowa's suffrage efforts have been largely erased as a result of major implication of the free-love movement, an issue that the Eastern suffrage leaders wanted to expunge from suffrage history. By thoroughly examining the Iowa General Assembly, a pattern of legislative impasse emerged. Most sessions, the legislature debated the enfranchisement of women but experienced little success. Moving from the ineffective attempts in the General Assembly, it is important to understand the leaders who placed female enfranchisement in front of the Iowa legislators via petitions, newspapers articles, and public speeches. When the suffrage work in Iowa is studied, women such as Amelia Bloomer are at the forefront. Critical evaluation of Bloomer's work in Iowa indicates that her accomplishments pale in comparison to other local women, specifically Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall. After recovering the early Iowa suffrage movement, it is necessary to reevaluate how Iowa is portrayed in the master suffrage narratives. Finally, Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall's connections to temperance, moral reform, and the press create a broader perspective for studying Iowa woman suffrage.

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Introduction:

The narrative of women suffrage in Iowa has been shaped by the groundbreaking works, *History of Woman Suffrage* and *Strong-Minded Women*.¹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, an edited volume of primary sources written during the fight for female enfranchisement, evaluates the suffrage movement throughout the United States. Edited by Eastern suffrage leaders, *History of Woman Suffrage* focuses on the national movement with occasional mentions of Iowa. By focusing on women who presented the standard Eastern background and affiliations, *History of Woman Suffrage* excludes the local suffragists. These local women were vital to the suffrage cause in Iowa and made the movement possible. *Strong-Minded Women* provides a comparative analysis of Iowa and the national movement, but places disproportionate attention on women who were more effective on the national, instead of local, level. This thesis seeks to remedy the incomplete history that has been presented by focusing on deconstructing the Eastern-centered narrative as well as emphasizing the work of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Cogshall, two local women essential to the suffrage movement in Iowa.²

Woman suffrage historiography has undergone transformations as focuses shift over time. Originally texts, such as *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, have attempted to create a metanarrative of female

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3, 1876-1885* (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1886); Louise R. Noun, *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1969).

² This thesis will be utilizing the term national movement as synonymous with the Eastern narrative. When referencing the Eastern women, it is those women who are involved in the national suffrage societies, NWSA, AWSA and NAWSA.

enfranchisement.³ Often times these narratives are reliant on the Eastern narrative and perpetuate the work of Eastern women across the United States. Providing a critique on Eleanor Flexner, Ellen Carol DuBois outlines problems the master Eastern narrative. DuBois focuses on the importance of the reform movements, sexuality, political engagement, and regionality to the promotion of woman suffrage.⁴ Moving away from the Eastern narrative, scholars focusing on the West, Midwest, and South note differences in regional suffrage. Attempting to create broad interpretations of the woman suffrage movement regionally, Rebecca J. Mead found that the West experienced three phases of enfranchisement activism. Mead also makes critical connections to the success of Western states thanks to their affiliations with the Populist Party, the Knights of Labor, the Grange, and the Woman Christian Temperance Union.⁵ Steven M. Buechler identified the shifts in ideology that directly attributed to the rise in philanthropic church and moral reform societies in the Midwest. Drawing from the state of Illinois as representative of the Midwest, Buechler claimed that this region was less elitist, racist, and nativist than the East and South.⁶ The South, examined by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, experienced far different motivations for the promotion of woman suffrage through white supremacy and the discrimination of African Americans.⁷ Focusing on region has given way to new

³ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996).

⁴ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

⁵ Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States 1868-1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

⁶ Steven M. Buechler, *The Transformation of Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

⁷ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993).

scholarship concentrated specifically on individual states and their fight for enfranchisement. Sara Egge studies three different counties in the states of Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota to assess Midwestern suffrage. Egge's dissertation explores the early twentieth century until enfranchisement in 1920. Reevaluating the role of rural women, Egge found important partners for Iowa women in farmer labor and the WCTU.⁸ In keeping with this state specific approach this thesis will attempt to unpack the history of woman suffrage in Iowa that has still been forgotten. This thesis will further look to the role of Amelia Bloomer, Annie Savery, and Mary Jane Coggeshall and their efforts in the enfranchisement fight, while establishing that the focus on Bloomer in Iowa is inflated. Instead, Bloomer's work must be compared to that of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall, two women who also led the charge for enfranchisement. While all of these women participated in some form on the national level, this thesis will be focusing on the specific contributions made towards the fight for enfranchisement in Iowa.

This thesis will first examine the history of woman suffrage as a whole and then move specifically to Iowa in Chapter 1. Identifying the weakness of *Strong-Minded Women*, this thesis will then expand the Iowa narrative by identifying the enfranchisement work in the Iowa General Assemblies in Chapter 2. While woman suffrage in Iowa is typically attributed to having started after the Civil War, it actually was an idea brought forth to the legislature before Iowa's constitution was signed. Suffrage was a hard-fought battle, with initial legislative approval then rejection in the next legislative session. Instead of utilizing sources such as the *History of Woman*

⁸ Sara Anne Egge, "When We Get to Voting: Rural Women, Community, Gender, and Women's Suffrage in the Midwest," (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2012).

Suffrage or Strong-Minded Women, this chapter employs the work of historian Ruth Augusta Gallaher as well as the *Daily Iowa State Register* to correct inaccuracies put forth in other histories. Gallaher's *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa* specifically looks to the Senate and House journals, paired with local newspapers, to produce an accurate legislative record of the fight towards enfranchisement.⁹ While this thesis will specifically look at the earlier movement of woman suffrage in Iowa, it will provide an overview of the entire legislative history to show just how effective the General Assembly was at avoiding the constitutional requirement for two consecutive approval requirements. After half a decade of legislative see-saw, woman suffrage was submitted for voter approval in 1916 and denied because of widespread voter fraud. Iowans were robbed of female enfranchisement.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 all focus on individual women involved in the early movement towards woman suffrage in Iowa. *Strong-Minded Women* features Amelia Bloomer as the originator for Iowa suffrage. Clarifying the work done by Bloomer, Chapter 3 creates a clear narrative of her accomplishment for women's enfranchisement in Iowa after arriving in 1855. After pointing out Bloomer's lack of completed suffrage work in Iowa, Chapter 4, looks at the work of Annie Savery and the unfortunate circumstances that led to her ousting from Iowa suffrage works. The final chapter focusing on one woman is Chapter 5 which examines the work of Mary Jane Coggeshall and her reformist upbringing leading to her extensive involvement in woman suffrage in Iowa.

⁹ Ruth Augusta Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa: An Historical Account of the Rights of Women in Iowa from 1838 to 1918* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918).

Why focus on Amelia Bloomer, Annie Savery, and Mary Jane Coggeshall?

Amelia Bloomer is perceived to be one of the main figures of woman suffrage in Iowa, but this status is unfounded and needs to be juxtaposed with others working for Iowa women. Annie Savery was dubbed by a local newspaper as the "Highest Priestess of Suffrage in Iowa." Working directly with Bloomer, Savery has been reduced to mere footnotes in the *History of Woman Suffrage*. Savery's involvement in woman suffrage in Iowa began in the same timeframe as Bloomer's. In fact, Savery established the Polk County Woman Suffrage Society in the heart of Iowa's capital city, Des Moines, with the aid of Coggeshall. Once Savery was ousted, Bloomer remained in the suffrage spotlight. All three women had a hand in the beginning stages of this historic society. Carrie Chapman Catt identified Mary Jane Coggeshall as "The Mother of Woman Suffrage in Iowa." These women can all be considered "Iowa women" due to their extensive residency within the state. Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall all participated at the national level for female enfranchisement, and scholars focus on this involvement, which continues to perpetuate the Eastern narrative. Instead, this thesis focuses on Iowa and their contributions at the state level. This state-level examination allows for the critical evaluation of the contributions to the Iowa woman suffrage efforts made by all three of these women.

Chapter 6 will reveal the inconsistencies and exclusions that have shaped the story of woman suffrage in Iowa. Due to the interpretation of suffrage information from the Eastern perspective, perpetuated by texts such as *History of Woman Suffrage*, local issues and individuals not directly associated with Eastern women have been overlooked. Amending the inaccuracies put forth by Eastern suffragists in the original *History of*

Woman Suffrage, this thesis will provide a corrective account of the starting point of Iowa suffrage. The final chapter lays forth the connections provided between these women through their work on behalf of temperance and morality, by examining how Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall all incorporated corresponding principles within their suffrage work and espoused these ideals through newspapers.

The rationale behind this thesis is to correct the history of woman suffrage in Iowa that misdirected the focus to Amelia Bloomer while erasing the influence of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall. Woman suffrage workers wanted to rely on women with Eastern connections such as Bloomer to help direct the fight for female enfranchisement in Iowa. Through lack of understanding in part by other Eastern suffrage workers in appropriate state-by-state suffrage techniques, and the absence of participation by Bloomer, Iowa experienced an unsuccessful fight for enfranchisement at the state level. While the suffrage efforts of Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall all differ, there are some broader connections that these women provide for the suffrage movement in Iowa. By rewriting this narrative, this thesis serves to provide the broader connections among temperance, morality debates, and suffrage rhetoric that linked all three of these women and to highlight the contributions of Savery and Coggeshall.

Chapter 1:
History of Woman Suffrage:
An Overview

The history of woman suffrage is a complex narrative spanning from 1848 until 1920. Scholars often begin this seventy-two year period with the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were refused seats at an American Anti-Slavery Convention and voiced their disdain for exclusion on account of sex. Eight years after this denial, Mott, Stanton, and three other women created a call for a Woman's Right Convention. The halls of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention were filled with legal reformers, Free Soilers, and Quaker abolitionists.¹⁰ Drawing inspiration from their abolitionist endeavors, the women created a Declaration of Principles also dubbed the Declaration of Sentiments. For those present, including Quaker Mott, historian Nancy Hewitt draws the connection of rights for women to "rights for slaves, free blacks, landless labourers, industrial workers, Native Americans and Mexicans."¹¹ The Declaration of Sentiments, modeled after the Declaration of Independence, was produced and provided to the Convention. Obtaining one hundred signatures, the Declaration of Sentiments was approved by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men. This triggered the start of the woman suffrage movement.¹²

¹⁰ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Re-Rooting American Women's Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848" in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹² Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 39-72.

Woman suffrage was placed on the back burner from 1861 to 1865 due to the Civil War. Female leaders instead focused their labors in maintaining morality. Through the formation of the National Woman's Loyalty League, Union women focused on the petitions for Congress to adopt the Thirteenth Amendment. During the debates of the abolition of slavery via the Thirteenth Amendment, Radical Republicans took up voting rights of African Americans. The insertion of the word "male" into the United States Constitution, through the second section of the Fourteenth Amendment was proposed to ensure that African Americans were considered full and equal citizens. Angered by the possibility of the insertion of the word "male," those fighting for the enfranchisement of women did not believe that women should be placed on the backburner. Unwilling to yield to the "Negro's hour" argument, opposition formed surrounding the Fifteenth Amendment.¹³ Part of this opposition led to the formation of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) founded in 1866. Advocating for Universal Suffrage, AERA attempted to merge gender and race into one cohesive campaign.¹⁴

From 1866 to 1869 AERA allowed for race and gender to work together for enfranchisement. AERA created a conducive environment for African American woman suffrage workers who faced different prejudice when fighting for their rights.¹⁵ Upon the

¹³ Ibid., 136-139; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 23, 32.

¹⁴ Laura E. Free, *Suffrage Reconstructed: Gender, Race, and Voting Rights in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 134.

¹⁵ African American women supporting woman suffrage included Sojourner Truth, Harriet Forten Purvis, Margaretta Forten, Sarah Remond, Mary Ann Cary, Frances Harper, Caroline Remond Putman, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Charlotte (Lottie) Rollin, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McCurdy, and Adella Hunt Logan; See Rosalyn Terborg-Penn "African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement," in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995), 135-140.

ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, Radical Republicans introduced the Fifteenth Amendment further guaranteeing male African Americans the right to vote. Section One of the Fifteenth Amendment reads, "The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State, on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude."¹⁶ Many argued that female enfranchisement could easily have been won through the addition of the word "sex." Due to the Fifteenth Amendment's disregard for woman suffrage, relationships in the AERA strained leading to the formation of two different suffrage societies.

AERA faced resistance due to the split among its members over the inclusion of "sex" in the Fifteenth Amendment.¹⁷ Abolitionists staunchly supported the rights of African American men and believed that adding women to the Amendment would jeopardize that chance. Opponents of the Fifteenth Amendment were angered by the casting aside of women who had aided in the abolition campaign. This sentiment is captured by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper who believed that "for white women the priority in the struggle for human rights was sex, not race."¹⁸ At the 1869 Equal Rights Convention in New York, Stanton proposed a woman suffrage amendment be added to the Constitution. Immediately following this call, Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Denouncing the Fifteenth Amendment, NWSA focused on earning enfranchisement of women through a federal constitutional amendment. Embracing all issues relating to women, NWSA utilized a broad campaign

¹⁶ U.S. Const. amend. XV.

¹⁷ While "sex" was not included in the Fifteenth Amendment, this debate led to the official formation of the national woman suffrage societies.

¹⁸ Terborg-Penn, "African American Woman Suffrage Movement," 154.

approach, expressed disdain with both Republicans and Democrats, and did not allow males in their ranks. Due to NWSA's rejection of the Fifteenth Amendment, those in favor of the amendment formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Created by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe, AWSA's tactics included a narrow, inclusive, female enfranchisement only, and a state-by-state campaign for woman suffrage.¹⁹

In 1870, the Eastern movement was embroiled in the battle between NWSA and AWSA. Noun asserts that the Fifteenth Amendment provided the necessary argument for moderates to break away from Anthony's outspoken views.²⁰ Embracing George Francis Train and Victoria Woodhull, NWSA's radical approach to female enfranchisement was apparent. Train was an openly racist Democrat and influenced the tactics and rhetoric of NWSA. Anthony and Stanton adopted a racist campaign advocating for the enfranchisement of white women only.²¹ Obtaining financial backing from Train, Stanton and Anthony continued the publication of *The Revolution*, which originally began in 1868. The motto for NWSA's newspaper was "Principles, not policy; justice, not favor; men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."²² With a more modest approach Stone, Howe, and Henry B. Blackwell formed *The Woman's Journal*. This newspaper promoted, "the interests of Woman, to her educational, industrial, legal and political Equality, and especially to her right of Suffrage."²³ While these papers were popular and allowed for women to stay connected with other suffrage movements across

¹⁹ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 141-146; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 101-105.

²⁰ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 105.

²¹ Free, *Suffrage Reconstructed*, 135.

²² *The Revolution*, Vol. 1, No. 5, Wednesday, February 5, 1868.

²³ *The Woman's Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Saturday, January 8, 1870.

the country, they did not represent the Midwestern or Western perspective, particularly Iowa.²⁴

NWSA encountered backlash after supporting Woodhull's appearance before a Washington Congressional Committee discussing her arguments for woman suffrage. Woodhull believed in spiritualism, divorce, and fortune telling; she was not afraid to get her hands dirty with insider stock trading. A staunch supporter of free-love, Woodhull opened NWSA up to scandal that would shake not only the Eastern suffrage women, but radiate across the United States. In 1871, Woodhull argued before Congress that women already had the right to vote.²⁵ While Stanton and Anthony were surprised by Woodhull's Congressional speech; they welcomed her into their ranks. Shifting the Eastern attempt for female enfranchisement away from a push for the Sixteenth Amendment and towards acceptance on inclusion via the Fourteen and Fifteenth Amendments, Woodhull profoundly shaped the approach of suffrage workers. Raising the issue of the double standard, Woodhull exposed an affair between Henry Ward Beecher and Elizabeth Tilton. Creating bad press for woman suffrage, Woodhull then attempted to take over NWSA. Woodhull's failed coup led to the creation of the Equal Rights Party.²⁶

The 1870s and 1880s suffrage activities centered around demonstrative, legal, and political attempts. Facing defeat, suffrage workers switched their tactics and focused on political issues. Flexner described this activism as "organizing state suffrage associations,

²⁴ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 143-148; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 84.

²⁵ This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

²⁶ Diana Pounds, "Booze, Ballots, and Wild Women: Coverage of Suffrage and Temperance by Three Iowa Newspapers, 1870-1875," (Master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1990); Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 157; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 167-175.

educating public opinion, conducting campaigns...and maintain[ing] pressure on Congress for an amendment to the federal constitution."²⁷ During this time women attempted to go to the polls, stating that they had legal rights to vote because of the New Departure. The New Departure was an approach first created by Virginia and Francis Minor in 1869.²⁸ This technique interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as inclusive of women, therefore state legislation explicitly identifying female enfranchisement rights was unnecessary.²⁹ Inspired by Mary Ann Cary, fellow African American suffragist, Mary Olney Brown appealed to the House of Representatives in the District of Columbia advocating the New Departure technique. Emphasizing the only a declaratory resolution was necessary for woman suffrage because women were already technically included in the Constitution.³⁰ Legislative battles on behalf of Anthony and the Minors showcased the lack of legal support for female enfranchisement. Anthony equated the Minors' loss in the Supreme Court for women as devastating as the Dred Scott decision for slaves. NWSA embraced the efforts of the Minors and Anthony, continuing their political battle for recognition through a public stunt at the Centennial in Philadelphia and the introduction of the Anthony Amendment in Congress. Distributing the Woman's Declaration of 1876 at the Centennial celebration, NWSA declared, "We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens

²⁷ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 157.

²⁸ Virginia Minor was a woman suffrage activist in Missouri and the President of the Woman Suffrage Association of Missouri. Her husband, Francis, was an attorney and brought their case to the Supreme Court; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 168; Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote*, 34, 84-86.

²⁹ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 161.

³⁰ Terborg-Penn, "African American Woman Suffrage Movement," 141.

of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever."³¹ Within this Declaration NWSA employed portions of Woodhull's argument presented to Congress. NWSA was attempting to promote morality as a reason for female enfranchisement, but Woodhull as their figurehead did not embody a woman of virtue. AWSA denounced NWSA's display at the Centennial as well as Woodhull's "new declaration."³² Focusing their efforts on the state-by-state campaigns, Western and Midwestern states made more attempts at legislative reform. While these nationally directed state campaigns only resulted in two actual victories for full suffrage between 1870 to 1900, there were partial victories with limited suffrage.³³

The years 1880 to 1896 witnessed a change in the leadership and climate surrounding woman suffrage. Due to strikes from the Panic of 1893, suffrage workers attempted to distance themselves from militant radicalism and trended towards a more conservative stance. Mergers of the Eastern associations were discussed for three years, led by Alice Stone Blackwell. Uniting AWSA and NWSA in 1890, the National American Woman Suffrage Association formed. Through focusing on AWSA's original state-by-state plan, NAWSA believed that if enough states ratified the suffrage

³¹ National Woman Suffrage Association, "Declaration of Rights of Women of the United States," July 4, 1876, Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, vol. 3 *National Protection for National Citizens, 1873 to 1880*, ed. Ann D. Gordon (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2003), 1.

³² "New declaration" refers to Woodhull's adoption of the Minors' New Departure technique.

³³ Wyoming Territory had already enacted full female enfranchisement in 1869. From 1870 to 1910, Colorado in 1893 and Idaho in 1896 both passed woman suffrage. Utah Territory granted women suffrage in 1870, seventeen years later Congress revoked this right, only to have to suffrage restored in 1895 and granted statehood in 1896. Often ignored in the master suffrage narrative, Utah woman suffrage was truly made possible through the work of the women of the state; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 149-156; Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote*, 375.

amendment that Congress would be forced to approve a federal amendment. State referendums in South Dakota (1890), Kansas (1894), and California (1896) all received help from NAWSA's organizers and leaders. These Western states were unable to pass full enfranchisement due to opposition from the liquor interests and challenges with state campaigns. Anthony's activism remained strong as she continued to advocate for the Federal Constitutional Amendment approach, which ignored by other suffrage workers, disappeared from politics until 1913.³⁴

Labelled the doldrums, 1896 to 1910 witnessed no significant gains for female enfranchisement. With only six state referendums held, and no new suffrage states won, the NAWSA collaboration attempted to combine the tactics of both organizations to garner a wider net of support. While there were no visible gains within suffrage, historian Rebecca J. Mead discusses that these were not the doldrums, but "in fact, it was a period of considerably activity, as a younger generation of suffragists helped develop successful modern methods of persuasion."³⁵ Anthony retired from suffrage activism in 1900, leaving NAWSA with Iowan Carrie Chapman Catt as their president. Catt then resigned four years later, followed by Anna Howard Shaw.³⁶

Flexner described 1910 to 1915 as "a contradictory measure of awakening, confusion, and continued paralysis." NAWSA experienced turmoil beginning in 1910 with charges against president Shaw resulting in numerous resignations which shook the suffrage leadership. Major changes in officers continued for the next six years. Due to Shaw's lack of direction, NAWSA faltered until the reinstatement of Catt as president.

³⁴ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 214-217.

³⁵ Mead, *How the Vote was Won*, 94.

³⁶ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 241-251.

This inability of Shaw to lead is shown through the rise of militant Alice Paul. Paul formed the National Women's Party as a NAWSA Congressional Committee in 1912. The NWP incorporated militant tactics such as picketing, parades, and civil disobedience. This approach increased woman suffrage visibility and in turn public outcry. Still garnering support from Shaw, the Congressional Union formed and demanded a campaign for the immediate passage of a Federal Amendment. A formal separation of the Congressional Union from NAWSA occurred one year later with Catt's return. Attempting to reign in Paul, and the Congressional Committee, Catt found the Committee unwilling to falter. Moving forward, NAWSA tried to pass the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment in the United States Congress. The Shafroth-Palmer Amendment sought to remove woman suffrage from the federal level, placing female enfranchisement to the hands of the states.³⁷ Defeated in Congress, the Congressional Union claimed partial victory for the blockage of NAWSA.³⁸

Adopting Catt's "Winning Plan" in 1916, NAWSA convinced President Woodrow Wilson to back the Nineteenth Amendment. Noun identifies Catt's plan as

1. The twelve states where women could vote for presidential electors were to secure for the next sessions of their legislatures resolutions asking Congress to submit the woman-suffrage amendment.
2. The few states where there was a chance of carrying a state constitutional amendment were to try for that.
3. The largest group of states was to work for presidential suffrage.
4. Southern states, where the primary virtually determined the election, were to try for primary suffrage.³⁹

³⁷ Jennifer M. Ross-Nazzari, *Winning the West for Women: The Life of Suffragist Emma Smith DeVoe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 221.

³⁸ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 254-268; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 250.

³⁹ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 257.

This approach led to four states gaining full suffrage, thirteen state legislatures granting presidential suffrage, and two state legislatures granting primary suffrage in state elections.⁴⁰ The Midwest was influential in the creation of this plan, because Midwestern states had been utilized as testing grounds for suffrage methods.⁴¹ While this winning plan was triumphant for white woman suffrage workers, many African Americans felt that the “Anthony Amendment” produced out of Catt’s plan would restrict voting to white women only. While there were additional amendments attempting to enfranchise only white females, they failed.⁴² The first portion of Catt’s winning plan was achieved in May of 1919, when the Sixty-Sixth Congressional House of Representatives passed the woman suffrage amendment. Two weeks later, the Senate also approved the amendment and it was sent to the states. Ratified by thirty-six states, women were granted the right to vote via the Nineteenth Amendment on August 20, 1920.⁴³

Overview of Woman Suffrage in Iowa:

Woman suffrage was first introduced in Iowa by way of the Eastern lecturer Frances Dana Gage in 1854. Shortly thereafter women’s clubs, ladies aid societies, and enfranchisement organizations began. Issues on the forefront of Iowans’ minds revolved around temperance, morality, and equality. During the Civil War women’s rights work paused in Iowa, and the majority of the other states, in order to maintain the family while husbands were at war. Suffragist Lizzie Bunnell Read credited the Civil War for

⁴⁰ Ibid., 250.

⁴¹ Sara Egge, “Woman Suffrage is a Midwestern Story: Gender, Region, and Nativism, 1880-1920,” *Middle West Review* Vol. 4, 2 (Spring, 2018): 14.

⁴² Terborg-Penn, “African American Woman Suffrage Movement,” 150.

⁴³ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 250.

expanding women's roles by "admitting that there *is* a sphere for woman outside of the domestic circle, and... capable of *choosing* a path as well as of accepting that opened to them by the exigencies of the times."⁴⁴ Women participated in wartime activities through societies such as the Iowa Sanitary Commission. One year after the Civil War, the question of female enfranchisement was brought before the Iowa General Assembly by James Crookham.⁴⁵

After Stanton and Anthony toured the Midwest in 1869, women of Dubuque signed a call for a woman suffrage state convention. Unable to find a sponsor in Des Moines, the first woman suffrage meeting took place in Dubuque April 17, 1869.⁴⁶ This meeting formed the Northern Iowa Woman Suffrage Association. During this same time, the Equal Rights Association was established in Algona. While the Northern Iowa Woman Suffrage Association meeting was technically the primary attempt at an Iowa convention, the first successful convention took place in Mount Pleasant June 16 to 17, 1870. Failing to account for the location, the Mount Pleasant convention experienced backlash. Annie Savery and Amelia Bloomer had been planning on holding a convention in the state capital of Iowa when the state legislature was in session. Unable to obtain an Eastern lecturer, Bloomer postponed the formation of the Iowa state convention and allowed for the Mount Pleasant convention to take place. Following the creation of the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 113. While this thesis focuses on the early woman suffrage movement in Iowa, African American Iowans formalized their support for female enfranchisement in the early 1900s. These women formed the Iowa Association of Colored Women's Clubs in 1902 to organize African American activism. An official suffrage committee was established twelve years later; Iowa Women's Archive, "Women's Suffrage in Iowa an Online Exhibit, 1890-1915," Woman's Suffrage Collection (Iowa City: University of Iowa Archive, 2010), 35.

Iowa Woman Suffrage Society, the Polk County Suffrage Society was founded in Des Moines. Formed in the capital of Iowa by Savery, the Polk County Suffrage Society met monthly regarding female enfranchisement.⁴⁷

In 1870 and 1871, national suffrage leaders, like Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, and Mary Livermore, lectured in Iowa. In this way, Iowans heard from both AWSA and NWSA supporters. Indeed, after witnessing Woodhull speak, Anthony preached the New Departure method to the Iowa audiences. This approach via the Fourteenth Amendment faced backlash because of the association with Woodhull. Due to the heavy focus on morality, woman suffrage in Iowa was exceptionally affected by the free-love scandal. The Iowa Woman Suffrage Society lost its first president, Henry O'Connor, in 1871. Leaving Savery to continue the annual meeting after leadership evaporated in IWSS, many women, including Savery, defended Woodhull creating rifts in the Iowa suffrage societies.⁴⁸ In order to promote female enfranchisement as morally right, societies began to publicly denounce any free-love associations and espouse the sanctity of marriage.⁴⁹ Moral feminist movements such as abolition and temperance focused on "bettering society through the expansion of womanly influence."⁵⁰ Attempting to petition the Republican convention for a party platform in support of female enfranchisement, Des Moines women were denied entry. Savery made further efforts to salvage a woman suffrage amendment in the General Assembly. After the proposal for a female enfranchisement resolution was presented and subsequently rejected in the 1872 Iowa

⁴⁷ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 121-123.

⁴⁸ This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

⁴⁹ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 202.

⁵⁰ Buechler, *The Transformation of Woman Suffrage Movement*, 146.

Legislature, the legislative see-saw continued. While many Western and Midwestern states were able to lead successful campaigns for female enfranchisement, Iowa was unable to gain woman suffrage through state legislation. Facing legal battle after legal battle (discussed in Chapter 2) Iowa was unable to enact full suffrage via the state legislature. Instead, Iowa became the tenth state to ratify the Nineteenth “Anthony” Amendment on July 2, 1919.⁵¹

⁵¹ Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote*, 376; Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1923), 226; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 259-261.

Chapter 2:

Legislative Trail to The Vote:

The Iowa General Assembly

Women suffrage in Iowa was discussed in the state's infancy. While the constitution did not include women, the question was explored throughout its formation. Women in Iowa recognized that female enfranchisement in Iowa would not be possible without legislative approval, and continuously presented petitions before the Iowa General Assembly. According to the Iowa constitution, the woman suffrage proposal required two consecutive legislative approvals to then be submitted to the voters of Iowa. Presenting amendments before every General Assembly after 1866, Iowa women found the legislature to be an immense hurdle that they could not overcome. Faced with continuous legislative letdowns, the General Assembly would pass female enfranchisement in one legislative session, only to kill it in the proceeding meeting. Woman suffrage in Iowa was not successful through state constitutional means and was not passed until ratification of the Federal Amendment in 1919.

The *History of Woman Suffrage* overlooks important suffrage debates in the Iowa legislature, which makes it necessary to recover that history. Originally governed by Common Law, the Iowa Territory granted equality in property rights to women. Congress, in 1836, included Iowa in the new Territory of Wisconsin. During this reorganization, married women lost political privileges but retained civil rights. Iowa became a separate territory in 1838, adopted its state constitution in 1846, and repealed

all legislation post-1807.⁵² Iowa's territorial legislature was introduced to the idea of extending a voice to women in the 1843-1844 session. Discussing suffrage, the House of Representatives passed a resolution allowing women to be present for the legislative proceedings. Through the inclusion of women in legislative proceedings, Iowa was ahead of other states prior to Seneca Falls. While raising the possibility of female enfranchisement, the constitutional draft of 1844 specifically rejected women from having the right to vote and hold office.⁵³ Iowa women were, however, granted privileges that women in other states lacked: the right to own property and retain ownership after marriage (1846), the release from liability from her husband's debt (1851), the ability to sue and be sued without joint action (1860), the right to conduct business or trade in her own name (1866), and the right to her earnings if her husband was found unfit.⁵⁴ Amelia Bloomer described the ability of women to own property in her editorial correspondence to *The Lily*. Bloomer stated, "By the laws of this State women can hold and control property, both real and personal, and I am desirous that they should take advantage of this liberality by securing themselves a share of these fine prairie farms."⁵⁵ According to historian Ruth Gallaher, "it is evident, therefore, that in civil affairs no marked injustice to women is to be observed in Iowa: discrimination against them is confined almost entirely to political matters."⁵⁶ With progressive rights such as these guaranteed to

⁵² Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 40.

⁵³ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*.

⁵⁴ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 612; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 54-58.

⁵⁵ Amelia Bloomer, "Editorial Correspondence," *The Lily: Devoted to the Interests of Woman*, June 15, 1855, Vol. VII, No. 12, Amelia Bloomer Collection, Council Bluffs Public Library, Photocopy, 93.

⁵⁶ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 154.

women paired with public support of female enfranchisement, it is surprising that woman suffrage could not pass in Iowa without the Federal amendment.

In Iowa the state constitution required the woman suffrage bill, as any other piece of legislation, to receive approval from both houses in two consecutive legislatures. After this presentation and subsequent approval, the bill would then be given to the men of Iowa for a vote. Mary Jane Coggeshall saw this difficult task as almost unachievable. "For thirty two [sic] years," she wrote in 1903, "by bills & petitions we have begged these 150 men to submit this question to the voters. From 1870 to 1884 they played see saw [sic] with it; one session passing it, the next one killing it."⁵⁷ This "see saw" described by Coggeshall began before 1870, with Republican Senator James Crookham's proposal for woman suffrage in 1866 at the Eleventh General Assembly. In this petition, Crookham proposed enfranchisement to include:

1. All white female citizens of 21
2. All soldiers honorably discharged who are under the age of 21
3. All male citizens of foreign birth, 21 years old, who have volunteered in the service and have been honorably discharged
4. All male citizens of African descent, 21 years old, provided they have served in the forces of the United States and have been honorably discharged
5. All male citizens of the age of 21, of African descent, who are worth \$250 of taxable property and have paid the taxes on the same and are of good moral character and can read and write⁵⁸

By applying enfranchisement to women, immigrants, and African Americans with restrictions, Crookham's proposal was ahead of its time. By 1866, the Thirteenth

⁵⁷ Mary Jane Coggeshall, "IESA Convention Boone," October 6, 1903, Document 8, Mary Jane Coggeshall Papers, 1880-1911, Part E: The Midwest and the Far West, Reel 10, A-13, Research Collections in Women's Studies, eds., Anne Firor Scott and William H. Chafe, Women's Studies Manuscript Collections from the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 1990 [hereafter Women's Studies Collection, Schlesinger Library], 13.

⁵⁸ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 42.

Amendment, which banned slavery, had been ratified (1865), but all states did not protect the rights of former slaves. In that year, Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act, which made former slaves citizens, but citizenship rights did not become guaranteed in the Constitution until the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 presumably protected voting rights to men regardless of race. Dying in committee, Crookham's bill promoted the idea of suffrage through the lens of race and gender. Following this failed measure, George M. Maxwell, Iowa Senator from Story County, presented a resolution to the House regarding the practicality of striking out the word "male" to the portion of the constitution that identified voting. The Committee on Constitutional Amendments killed Maxwell's resolution.⁵⁹ Benjamin Palmer brought forth a petition in support of woman suffrage from the people of Clinton County claiming:

They [the petitioners] represented nearly one-half of the entire population of the State, and also one-half of its stability, intelligence, and virtue; that they are counted in the basis of representation, yet are governed and taxed without judge or jury; and claiming further, that life, liberty, and property, are uncertain so long as the ballot, the only weapon of self-protection, is not in the hands of every citizen.⁶⁰

This petition began a continuous petition cycle presented by different legislators on behalf of different counties in Iowa every legislative session.

Continuing the conversation in the next legislature, the General Assembly debated the extension of suffrage in 1868. Senator Wilson, of Davis County, presented a petition identifying misrepresentation within the constitution. Gallaher described this misreading, "Whereas, We believe 'men,' in the memorable document for which we quote, refers to

⁵⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁰ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 178

the whole human race, regardless of nationality, or sex...."⁶¹ Through this resolution, the term "men" was not exclusive to males but included women. While this resolution was favorably reported to the Committee on Constitutional Amendments, the legislature did not vote on it. Instead, Iowa extended suffrage through the deletion of the word "white" for voting qualifications.⁶² Being dubbed the "Negro's hour," women were expected to cast aside their political grievance to promote African American male suffrage.⁶³

In 1870, John Irish, Democratic representative from Johnson County, presented the first resolution in favor of a constitutional amendment supporting woman suffrage to the House. This initial approval in the 1870 General Assembly started a cycle of continuous letdown. While there were discrepancies in the numbers, Irish's resolution passed both the House and the Senate. Following the first legislative approval, the Amendment was received favorably at the Republican State Convention in 1871. Requiring two consecutive legislative sessions, Irish's resolution was reintroduced at the 1872 General Assembly.⁶⁴ Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler announced, "when the Legislature of 1872 met, the organization was ready, the press friendly, the leaders of the Republican party outspokenly favorable" and the amendment, endorsed by the Governor, passed without debate or remark in the House 58 to 39, raising the hopes of Iowans.⁶⁵ After the easy passage through the House, the *Daily Iowa State Register*

⁶¹ Ibid., 178.

⁶² Noun, *Leader and Pariah*, 23.

⁶³ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 136.

⁶⁴ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 180.

⁶⁵ Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 212. John Irish also sponsored a suffrage resolution granting women the right to vote for presidential electors, however this was not voted upon. See, Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 180.

reported, "If the Senate shall follow suit, and it is pretty certain it will be plump to into our politics coming campaign, and our women will have the chance to fight it out on their line all summer."⁶⁶ The Senate finally debated Irish's proposal on March 29, 1872. Catt and Shuler asserted, "the Senate, after a spirited debate, voted to engross the bill for a third reading, 26 to 20, and hopes ran high. Yet a few minutes later the final vote stood 23 to 23."⁶⁷ While there is some argument on the final numbers, the Senate did not approve the woman suffrage proposal.⁶⁸

Women of Iowa attributed the loss of Irish's 1872 proposal in the legislature to be largely the fault of the Eastern suffrage workers. Discussed in the *Daily Iowa State Register*:

We think one thing contributed more largely to the result which has come, than all other things. Too many people have been brought here from abroad to work on the Legislature. The Iowa women would have done better alone, and would have been successful. The West is not such an overgrown and ill taught child that it must have Eastern wisdom imported to make it go straight. And, again, we think even the Iowa women might have been more judicious. Opening a book of debits and credits, praising 'the coming mer,' threatening all others, is not the best way in the world to drive and drum up votes.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Daily Iowa State Register*, February 22, 1872, 1.

⁶⁷ Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 212.

⁶⁸ Todd E. Pettys claims that the resolution died due to Senate's refusal to endorse. See, Todd E. Pettys, *The Iowa State Constitution*, 2 ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 42; Ruth Augusta Gallaher describes the resolution being defeated by two votes. See, Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 180; Louise R. Noun, explains the vote being lost 22 to 24. See, Noun, *Strong-Minded Women* 218. Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, finished the 1872 resolution with the tie of 23 to 23 and did not say anything further about the results. See, Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 212. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, stated the bill was lost 22 to 24. See, Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 625.

⁶⁹ "The Senate and the Suffrage," *Daily Iowa State Register*, March 30, 1872, 1.

Discontent with Eastern suffrage workers' lack of understanding in the approaches to enfranchisement in other parts of the United States was a common issue, especially when looking to suffrage work in the South.⁷⁰ It is no surprise then that local women in the West and Midwest also felt the disconnect.

After the legislative letdown of the prior session, the Fifteenth General Assembly, House and Senate, succeeded in passing the Equal Suffrage Amendment, and garnered the official support of the Radical Republicans.⁷¹ Similar to the process of gaining voting qualifications for African Americans, Governor Carpenter voiced his approval of striking out "male" in the state constitution in 1874.⁷² Expressed within the Republican Party platform, their tenth plank acknowledged, "that since the people may be entrusted with all questions of governmental reform, we favor the final submission to them of the question of amending the constitution so as to extend the right of suffrage to women, pursuant to the action of the fifteenth General Assembly."⁷³ Instead of enlisting a man to be the voice of the woman's movement, Elizabeth Boynton Harbert went before the resolution committee to present on behalf of female enfranchisement.⁷⁴

The tenth plank of the Iowa Republican Party was electrifying for not just Iowan women but for women across the United States. According to the *State Record*, "the Republican State platform of Iowa is the first real and purely woman's plank that ever entered into any political platform—because it originated in the brain of woman. It was by a woman carried to the committee, and in response to an able, dignified, and true

⁷⁰ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*.

⁷¹ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 186.

⁷² This "strikeout" proposal had also been presented in the House in 1872.

⁷³ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 188.

⁷⁴ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 270-271.

womanly appeal, it was accepted, and by the convention incorporated into the platform of the party."⁷⁵ Iowa was recognized by Eastern women on May 11, 1875, during a suffrage convention in New York. At this convention, a resolution was discussed regarding the status of Iowa. The resolution stated "that as the proposition for woman's enfranchisement is to be submitted to Iowa, in 1876, the National Woman Suffrage Association will hold their 100 county conventions, and by lectures and circulation of tracts, help the women of Iowa to make a thorough canvass of the state."⁷⁶ The proposal carried in the House by fourteen votes, the resolution was then sent to the Senate. Gallaher describes the efforts of Iowa suffrage workers as "a careful canvass of the Senate, made by friendly Senators as well as by the women, showed a suffrage majority of ten on both polls."⁷⁷ The *Daily Iowa State Register* furthers Gallaher's point, "the cause of woman suffrage is triumphant so far as the present Legislature can make it so. The Senate yesterday ratified the action of the House on the proposition to give the people at the polls a chance to vote the word 'male' out of the Constitution. But before it goes to the people, another Legislature must act upon it and endorse it."⁷⁸ Originally the vote passed the Senate with 26 to 20 in favor, but was re-voted on twice, leaving the final tally the vote shifted to 22 to 23 against.⁷⁹

Legislative downfall continued with the Seventeenth and Eighteenth General Assemblies due to the Senate. In 1878, while the House rejected the amendment,

⁷⁵ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 621.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 2, 1861-1876* (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1881), 585.

⁷⁷ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 213.

⁷⁸ Editorial, *Daily Iowa State Register*, March 13, 1874, 1.

⁷⁹ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 620.

members still passed a resolution 55 to 42 in favor of female enfranchisement. The Senate placed this resolve into an indefinite postponement. Again 1880, the House favored the woman suffrage amendment and faced rejection by the Senate. Gallaher identified the hopelessness that seemed to be the chance of women gaining enfranchisement through the Iowa Legislature: "There is something pathetic in the efforts of the women who gathered year after year to consider the cause so important to them, handicapped as they were by the lack of votes which men have ever relied upon to further reform."⁸⁰ Part of this defeat by men can be attributed to the publishing of Senator Gaylord's twenty-one reasons that he voted against the enfranchisement of women.⁸¹

Faced with the pressing issue of prohibition, the Nineteenth and Twentieth General Assemblies continued the legislative see-saw. Historian Dorothy Schwieder expressed that the fear of prohibition could be used as a motivator to deny women enfranchisement: "To some wets, all women were natural opponents of the liquor trade, and the close association between suffragists and the drys [sic] strengthened the wets' resolve to defeat any effort to give women the vote."⁸² Those in favor of the freedom to drink alcohol associated the moral reform work attached to woman suffrage to be synonymous with temperance. Both the House and the Senate passed an Equal Suffrage resolution in 1882, only to be defeated in the following legislative session. The resolution presented again in 1884 to the General Assembly explained the reasoning behind the necessity for Equal Suffrage were as follows:

⁸⁰ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 191.

⁸¹ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 47-49.

⁸² Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa the Middle Land* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 225.

First. The principle is axiomatic, that the just powers of a free representative government are derived from the consent of the governed.

Second. That American civilization, law and conscience recognize woman as a subject of government, as a person and as a citizen in many respects equally, and in some respects more directly interested in the enactment and enforcement of law and in giving direction to the administration of government than man.

Third. That it is only fairness and justice to determine, as a general principle, that burdens and privileges, taxation and representation, if not altogether identical, should be equal and coextensive.

Fourth. That woman would doubtless vote quite as intelligently as man.

Fifth. That her participation in the elective franchise would tend to elevate rather than degrade politics.

Sixth. That there is no sufficient reason why her admission to share with man in the direction and control of governmental affairs may not and will not tend to advance the best interests of all classes in the commonwealth.⁸³

This 1884 legislative session was presented with 8,000 signatures for petitions of female enfranchisement.⁸⁴ The Twentieth General Assembly technically should have been the session in which woman suffrage was brought to the voters. As Gallaher explains, “the House...indefinitely postponed the measure, although the Senate at this time passed it by a vote of 26 to 24...gave the women a victory in three of the five necessary votes on the subject—two in the House, two in the Senate, and the final vote by the men of the State.”⁸⁵ Through the approval of the partial suffrage amendments in 1880, Equal Suffrage Amendment by both House and Senate in 1882, and the second approval in the General Assembly of 1884, woman suffrage could have been submitted to the voters

⁸³ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 188.

⁸⁴ Susan B. Anthony, and Ida Husted Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4, 1883-1900* (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902).

⁸⁵ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 189.

because it received three approvals. However, this loophole was ignored by Governor Buren R. Sherman so the Equal Suffrage Amendment was not presented to the voters. Sherman, busy with the temperance debate, yielded to the General Assembly by stating he was "not caring to here express an opinion upon the question."⁸⁶ Without push from the governor the legislative loophole was ignored, and the possibility of female enfranchisement disregarded.⁸⁷

After the joint resolution amendment for equal suffrage faced disapproval in 1886, woman suffrage supporters in Iowa changed their tactics. In the Twenty-First General Assembly the legislatures were presented with a constitutional amendment resolution as well as a bill regarding municipal and school suffrage. While the Senate favored the resolution, school and municipal suffrage never made it past committee. The House failed to act in both instances. Splitting up municipal and school suffrage, the Twenty-Second General Assembly voted on municipal suffrage and the joint resolution. The see-sawing legislature then defeated the joint resolution in the Senate by failing to address it. The House adopted the resolution 66 to 26. Municipal suffrage faced rejection in both the House and Senate. Moving away from the constitutional amendment tactic, the Twenty-Third General Assembly was faced with the partial enfranchisement at the municipal and school levels. Embracing this bit-by-bit method, AWSA, and, in turn, Iowa, women faced yet another letdown through the defeat of both proposals.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁷ Some blame not only Governor Sherman, but also the divisive issue of prohibition that clung to the Equal Suffrage resolution. See, Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 189.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 195-197.

While the partial suffrage approach did not prevail in 1890, the concept was adopted in the following Assembly through three proposals by the Senate and four bills by the House. The Senate proposed a statutory enactment, revival of presidential enfranchisement, and joint resolution to strikeout "male" from the constitution. Although all three of these proposals died in committee, they represented new and renewed approaches to the enfranchisement question. The bills presented by the House also failed whether it was due to vote or by postponement.⁸⁹

Partial woman suffrage was passed through the House and the Senate in 1894. The Twenty-Fifth General Assembly was faced with multiple resolutions for the woman's question including school suffrage, municipal suffrage, joint school and municipal suffrage, and a constitutional amendment. Passing the House and adopted in the Senate, the joint school and municipal suffrage bill allowed, "women the privilege of voting... involving the issues of bonds, borrowing money, or increasing the tax levy."⁹⁰ Specifically, this partial suffrage gained allowed for Iowa women to vote on issues that were related to school and municipal taxes.⁹¹ Misrepresented in *History of Woman Suffrage*, this was more than just the issue of bonds.

Changing tactics back to focus on joint resolutions in 1896, 1898, and 1900, the legislatures successfully stalled female enfranchisement once again. Drowned out by the liquor interests, woman suffrage received little attention in Twenty-Sixth General Assembly. The Senate defeated a joint resolution 23 to 23, while the House took no

⁸⁹ Ibid., 197-201.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 202.

⁹¹ Iowa Women's Archive, "Women's Suffrage in Iowa an Online Exhibit, 1890-1915," 23.

action with regard to woman suffrage. Two years later, the House was presented with two separate joint resolutions. The first did not pass committee; the second did not reach majority. A resolution was proposed in the Senate to strike the word 'male' from Section 1, Article 2 of the Iowa Constitution.⁹² The Iowa Constitution reads:

Every [*white*] male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of this State six months next preceding the election, and of the county in which he claims his vote sixty days, shall be entitled to vote at all elections which are now or hereafter may be authorized by law.⁹³

While this resolution was heard in the Senate, there were no legislative actions that occurred. The House and Senate also listened to arguments put forth by the pro- and anti-suffrage women. By 1900, suffragists presented 100,000 signatures, more signatures than the number of people in Polk County, to the General Assembly via petitions in favor of woman suffrage.⁹⁴ During this time Iowa's population was 2,231,853 with the capital city's population at 62,139.⁹⁵ Even with growing public admiration for female enfranchisement, the legislature continued to hold fast to its conservative roots. In the Twenty-Eighth General Assembly the joint resolution failed to reach Senate majority, and in the House lost by thirteen votes.⁹⁶

⁹² Gallaher explains that it was originally quoted as "section 1, article 3," however it is article 2 that applies to right to suffrage. See, Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 209.

⁹³ The word white is in italics and brackets because it was present in the original 1857 constitution but was later removed; Iowa Cons. of 1857 art. II.

⁹⁴ Carrie Chapman Catt, and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 215.

⁹⁵ Department of Commerce Bureau of Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Population 1910: Reports by States, with Statistics for Counties, Cities and Other Civil Divisions, Iowa*, Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Press, 1913), 580-581.

⁹⁶ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 212-213.

The unyielding legislators raised doubt in the Iowa General Assembly's ability to pass woman suffrage. Coggeshall cautioned,

We have watched this business closely for 35 years & up to the last two sessions it has seemed to take the average man, (we mean the average legislator) about ten years to get the idea into his head clearly that the suffragists do not ask them [sic] to give the ballot to women, they are asked only to submit the question to the voters to decide. The suffragists are willing that the fathers, husbands, brothers, & sons should decide the question.⁹⁷

Gallaher described this legislative filibustering of female enfranchisement as political log-rolling.⁹⁸ Coggeshall compared the work of these Senators to the aristocrats that the representative government was established to replace. Suffragists believed that it was only through the public vote that women would gain the ballot.

From 1902 to 1913 the General Assembly was continuously approached with various equal suffrage resolutions with no progress gained. Due to the legislature's lack of success, in 1911, a Joint Campaign Committee formed on behalf of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association and the Men's League for Woman Suffrage. By joining forces, the Committee focused its efforts on obtaining pledges of the legislators for woman suffrage. Led by Mary Jane Coggeshall, the Joint Campaign Committee planned to combat the see-saw General Assembly through:

FIRST: That no member of the legislature who pretends to believe in the republican idea of majority rule can consistently vote against submitting any important question directly to his constituents for final decision;

SECOND: That we ask every candidate for legislative nomination in all parties to pledge himself, before the primaries, to vote for submission of the Suffrage Amendment to the people;

⁹⁷ Mary Jane Coggeshall, "IESA Convention, Ida Grove" September 25, 1906, Reel 10, Document 12, Coggeshall Papers, Women's Studies Collection, Schlesinger Library, 5.

⁹⁸ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 180.

THIRD: That we invite the Iowa Suffrage Association to join us in a campaign to secure such pledges and to appoint a Joint Campaign Committee of three members to co-operate with a special committee of the same number from our League.⁹⁹

While the Joint Campaign Committee's tactic was bold, legislative letdown continued. Gallaher attributed this failure to "the General Assembly, [which] was very conservative and continued to vote down the constitutional amendment until 1913."¹⁰⁰ During the same time as the Joint Campaign Committee, an amendment was posed that would change Section 1, Article 2 of the state Constitution. Altering the 1857 Constitution through deleting the word "male" and adding in "or she" and "or her" the section was to read:

Every citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of this State six months next preceding the election, and of the county in which he or she claims his or her vote sixty days, shall be entitled to vote at all elections which are now or hereafter may be authorized by law.¹⁰¹

Passing in the House 81 to 26 and in the Senate 31 to 15, the amendment then had to pass a second time in the subsequent General Assembly. This initial passage was likely thanks to a dry majority in both the House and the Senate.¹⁰² Surprisingly, the legislative see-saw stopped in 1915 with the second passage of the constitutional amendment. Having

⁹⁹ Joint Campaign Committee, "Pamphlets on History and Organization of Suffrage in Iowa, 1911-1917," p. 2, Iowa Women's Archives, Woman's Suffrage Collection, Iowa City: University of Iowa Archives, 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 213. See, Appendix I for House and Senate Voting for the Twenty-Ninth, Thirtieth, Thirty-First, Thirty-Second, Thirty-Third, Thirty Fourth, and Thirty-Fifth General Assemblies.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁰² Catt, and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 216.

received a vote of 84 to 19 in the House and 38 to 11 in the Senate, the amendment was then sent to the Iowa voters.¹⁰³

In the primary election of June 5, 1916, the vote for woman suffrage in Iowa was fraught with issues. Woman suffrage in Iowa found its support with Protestants, Republicans, British Americans, and dry counties. Among these groups, historian Thomas G. Ryan compared, "the close relationship between the two referenda votes offer[ed] considerable evidence that among grass-roots voters support for woman suffrage usually went hand-in-hand with support for prohibition."¹⁰⁴ This was a daunting issue for the suffrage election because in January of 1916 a prohibition law had gone into place in Iowa, and many feared the woman suffrage would make it exponentially more difficult to repeal the prohibition measure.¹⁰⁵ Not only did this election face resistance from the local liquor interests, but also the United States Brewer's Association as well as betrayal by the Republican delegates at the convention. Faced with mysterious ads throughout the local agricultural paper, woman suffrage became a target of a propaganda scheme. While the ads were associated with the brewing interests, the Republican convention had secretly planned to kill female enfranchisement at the ballot box.¹⁰⁶

Defeated in 1916, the only suffrage referendum in Iowa lost with the help of fraudulent voting across the state.¹⁰⁷ Due to the strange circumstances regarding the 1916

¹⁰³ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 220-221.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas G. Ryan, "Male Opponents and Supporters of Woman Suffrage: Iowa 1916," *Annals of Iowa* Vol. 45, No. 7 (Winter 1981): 540-542.

¹⁰⁵ Egge, "Woman Suffrage is a Midwestern Story," 11.

¹⁰⁶ Catt, and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 220-226.

¹⁰⁷ John P. Irish, ironically one of the first vice presidents of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society, helped to defeat the woman suffrage through anti-suffrage campaigning throughout Iowa; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 142-143.

election, the Woman Christian Temperance Union investigated and found fraud. Of the ninety-nine counties in Iowa, forty-four counties showed some form of tampering. When looking to the county map of Iowa created by Carrie Chapman Catt for 1916 fraudulent voting, there were twelve types of inconsistencies found on Figure 1: 1.) unaccounted for, 2.) more votes than names on the list of voters, 3.) more votes than names marked (x) on list of voters where any are so marked, 4.) number of votes where none are marked with (x) as voting on amendments, 5.) "yes" and "no" more than total in certificate, 6.) majority in cities not legally registered for amendments, 7.) majority in cities not legally registered against suffrage, 8.) "true return" not signed by some or all of the board, 9.) certificate changed, 10.) no time of opening polls or wrong hours given, 11.) only one ballot box, and 12.) the amendment and public measures not on the same ballot.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Adams, Audubon, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Bremer (GP), Butler (GP), Carroll (GC), Cass, Cedar (GP), Chickasaw [D](GC), Clinton (GC), Crawford (G), Davis [D], Des Moines, Dubuque [D] (GC), Floyd, Franklin (GP), Hamilton, Hardin (GP), Iowa, Jackson (GC), Jasper, Johnson [D], Jones, Keokuk, Lee, Linn, Louisa, Mahaska, Marion, Marshall, Monona, Monroe, Muscatine, Polk, Pottawattamie, Poweshiek, Scott (GC), Story, Tama, Wapello, Webster, Woodbury; Within the parenthesis and brackets are signifiers to identify counties that were Democratic [D], Protestant (P), Catholic (C), and German (G); Typically German Catholic voted Democratic while German Protestants voted Republican. See, Egge, "When We Get to Voting," 47-48; Carrie Chapman Catt, *Abstract of Vote on Woman Suffrage Constitutional Amendment Election, June 5, 1916*, Map, From State Historical Society of Iowa, *Iowa Women's Suffrage Collection*.

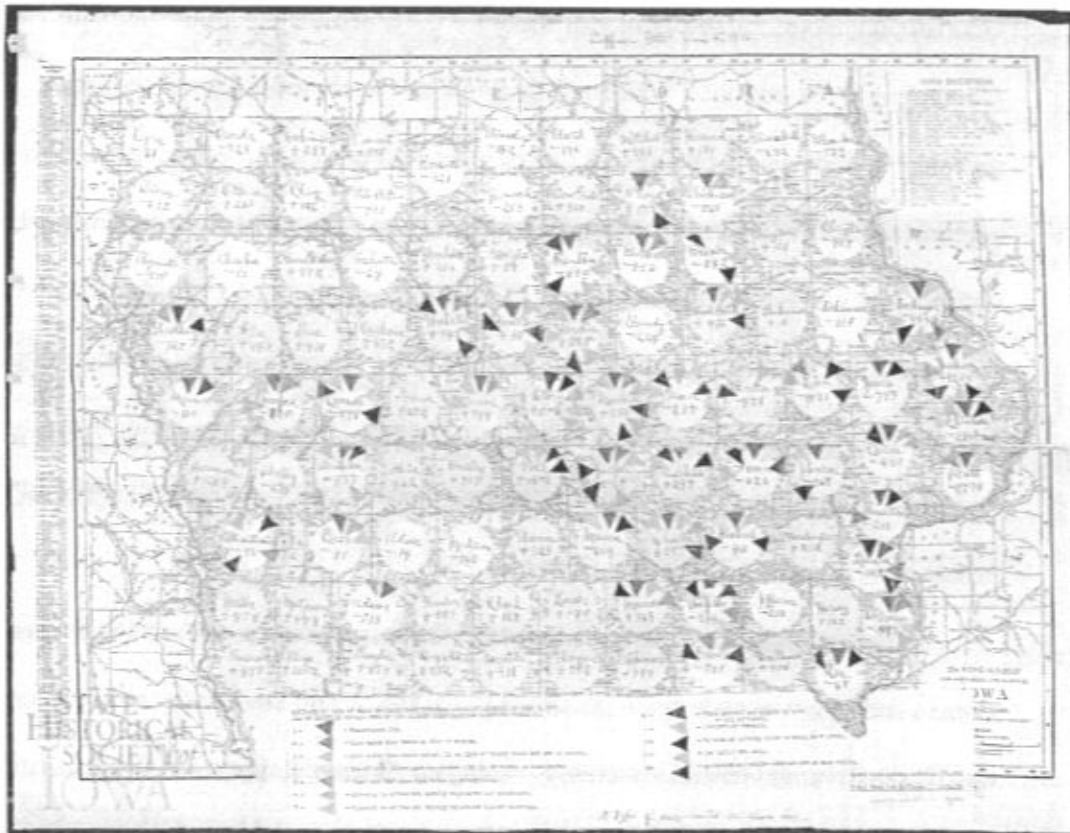


Figure 1. *Abstract of Vote on Woman Suffrage Constitutional Amendment Election, June 5, 1916.* Map by Carrie Chapman Catt, State Historical Society of Iowa, *Iowa Women's Suffrage Collection*.

Indicated by the colored triangles (see Appendix II for clearer figure) elections issues are identified. Counties are denoted by circles with the yellow marking those counties which voted for and the white voting against woman suffrage.

The while the 1916-woman suffrage vote in Iowa was fraught with voting issues, the liquor interests and propaganda were also responsible for the defeat. Looking to the inconsistencies, thirty-one of these counties accused of fraudulency voted against female enfranchisement. Also, within this number, the outright opponents of the temperance were the European immigrants, specifically Germans, Catholics, the wets, and

Democratic voters came into play.¹⁰⁹ Describing this voter fraud in relation to the German population, Egge asserts that the WCTU blamed the “ignorant Germans [for] sabotag[ing] the election.”¹¹⁰ When identifying the twenty most German counties, seventeen voted against female enfranchisement, and eleven of the twelve counties that committed fraud voted against woman suffrage. Even with a 200-page documented report of forty-four counties exhibiting signs of fraudulent voting in the 1916 election, the General Assembly kept the vote totals and the 10,341 majority against decision stood.¹¹¹ Catt and Shuler called the election a “brewer’s victory,” because the liquor interests won by virtue of defeating the woman suffrage amendment thanks in part to the “liberal” Senate and the anti-Prohibitionist Governor.¹¹²

The continuous letdown resumed after the corrupt referendum of 1916 when woman suffrage was once again presented to the House and the Senate in the majority-wet Thirty-Seventh General Assembly. Facing an Assembly angered at the accusations of corruption following the elective defeat, woman suffrage experienced mishap once again. Passing both the House and the Senate, woman suffrage should have been submitted once again to the public. However, due to a “clerical error,” the Secretary of State did not publish this amendment, and it was not submitted to the voters.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ryan, “Male Opponents and Supporters of Woman Suffrage: Iowa 1916,” 537-550; These opponents are consistent with results in other states, as well as experiencing fraud.

¹¹⁰ Egge, “Woman Suffrage is a Midwestern Story,” 12.

¹¹¹ Catt, *Abstract of Vote*; Schwieder, *Iowa the Middle Land*, 227-228.

¹¹² Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 220-226. For more on the connections between German immigrants, temperance, and woman suffrage see, Egge, “When We Get to Voting,” 110.

¹¹³ Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 224-225.

The nomination of Governor William Lloyd Harding allowed for woman suffrage to gain a powerful supporter. Expressing his approval for female enfranchisement, Harding claimed to be unaware of the unfortunate continual defeat of woman suffrage due to the Republicans and liquor interests plotting. In 1918 Harding placed himself on the suffrage advisory committee. One year later Harding presented before the General Assembly on his recommendations for approving the Federal Suffrage Amendment. Upon ratification of the Federal Suffrage Amendment, Harding was one of the first to respond. After decades of legislative letdown, woman suffrage was accepted by both the House and the Senate in Iowa and ratified on July 2, 1919 via federal amendment.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote*, 376; Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 226; Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 259-261.

