

# Gender roles with the 19th century history essay



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Nineteenth century women were said to be the weaker, gentler sex whose especial duty was the creation of an orderly and harmonious private sphere for husbands and children. This was opposed to the public sphere, which men dominated. Respectable women, “ true women,” did not participate in debates on public issues and did not attract attention to themselves. In a society that denied the existence of a middle ground between purity and immorality, women who fell off the pedestal had to prove they were other than prostitutes. If a woman attracted public notoriety, she undermined her good reputation and courted infamy. Susan B. Anthony showed her undying readiness to endure unpopularity, first in the profession of teaching, where she rightfully resented the lack of equal pay for equal work, and then in the temperance movement where she gave her maiden speech. Miss Anthony could not turn a deaf ear to the issue of slavery where she without hesitation allied herself with the despised Abolitionists, eventually acting as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. She tirelessly lectured all over the country to reform a country desperately in need for change.

West Grove Massachusetts served as the birthplace of Susan B. Anthony on February 15, 1850. She was the second oldest child in a family of nine. Her father, Daniel, was a stern but open-minded man that manufactured cotton. Mr. Anthony was born into the Quaker religion and was a devout abolitionist. Susan was a very precocious child, having learned to read and write at the age of three. In 1826, when she was six years old, the Anthony family moved from Massachusetts to Battenville, New York. Susan was sent to attend a local district school, where a teacher refused to teach her long division because of her gender. Upon learning of the weak education she was

receiving, her father promptly had her placed in a group home school, where he taught Susan himself. While in this group, Susan's growing belief in women's equality was further fostered by Mary Perkins, another teacher there, as she conveyed a progressive image of womanhood. (1)

The Panic of 1837 forced Susan to end her formal studies because her family, like many others, was financially ruined. Their losses were so great that they attempted to sell everything in an auction, even their most personal belongings, which were saved at the last minute when Susan's uncle, Joshua Read, stepped up and bid for them in order to restore them to the family. (2) In 1839, the family moved to Hardscrabble, New York, in the wake of the panic and economic depression that followed. That same year, Anthony left home to teach and to help pay off her father's debts. She taught first at Eunice Kenyon's Friends' Seminary, and then at the Canajoharie Academy in 1846, where she rose to become headmistress of the Female Department. Anthony's first occupation inspired her to fight for wages equivalent to those of male teachers, since men earned roughly four times more than women for the same duties. (3)

Being brought up in a Quaker family, Susan B. Anthony and her family believed drinking liquor was sinful. While Anthony was working as head of the girls' department of Canajoharie Academy she joined the Daughters of Temperance, a group of women who drew attention to the effects of drunkenness on families and campaigned for stronger liquor laws. (4) In 1848, Anthony made her first public speech at a Daughters of Temperance supper, a step towards the public limelight. Anthony eventually returned to Rochester in 1849 where she was in turn elected president of the Rochester <https://assignbuster.com/gender-roles-with-the-19th-century-history-essay/>

branch of the Daughters of Temperance and raised money for the cause. In 1853, Anthony was refused the right to speak as she was told to “listen and learn” at a state convention of the Sons of Temperance in Albany. She simply left the convention and called her own. In doing so, Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the Women’s State Temperance Society with the goal of petitioning the State legislature to pass a law limiting the sale of liquor. (5) Together they collected signatures of some 28, 000 people for a petition, but the State Legislature rejected it because the majority of its signers were women and children. Anthony decided women simply needed the vote so that politicians would listen to their pleas. However, she eventually resigned from the Women’s State Temperance Society mainly because she was criticized for talking too much about women’s rights. She eventually decides not to support prohibition because it detracted too much attention from the cause of woman suffrage. (6)

After the Anthony family moved to Rochester in 1845, they became very active in the anti-slavery movement, and anti-slavery Quakers met at their farm almost every Sunday. Amelia Bloomer invites Susan Anthony to Syracuse in 1851 for an anti-slavery convention. (7) While participating in the convention, she is introduced to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a friend who would eventually travel the country with her giving speeches all the while attempting to persuade the government that society should treat men and women equally. Anthony becomes more involved in the anti-slavery movement and becomes an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. (8) She arranged meetings, distributed leaflets, put up various posters, and did what she did best, gave speeches. These were likely the more dangerous of

her attempts at changing the country as she encountered hostile mobs, suffered armed threats, and often had things thrown at her. She was hung in effigy, and the people of Syracuse dragged an image of her through the streets. (9)

Despite all of the violence directed at them, Anthony and Stanton organized a Women's National Loyal League in 1863 to support and petition for the Thirteenth Amendment which would outlaw slavery. The league worked tirelessly to collect and submit over 260, 000 signatures, two-thirds of them being women, to Congress. This was the first popular campaign ever conducted on behalf of a constitutional amendment, and helped significantly in getting the passage and ratification of the Thirteenth amendment in 1865. With a sense of victory, Anthony and Stanton both went on to campaign for Black and women's full citizenship, including the right to vote, in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. They were understandably bitter and confused when women were excluded from the amendments. Anthony remained steadfast as she continued to campaign for equal rights for all American citizens, including ex- slaves, in her newspaper *The Revolution*, which she began publishing in Rochester in 1868. Anthony's focus never waned as she attacked lynchings and racial prejudice in the Rochester newspapers well into the 1890s. (10)

Susan B. Anthony's first paid position was at Canajoharie Academy as the head of the girl's department at the age of 26 in 1846. Having taught there for two years, she earned \$220 in total. In 1853 Anthony attended a state teacher's convention and called for women to be admitted to the professions and in turn increase their salary. She also asked that women be given a

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voice at future conventions and possibly assume committee positions. Later, in 1859, she spoke before the state teacher's convention at Troy, New York and at the Massachusetts teacher's convention, explaining the need for coeducation based on the fact that there were no differences between the minds of men and women. . Anthony called for equal educational opportunities for all regardless of race, and for all schools, colleges, and universities to open their doors to women and ex-slaves. She fought so that the children of ex-slaves could attend public schools. In the 1890s Anthony campaigned for coeducation and equal treatment of boys and girls while on the board of trustees of Rochester State Industrial School. During this time Anthony also raised \$50, 000 in pledges to ensure that women were admitted to the University of Rochester. As a last-minute move to meet the deadline she put up the cash value of her life insurance policy. The University had no choice but to honor its promise and women were admitted for the first time in 1900.

Anthony first published a weekly journal entitled *The Revolution* on January 1, 1868. The journal was printed in New York City, and its motto was: " The true republic – men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less." Anthony and Stanton both worked together to produce the journal, with Anthony as the publisher and business manager while Stanton acted as the editor. The main thrust of *The Revolution* was to promote women's and African-Americans' right to suffrage, but it also discussed issues of equal pay for equal work, more liberal divorce laws and the church's position on women's issues. This was a canvas for both Anthony

and Stanton to express their views on topics such as sexuality in marriage and abortion. (11)

In Susan B. Anthony's journal *The Revolution*, she advocated an eight-hour work day and equal pay for equal work. It obviously stemmed from her unfair salary as a teacher, but the length of the workday was a shared dream for both men and women. The journal also encouraged a policy of solely buying American-made goods and encouraging the newly arriving immigrants to rebuild the South as their means of employment or settle the rest of the country. Publishing *The Revolution* in New York brought her in direct contact with women that worked in the printing trades. In 1868 Anthony encouraged working women from the printing and sewing trades in New York, who were excluded from men's trade unions, to form Workingwomen's Associations. In 1868, as an acting delegate to the National Labor Congress, Anthony persuaded the committee on female labor to call for votes for women and equal pay for equal work, although the men at the conference deleted the reference to the vote. Anthony formed the Workingwomen's Central Association in 1870 and was elected to act as president. The association provided educational opportunities for working women by drawing up and presenting working conditions at the time. (12)

Anthony further employed the use of *The Revolution* to encourage a cooperative workshop founded by the Sewing Machine Operators Union and boosted the newly-founded women typesetter's union. Anthony took advantage of a New York printer strike by urging the employers to hire women instead, hoping this would show how they could do the job just as well as men, and therefore deserved the same pay as the formerly hired

men. This obviously didn't go over well with the strikers as they accused her of strike-breaking at the 1869 National Labor Union Congress. The men's Typographical Union also accused her of running a non-union shop at The Revolution, and called her an enemy of labor. (13) Some 21 years later, as acting president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Anthony emphasized the importance of mending the tensions between her organization and the groups of organized labor. Her plan was to encourage Florence Kelley and Jane Addams in their work at Chicago, and Gail Laughlin in her goal to seek protection for working women through trade unions. (14)

Susan B. Anthony was convinced by her work for temperance that women needed the vote if they were to influence public affairs. Their later disappointment came with not getting the right to vote after their work with the Thirteenth Amendment. Their hard work was finally rewarded in Wyoming as it became the first territory to give women the right to vote in 1869. In the 1870s Anthony campaigned vigorously for women's suffrage on speaking tours in the West. A couple of years later Anthony, her three sisters, and a handful of other women were arrested in Rochester for having the audacity to vote. Anthony, being Anthony, refused to pay her streetcar fare to the police station because she was "traveling under protest at the government's expense." She was arraigned with other women and election inspectors in Rochester Common Council chambers. Being stubborn as ever, she refused to pay bail and applied for habeas corpus, but her lawyer paid the bail, keeping the case from the Supreme Court. She was indicted in Albany, and the Rochester District Attorney asked for a change of venue because a jury might be prejudiced in her favor. At her trial in Canandaigua



in 1873 the judge instructed the jury to find her guilty without discussion. He fined her \$100 and made her pay courtroom fees, but did not imprison her when she refused to pay, therefore denying her the chance to appeal. Miss Anthony made a closing statement saying “ but, yesterday, the same man-made forms of law, declared it a crime... for you, or me, or any of us, to give a cup of cold water, a crust of bread, or a night’s shelter to a panting fugitive as he was tracking his way to Canada. As then, the slaves who got their freedom must take it over, or under, or through the unjust forms of law, precisely so, now, must women, to get their right to a voice in this government, take it.” She gives the people in that courtroom a clear comparison to the injustices that women in the nineteenth century were dealing with, as once the slaves too had to suffer. (15)

In 1877 Anthony gathered petitions from 26 states with 10, 000 signatures, but Congress laughed at them. She appeared before every congress from 1869 to 1906 to ask for passage of a suffrage amendment but to no avail. In 1887 the two women’s suffrage organizations merged as the National American Woman Suffrage Association with Stanton as president and Anthony as vice-president. Anthony became president in 1892 when Stanton retired. Anthony campaigned in the West in the 1890s to make sure that territories where women had the vote were not blocked from admission to the Union. In 1900, aged 80, Anthony retired as President of NAWSA.

To better understand the mindset of nineteenth century society, one need only look to former president James A. Garfield. While still working as a young Ohio college teacher, he summed up the prejudice against women in public life that sustained antisuffragists for three quarters of a century: “...  
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there is something about a woman's speaking in public that unsexes her in my mind, and how much soever I might admire the talent, yet I could never think of the female speaker as the gentle sister, the tender wife, or the loving mother... The sacred place in my affections which Woman holds would be desecrated by the super addition of the business of public life and a contact with the coarser pursuits of Humanity." This was the social norm of the time, and, in fact, the less ignorant view upon the subject of women in the social sphere. (16)