

Suffragettes

Lucretia Mott, Margaret Fuller, and Susan B. Anthony



WHY THEY MADE HISTORY Suffragettes were women who supported women's rights and fought for women to have the right to vote.



As you read the biography below, think about the strength and determination it took the suffragettes to defend women's rights and fight for the right to vote.



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In the United States today, every adult has the right to vote. This right, however, did not always include all Americans. Women were not allowed to vote. It was not until 1920 that all women were given this right. The women who fought for this cause were known as suffragettes.

During the early 1800s, women began to take a more active role in society. More educational opportunities became available to women and women started to take part in various reform movements and politics.

The first public meeting in the United States to discuss women's rights occurred in 1848, when **Lucretia Mott** (1793–1880) organized a women's rights conference in Seneca Falls, New York. It was at this convention that supporters of women's rights worked together to create a Declaration of Sentiments, which identified the demands that needed to be met for women's equality. The Declaration of Sentiments included education for women, better job opportunities, and women's **suffrage**.

Mott was known for her powerful speeches. She was not afraid to speak out and even wrote a book

VOCABULARY

suffrage voting rights

ratified formally approved

called *Discourse on Woman*, which focused on these and other issues.

Mott was also known for her strong views against slavery, and she founded two societies for anti-slavery groups. In fact, her interest in women's rights came from an event that took place at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. Mott and other women were not allowed to participate in the conference and were required to sit behind a curtain in a different room. Enraged, Mott took interest in women's affairs and began demanding equal rights.

Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) was another American suffragette. Fuller was a reformer and journalist who wrote for *The Dial* and the *New York Tribune*. In 1845 Fuller wrote a book, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, which discussed the status of women in the United States during this time. The book specifically criticizes American culture for discriminating against women simply because of their gender.

People who opposed women's suffrage believed that women were inferior both physically and mentally to men, and less able than men to make decisions. Many argued that husbands could represent their wives far better than the women could represent themselves. American suffragettes fought these ideas.

In 1869 the National Woman Suffrage Association was founded. One of the leading founders was a radical suffragette named **Susan B. Anthony** (1820–1906). A teacher from New York, Anthony was responsible for demanding equal pay for female teachers, as well as fighting for many other women's rights.

The National Woman Suffrage Association united with the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890, forming a more unified and strong association. Anthony was the president from 1892 to 1900.

Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Margaret Fuller were all suffragettes who fought for women's right to vote. Their fight slowly began to bring about changes in the United States. Individual states began to give women the right to vote, one by one. Between 1869 and 1896, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho became the first few states to make this change.

The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, **ratified** in August 1920, granted all adult women throughout the nation the right to vote. The amendment was originally introduced to Congress in 1878, but it took more than 40 years before it passed. The amendment states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

Today, both men and women have the right to vote in the United States, thanks to the hard work of the suffragettes.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Who were the suffragettes? What did they accomplish?

2. **Summarize** Reread the quote from the Nineteenth Amendment. Write what it means to you, in your own words.

ACTIVITY

You have been invited to a women's suffrage convention. Make a poster or flyer supporting women's rights that you could bring with you to the convention. Include at least one fact from your reading.