

1919 - Equal Suffrage  
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As a short preamble to this paper I wish to quote a few paragraphs from Chapter 9 of "Women Suffrage and Politics, written by Mrs. Catt and Mrs. Shuler. It is a clear authentic and interesting statement of suffrage history and politics and I wish more people might read it and know how long and hard was the battle for this little step of progress in true Democracy. Even the World War, fought to "make the world safe for Democracy," though more tragic, deadly, and costly, lasted but a short time in comparison and only achieved the opposite goal, making it safe for dictators.

Mrs. Catt says, "Three years were consumed in the process of writing the word male into the Federal Constitution, two more in completing the enfranchisement of the Negro. Both were strictly Republican party measures and were achieved by the combined political force of a majority party and the military power of the nation.

The demand to include women in any further extension of the suffrage, although supported at the time by men of great influence, was effectually evaded all along the way by the proposal to "let the women wait--this is the Negroes' hour-- the women's hour will come."

To get the word male in effect out of the Constitution cost the women of the country fifty-two years of pauseless campaign thereafter. During that time they conducted fifty-six campaigns of referenda to male voters; 485 campaigns to get Legislatures to submit amendments to voters; 47 campaigns to get state constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into State Constitutions; 277 campaigns to get state party conventions to include women suffrage planks; 30 campaigns to get presidential party conventions to adopt women suffrage planks in party platforms, and 19 campaigns with 19 successive congresses.

Millions of dollars were raised mainly in small sums and expended

with economic care. Hundreds of women gave the accumulated possibilities of an entire lifetime, thousands gave years of their lives, thousands more gave constant interest and such aid as they could. It was a continuous, seemingly endless chain of activity. Young suffragists who helped to forge the last links in that chain were not born when it began. Old suffragists who forged the first links were dead when it ended. //

Between the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment (March 30, 1870) which completed the enfranchisement of the Negro and 1910, lie forty years during which women watched, prayed and worked without ceasing for the womens' hour that never came. The party whips had cracked to drive the nation to enfranchise the Negro. They cracked and cracked again to prevent the enfranchisement of women. But strong men in both parties championed the womens' cause in Legislatures and political conventions and eventually the number of these became too large to be ignored. But it was not until public opinion, far in advance of party leaders, indicated that a choice must be made; that organized party help was given and even then it was neither united nor whole-hearted. Most victories were won however in spite of party opposition."

It was with amazing courage that the 480 campaigns to secure the submission of State Constitutional Amendments from Legislatures or constitutional conventions were conducted. In these campaigns millions of names were presented in the form of petitions. Candidates were interviewed, hundreds of whom gladly pledged their support, --press aid was solicited and in many states a majority of the papers were won over to support submission and adoption of the question. It was during one of these campaigns to get New York's State Constitutional Convention to submit a women suffrage amendment with the rest of its constitutional tinkering that the Political Equality Club of Chautauqua County made its most vigorous growth.

While individual women throughout the county were believers in

the principle of political equality, special interest was not awakened until Mrs. Lillie Devereaux Blake, then president of the New York State Suffrage Association, gave an address in the Opera House at Jamestown on July 24, 1885. She urged organization at that time of a local club, but it was not until November of 1887, when Mary Seymour Howell addressed an assemblage at Institute Hall, Jamestown that the women decided to organize. The following day Mrs. Howell met the women interested at the home of Mrs. Daniel Griswold and there helped to organize the first Political Equality Club in the county with thirteen members, evidently not believing in the superstition about its being an unlucky number.

Mrs. D. H. Grandin was made president; Mrs. R. N. Thompson, secretary; Mrs. C. W. Scofield, treasurer. The membership rapidly increased and the large and active club soon aroused the interest of women in neighboring towns and the following year 1888 clubs were organized in many towns in the county seemingly more in the southern part than in the northern section. During this year Kennedy and Mayville were organized in July; Frewsburg, Ellington, and Fredonia in August; Sinclairville and South Stockton in October; Gerry, Westfield, Harmony and Kiantone in November.

On August 16th 1888, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony renowned pioneers of equal suffrage addressed afternoon and evening meetings in Allen's Opera House, Jamestown. There was present in the large audience, Kate Stoneman, a native of Busti, who furnishes another first gem for Chautauque's crown and I think her story is interesting enough to recount at this time. I find it in Mrs. Henderson's scrap-book and it is dated May 20, 1886.

"Today the first female lawyer was admitted to practice in the State of New York. Miss Kate Stoneman a sister of General Stoneman, now Governor of California, has been reading and studying law in Albany for the past five years. Recently she passed a creditable examination

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along with the male students. The court decided, however, that the statutes required an applicant to be a male citizen and rejected her. A law, however, was passed which Governor Hill signed yesterday amending the code of procedure by removing the distinction of sex. Under this new law Miss Stoneman was admitted to the practice of law in all the courts of record in this state. Miss Stoneman is a member of the family whose old homestead is at Lakewood, her many Jamestown friends and admirers rejoice in her achievement and success." It would seem from the foregoing article that Chautauqua had also furnished a native son who became Governor of California.

And now let us return to the development of our subject. After this meeting, so great was the interest manifested throughout the county that a call for the purpose of organizing a western New York Political Equality Club was sent out by the Jamestown club. In response delegates assembled in Jamestown October 31, 1888 from Carroll, Charlotte, Cherry Creek, Ellery, Gerry, Harmony, Kiantone, Kennedy, Mayville, Stockton, Sinclairville, Randolph, Pomona Grange, and Ross Grange, showing how fast the idea had spread. Before the meeting was called to order by Mrs. C. H. Grandin, it was decided by those in charge to organize a county club instead of a western New York club. The idea of a western New York federation of clubs of general interest was carried out later and I believe largely by leading club women of Jamestown and Dunkirk.

Mrs. Martha R. Almy of Mayville was made chairman and the Political Equality Club of Chautauqua so sprang into being with these officers. Mrs. Martha T. Henderson, of Jamestown --president; Mrs. Anna C. Shaw of Kennedy --corresponding secretary; Mrs. Kate S. Thompson of Jamestown --recording secretary; Mrs. Lois B. Lott of Mayville --treasurer; Executive Committee, Miss Jane Colburn, Fredonia; Mrs. L. McAllister, Sinclairville; Mrs. Mary L. Hiller, Frewsburg. This organization was accomplished in

the afternoon and in the evening a meeting was held presided over by the new president, Mrs. Henderson. C. R. Lockwood of Jamestown and Mary Seymour Howell of Albany were the principal speakers thus it is that Chautauque County noted for its broad-minded liberal men and women and the birthplace of several progressive movements, further prides herself on the fact that she was the first county in the state to organize a county Political Equality Club with local clubs as auxiliaries.

From this time on semi-annual and annual meetings or county convention were called with weekly and monthly meetings in the separate towns. The first annual convention was held in the church at Bemus Point. Addresses were made by C. R. Lockwood and Reverend Henry Frank and Miss Kate O. Peate, known as the silver-tongued orator for labor.

The weather was bad but the meetings were reported as good. On the fourth of July of the same year 1889 Mrs. Marion T. Skidmore arranged for a celebration at Lily Dale and invited all the clubs of the county, a large number attended and a fine program was carried out. After music, the Declaration of Independence was read by Josiah Ransdell and addresses by Reverend Henry Frank of Jamestown, Mrs. R. S. Lily, Miss Kate Peate and Mrs. Hanna B. Stearns.

This was the forerunner of the Annual Womans' Day at the Dale. The spirits of these great leaders and splendid orators of the suffrage cause must often haunt that lovely place in summer for they came there so many times to speak and drew such crowds; that I am sure these occasions had much to do with the spread of the idea through the county, yes and much farther.

The second annual convention was held in Temperance Hall Fredonia in the afternoon and in the Normal School in the evening. Twenty-seven delegates were present. Mrs. Martha Henderson was re-elected president-- and Reverend Anna Howard Shaw delivered the address which was enthusiastically received and left a fine impression.

At the semi-annual meeting which was held next in Jamestown, Dunkirk was represented. They having organized some time in 1889 under the able leadership of Mrs. Elenora Babcock, the G. A. R. kindly donated their hall for the afternoon, showing their friendliness. This meeting was noted for having an unusual speaker. Mrs. Zerelda G. Wallace of Fredonia who was the step mother of General Lew Wallace the writer of Ben Hurr. She greatly pleased a large audience Dr. F. E. Almy also spoke. ☹

This year was one of unusual activity among the women of Jamestown who determined they should be represented by two women on the school board. Both the "Journal" and the "Sun" opposed this move. But the "Morning News", edited by Benjamin S. Dean advocated the election of the women. The Political Equality Club worked with a will and elected both their candidates, Mrs. N. R. Thompson and Mrs. Daniel Griswold, both highly accomplished women well fitted for the position. During the years 1890-1894 the Dunkirk women tried to secure the election of women to the school board of their city but with out success. About this time 1889, Mrs. E. R. Clarke brought out a magazine called "Equality!" It was published by Archie McLean of Sinclairville. It was finely edited and a good newsy little paper as several copies I found in Mrs. Henderson's scrapbook can testify but lack of financial support brought it to a close.

The third annual convention was held in Dunkirk November 1, 1890 and was the first meeting ever held in the New Woman's Union building of that city which building has since been torn down.

Mrs. Elnora M. Babcock was elected president at this meeting; Miss Lotta G. Cheney, Jamestown, recording secretary; Mrs. C. C. Parker, Dunkirk, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Lois M. Lott, Mayville, treasurer; Mrs. E. R. Clark of South Stockton chairman of executive committee and Martha T. Henderson, chairman of Chautauqua Committee.

In the summer of 1890, the desirability of having an address upon

woman suffrage from the Chautauqua platform was suggested and Mrs. Henderson as chairman of the Chautauqua committee began a correspondence with the management which resulted in the request being granted. The following year witnessed a large attendance at Chautauqua from clubs all over the county, one hundred driving from Lily Dale. Elnora M. Babcock then president of the county club presided in a dignified manner. Bishop Vincent welcomed the clubs in happy vein. The speakers of the day were Susan B. Anthony, Zeralda G. Wallace, Reverend Anna Shaw and Kate O. Peate. A song entitled "Welcome Wyoming" written by Amanda T. Cheney of Poland Center was sung in honor of that state coming into the Union, at that time, with women suffrage in its constitution. Frances Willard in writing Susan B. Anthony from the Assembly Grounds a few days later said, "Dearest Susan, I could sing Hallelujah over you and our Anna Shaw and Deborah Wallace." It was the best and biggest day Chautauqua ever had.

From that day to the present Chautauqua has given a day each year as long as needed to Political Equality and to other causes, in women's progress. The list of speakers that have appeared there covers the list of America's greatest pleaders for the rights of women. It would be difficult to estimate the amount of sentiment for suffrage made at this educational institution. In 1872 a debate was arranged between Reverend Anna H. Shaw and Dr. J. T. Buckley which stirred up much excitement. It is thought from the applaus she received that the audience was with her.

At the third annual convention at Sinclairville there were delegates present from twenty clubs and a membership of 1,000 was reported. At this time it was voted to become auxiliary to the State Suffrage Association. For several years Chautauqua had the largest county organization in the United States and it brought fresh life into the state organization, and a goodly number of the women of this county. The State officers

among them were Mrs. E. R. Clark, South Stockton, Mrs. Lotta G. Cheney, Mrs. Ellen Cheney of Poland, Mrs. Helen C. Peckham of Jamestown, who had acted as the valiant leader of the Jamestown Club for a number of years. Elnora Babcock achieved the Press chairmanship of the state and then became the first National Press chairman and conducted an extensive clipping bureau and had many newspapers that published her suffrage news column.

During the year 1891 the executive committee of the Political Equality county club made a strong effort to secure the passage of a bill giving women the right to vote for county school commissioners. This bill was drawn up by Dr. J. T. Williams both he and his paper being staunch supporters of the suffrage cause as was Mr. Louis McKinstry of Fredonia and his paper the Fredonia Censor. Senator Vedder introduced it in the Senate and succeeded in passing it with a good majority. Honorable W.C. Gifford, then member of the Assembly, from Jamestown, worked faithfully for its passage in the house but owing to the usual rush of business and a party wrangle the bill did not come to vote. The following year, 1892, it became a law through the efforts of Hon. W. C. Gifford in the house and Hon. J. T. Edwards in the senate. The county clubs worked for many other bills affecting women with occasional success. Mayville entertained the next convention and had the honor of having delegates from Cattaraugus County and Pomona Grange and a Pennsylvania State Grange. Mrs. Babcock was re-elected. It was largely through the efforts of Mrs. Henderson that Cattaraugus County was organized and some of her papers read at the meetings make very interesting reading. At the sixth annual convention held in Kennedy October 18, 1893, there were fifty-two delegates present here. Mrs. Babcock because of her state duties refused re-election as president and Mrs. Eveline R. Clark was chosen with Mrs. Ella C. Barmore recording secretary, Mrs. Hannah D. Love corresponding secretary and Mrs. E. C. Bronson treasurer.

That year 814 women voted at a school election in Dunkirk, a like proportion voting at other towns in the county.

Now came the time of supreme effort. There was to be a State Constitutional Convention. It was at this time, 1894, that Mrs. A. S. Prather of Jamestown made her first appearance in arduous physical work for the suffrage cause in circulating petitions for the amendment, that the women hoped this convention would recommend. Mrs. Prather pays a very fine tribute to the men of the county who were in office at that time when she writes, "Perhaps this is an appropriate time to express the gratitude that is always in our hearts for the many many men who unhesitatingly endorsed resolutions and petitions. We do not recall an instance when we could not enter the city building at Jamestown and secure the endorsement of our resolutions and petitions from any and all city officers there in. Our representatives in the State Legislature with few exceptions were ready champions of our cause. Speaker S. Fred Nixon, W. C. Gifford, Judge E. E. Woodbury, A. M. Cheney, H. L. Ames never disappointed our expectation and Mr. Fred W. Hyde much in Albany during the sessions kept the suffrage workers at home informed and rendered valuable service.

A semi-annual meeting of the club was held in Dunkirk April 5-6, 1894 in connection with a two day's mass meeting under the auspices of the state Political Equality Association to arouse interest in constitutional convention over 100 delegates and visitors were entertained by the Dunkirk club. The speakers were Reverend Anna H. Shaw, Mary Garret Hay, Louis McKinstry and Dr. Williams. All this strenuous effort to have the word male stricken from the Constitution. Six hundred thousand names were secured to a petition asking for it. The women of Chautauqua County secured 13,993 and in addition the W.C.T.U. secured over 2,000. The canvass made at that time revealed the fact that there were 4,627 women

in the county paying taxes on \$4,618,655 of real estate and on \$552,912 personal property. At a mass meeting in Jamestown speeches were made by Mayor O. E. Price, F. W. Stevens, Reverend L. H. Squires, J. L. Weeks, F. S. Thorp, W. C. Lindsey, John Woodard, Frank H. Mott and A. C. Pickard. The constitutional convention refused to submit the amendment the arbitrary vote of 96 delegates over ruling the expressed wish of six hundred thousand one third of whom were men. It is recorded that not only did Chautauqua's delegates; Louis McKinstry and Benjamin S. Dean vote for the amendment but worked and spoke in behalf of the women citizens of the State. So on the evening of October 29, 1894 the First Political Equality club of Jamestown tendered a reception in the G. A. R. Hall to Mr. and Mrs. Louis McKinstry and Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Dean in grateful remembrance of their valiant service.

On September 17-18, 1894 the seventh annual convention was held at Lily Dale. The defeat in the convention had seemingly disheartened the women and but twelve clubs were represented. The membership fell from 652 to 432. Mrs. Ellen Cheney was elected "resident." Lotta G. Cheney recording secretary; Laura M. Burgess, corresponding secretary; Harriet M. Chase, treasurer.

And here seems a fitting place to bring this early chapter in suffrage history to a close. But it is only a first chapter. Did they give up? No, they kept on and with renewed courage the depleted ranks were filled by new workers and with the help of those scared in battle went on for 23 years till the cause was won. Mrs. Martha Fuller Prather, Miss Jennie Prescott, Hettie B. Sherwin, Mrs. Nellie Erb are names that stand out among the hundreds that marched in that procession. The later campaigns is another story. I wish more women of today could know about the struggle those early women made that they might have some of the things today, that they take as a matter of course. The right to their own property the

right to make contracts, the right to their own children, the opportunity to enter any career they choose and to hold public office. Our advantage is due to their sacrifice. A few were even martyrs and went to prison.