

Carrie Chapman Catt

1859–1947



WHY SHE MADE HISTORY Carrie Chapman Catt campaigned for women's suffrage in the early 1900s.



As you read the biography below, think about how Carrie Chapman Catt's determination helped her in the struggle for women's rights.

Carrie Chapman Catt was born in Wisconsin and grew up in Wisconsin and Iowa. She worked her way through Iowa State College, and in 1881 she became a high school principal in Mason, Iowa. In 1883 she was named superintendent of schools. She was one of the first women to hold such a high position.

Several years after the death of her first husband, Carrie married George Catt. Before marrying him, Carrie Chapman asked him to sign an agreement. This agreement gave her four months of free time every year to work for woman's suffrage. George Catt signed the agreement, and he too became a strong supporter of woman's suffrage.

Carrie Chapman Catt devoted most of her life to woman's suffrage. She organized the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association and later served as the president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. She worked at both the state and national levels to build support for woman's suffrage.

Catt once said, "The simplest method now possible is by amendment of the Federal Constitution. To deny the privilege of that method to women is a discrimination against them so unjust and insufferable, that no fair-minded man North or South, East or West, can logically share in the denial."



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VOCABULARY

suffrage the right to vote

Catt also trained other women for direct political action to further the cause. Their work paid off when the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote was ratified in 1920.

Following ratification of the amendment, Catt organized the League of Women Voters. Its goal was to educate women about politics so that they could vote wisely. This organization is still active today, attempting to educate both female and male voters.

In the 1920s Catt became interested in the peace and disarmament movements. She was an active supporter of both the League of Nations and the United Nations.

In 1924 Catt said, “The struggle for the vote was an effort to bring men to feel less superior and women to feel less inferior.”

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What causes did Carrie Chapman Catt support?

2. **Make Judgments** Why do you think women had to fight so hard and so long to gain the right to vote?

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to Carrie Chapman Catt. Explain to her how the roles of women have changed during the past 30 years. Include a fact about a specific woman who is or has served in elected office.