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## Article Title: Sixty-Five Years Till Victory: A History of Woman Suffrage in Nebraska

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Article Summary: Amelia Bloomer spoke in Omaha in 1855 and other prominent suffragists followed. Their attempts to promote women's rights were opposed by those who felt that women belonged at home or that women would vote for prohibition (a particular concern of German-Americans). The state's voters rejected an 1882 amendment that would have made Nebraska the first state in the Union to give women the right to vote. Nebraska women gained full suffrage only after the Federal Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified by Nebraska in 1920.

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Photographs / Images: Lucy Correll, Hebron, contributor to the *Western Women's Journal*; "Votes for Women" campaign materials

## SIXTY-FIVE YEARS TILL VICTORY

### A History of Woman Suffrage in Nebraska

By ANN L. WIEGMAN WILHITE

**M**EN. Everywhere. Sitting on benches, standing between the seated, leaning against the walls. Hardly able to make her way through the crowd, the small, auburn-haired young lady took her place on the speaker's platform. She spoke simply, yet eloquently. After an hour and a half of attentive silence, the audience broke into great applause.

Who was this courageous, eloquent woman with the prim bonnet, simple black dress and matching pantalet? Only six months before—on July 4, 1855—she had stood in front of the Douglas House and addressed curious Omahans. Impressed, some of those listeners—eager to promote Nebraska's image as a progressive state—had invited her to give a similar speech here, before the Territorial Legislature.

Thus, less than eight years after the first woman's rights convention, the Nebraska Legislature heard their first speech on woman's rights. What did the women want? Emphatically, Amelia Bloomer replied:

*Mrs. Wilhite is a 1967 graduate of Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska. Her article was written while she was a student at Midland.*

We claim all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States to the citizens of the Republic. We claim to be one-half the people of the United States, and we deny the right of the other half to disfranchise us. <sup>1</sup>

According to the *Council Bluffs Chronotype*, Mrs. Bloomer's arguments "had met with much favor."

We may doubt the policy for women to vote; but who can draw the line and say that naturally she has not a right to do so? Mrs. Bloomer, though a little body, is among the great women of the United States; and her keen intellectual eye seems to flash fire from a fountain that will consume the stubble of old theories until woman is placed in her true position in the enjoyment of equal rights and privileges. Her only danger is in asking too much. <sup>2</sup>

The House did not think Mrs. Bloomer was asking too much: they responded to her arguments by passing a suffrage bill (fourteen to eleven) on January 25, 1856. The Council (upper house), however, was bickering over county boundaries. The session, limited to forty days, adjourned *sine die* before they could take a vote.

"I was assured by Gov. Richardson and others," wrote Mrs. Bloomer in her journal, "that the bill would undoubtedly have passed had a little more time been allowed them."<sup>3</sup> Had it passed, Nebraskans would have been the first in America—and in the world—to enfranchise women.<sup>4</sup> The forward-looking legislators who favored equal rights went unrewarded, with the exception of their eloquent leader, General William Larimer. The suffrage opponents gave Larimer a petticoat "over which there came near being a general melee."<sup>5</sup>

1. Dexter Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer* (Boston: Arena Publishing Company, 1895), p. 159.

2. Quoted in Amelia Bloomer, "First Female Suffragist Movement in Nebraska," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln, 1885), I, 59.

3. Dexter Bloomer, *Life and Writings* . . . , p. 214.

4. Wyoming Territory granted full suffrage to women in 1869. Abroad, the first area to do so was the Isle of Man in 1881.

5. Amelia Bloomer, "First Female Suffragist . . ." p. 60. Andreas (*History of the State of Nebraska*, pp. 183-184) records the matter differently: "some of the members of the opposition proposed to present General Larimer with a petticoat as a badge of his devotion to the sex. After the lapse of a quarter of a century, it is safe to remark that such an emblem, had it really been imposed on the General at that time would now be regarded as an historic garment, worthy of preservation among the valued relics of the State." Did he or did he not receive a petticoat?

Thus, Nebraska Territory maintained the male securely on his throne. Statehood promised no immediate change, for the 1866 constitution explicitly limited both electoral eligibility (Article II, Section 2) and constitutional incumbency (Article III, Section 4) to men.

Proponents of the woman's rights movement, however, did not consider the printed word infallible, especially when it denied women the franchise. With the assistance of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Miss Susan B. Anthony and George Francis Train, they inaugurated their suffrage campaign in Omaha on November 15, 1867. The same year the Legislature passed the following statute, which became effective in 1869:

*Every inhabitant at the age of 21 years, residing in the district, and liable to pay a school-district tax therein, shall be entitled to vote at any district meeting. (Italics added.)*

Women now had school suffrage, a step forward that Nebraska was the second state to make. But she could not stay ahead. In 1875 the Legislature changed the wording of the law to "every male citizen and unmarried woman;" it would take another six years to again include married women.<sup>6</sup>

In 1871 came the Constitutional Convention, where woman suffrage was repeatedly discussed. At first the suffragists' wishes were treated with a mock solemnity. Mr. B. I. Hinman, for instance, presented the following resolution on June 24:

WHEREAS; it is charged by woman (suffragists) that drunkenness, debauchery, fraud, and all grades of vice and villany [*sic*], are the rule of the day owing to the corruption of the male sex . . .

RESOLVED. That the elective franchise shall be conferred on females alone.

2nd. That the word "male" shall be stricken from the Constitution wherever the same occurs, and the word "female" substituted therefor . . . [the rest of the resolution proposed that all the traditional male occupations and duties be given to women].<sup>7</sup>

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6. The March 1, 1881, school suffrage law has been effective to date. Electors must reside in the district and own taxable property therein or have children of school age.

7. *Official Report of the Debates and Proceedings in the Nebraska Constitutional Convention, Publications of the Nebraska State Historical Society (York: 1871), XI, 121.*

By August, however, much serious attention was given to the question. Mr. E. Estabrook was the first to speak at length in favor of enfranchising women, quoting from Madison, Paine, Jefferson, Blackstone and others for support. How could one say that politics would desex women? What of Queen Victoria? "Why, sir, Queen Victoria is not only at the head of the government, but if there is a mother that comes up to the full standard of perfect motherhood, if there is one it is Queen Victoria herself."<sup>8</sup> In response to the clause that would give the vote to all males except infants, the insane or criminals, he asked: what of woman's exclusion?

. . . is she imbecile, is she a lunatic, is she idiotic, is her intellect immature? No, but she is a woman; and not a man. . . . I have been told, Mr. President, that it was not the intention at the time of the creation of this earth that woman should belong to the governing power. I want to know, Mr. President, how you found that out?<sup>9</sup>

The opposition responded with eloquent, prosaic orations eulogizing all that is noblest and purest of womanhood. To expose the delicate, sensitive, refined woman to the vices of politics would be unthinkable. One argument claimed that giving woman the vote would destroy the divinely ordained institution of marriage, sowing seeds of dissention between husband and wife. "A house divided against itself can not stand." This elevated discourse concluded:

Finally, Mr. President, I really think that if the ballot was placed in the hands of women, the old American eagle, that stands with one foot upon the Alleghanies [sic] and the other upon the Rocky mountains, whetting his beak upon the ice-capped mountains of Alaska, and covering half the southern gulf with his tail, will cease to scream and sink into the pits of blackness, of darkness concentrated, where the shrieks of lost spirits will forever echo and reecho through cavernous depths unknown and be no more forever.<sup>10</sup>

Though numerous resolutions were considered, the convention was unable to reach a solution; the issue was conveniently shifted onto the people via the separate submission device. But the people accepted neither the proposal (12,495 to 3,502) nor the constitution (8,627 to 7,986).

8. *Ibid.*, XIII, 78. See particularly the arguments pp. 64-82, 124-146, 199-231 and 266-302.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

"The women of America, . . ." wrote Walt Whitman in his *Democratic Vistas* of 1871, are "great . . . as man, in all departments; or rather, capable of being so, soon as they realize it, and can bring themselves to give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life." The women of Nebraska (specifically of Hebron in Thayer County) seemed to accept this challenge after the 1871 defeat, and the next decade saw a spurt of suffrage activity.

Another constitution was drafted in 1875, based largely upon the 1871 constitution. The suffrage issue no doubt had received much attention again at the constituting convention, but records of the proceedings do not exist. Nevertheless, any franchise efforts were unsuccessful. The accepted constitution (30,332 to 5,474) of 1875 denied suffrage to the mentally ill, to criminals—and to women.

In 1876 The *Hebron Journal*, published by Erasmus M. Correll, became the first paper to discuss equal rights. Three years later, it devoted an entire column to the political interests of women with Mrs. Lucy Correll in charge. In November of 1878, Susan B. Anthony won many converts in Hebron with her lecture, "Bread vs. the Ballot."

Another leading suffragist, Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, came to Hebron in April of 1879 and organized the first Woman's Suffrage Association in Nebraska. The Thayer Association grew from fifteen to seventy-five members and eventually included many leading business men.<sup>11</sup> Seeing the advantages of organization and unity, the suffragists formed a state association in January of 1881 with Harriet S. Brooks as the first president. A few months later the *Western Woman's Journal* was established to give the association a voice. Headed by Mr. Correll, this pioneer suffrage paper, "sparkling as the dewdrops,"<sup>12</sup> appeared monthly in active support of woman's equality.

What happened at a typical suffrage meeting? The agenda of a Gage County meeting consisted of reviewing the suffrage

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11. Lucy Correll, "Suffrage in Nebraska," *Nebraska Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Collection of Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences*, (Cedar Rapids, Ia: The Torch Press, 1916), p. 277.

12. *Western Woman's Journal*, I (May, 1881), 27, quoting the comments of The *Beatrice Express* on the new journal.

movement in England, reading a sketch of "Mrs. Oliver's Church" and quoting from articles by Julia Ward Howe. It concluded with two musical selections: "Come Where the Lillies Bloom" and "The Land of the Swallows."<sup>13</sup>

The enthusiasm of the suffrage associations soon stirred up support for another amendment. Submitted to the Legislature in 1881, it met the opposition of two principal groups: the "wets," who felt woman suffrage meant prohibition, and a large middle group who felt women belonged at home. Nevertheless, by a vote of fifty-one to twenty-two (eleven absent) in the House and twenty-two to eight in the Senate, a joint resolution was accepted to submit an amendment to the people. The ease with which it passed, however, was misleading; as A. E. Sheldon indicates in *Nebraska, the Land and the People* (I, 594), many legislators voted just to get rid of the suffrage question and to pass the buck to the voters.

The suffragists were encouraged by their proposal's acceptance and worked zealously behind the scenes: organizing associations, raising money, securing press outlets, distributing material and corresponding.

The Hon. Mr. Correll, who had supported the successful bill in the Legislature, was rewarded for his efforts by Mrs. Lucy Stone. In the fall of 1881, he received the presidency of the American Woman's Suffrage Association. Nebraska's leadership was nationally recognized; the acceptance of the 1882 amendment assumed new importance.

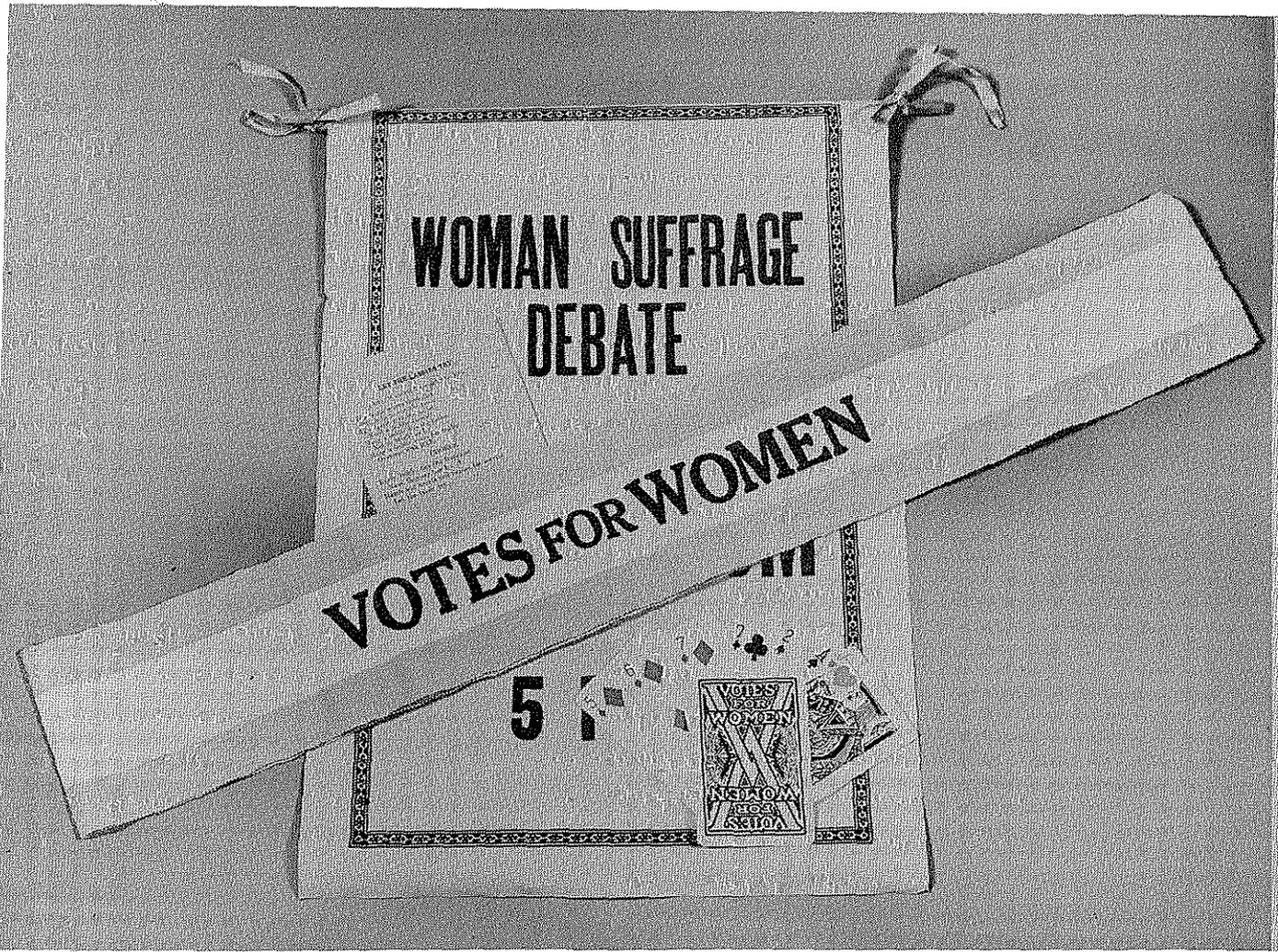
Nebraska Land  
(Air: "Annie Laurie")

*Oh, Nebraskaland, Nebraska,  
Our state so good and true,  
We'll give the equal franchise  
To men and women, too;  
To all the women, too,  
And their votes none can decry,  
And for women's rights and suffrage,  
We will lay us down and die.*

13. *Ibid.*, p. 24.



Mrs. Lucy Correll, Hebron, a contributor to her husband's paper  
the *Western Woman's Journal*



“Votes for Women,” as represented in items from the Museum collection.

*Oh, Nebraskaland, Nebraska  
 Will not long the right refuse,  
 But grant to every woman  
 Her just and lawful dues:  
 Her just and lawful dues,  
 And their votes none can decry,  
 And for women's rights and suffrage,  
 We will lay us down and die.*

The culmination of this feverish activity came with the election year, 1882. The autumn campaign opened with meetings in the Boyd Opera House in Omaha on September 26-28. The accounts of these meetings in the September 27 *Omaha Republican* (p.8) were encouraging:

Considered as a series of political meetings the suffrage convention had more hearers than all the democratic meetings and conventions held in Omaha during the last 5 years. The audiences were truly representative, embracing the business, professional and working interests of our city, and composed very largely of voters and citizens influential in politics.

Nebraska women were aided not only by the press (the majority of newspapers declared for suffrage), but also by the most talented suffragists in the country. To one hundred Nebraska towns came Mrs. Stone (Blackwell) and her husband, Miss Anthony, Miss Phoebe Couzins, Mrs. Stanton and several others, including Mrs. Clara Newman, a German who spoke with the German people. "The woman suffragists are here in force and talent," wrote one reporter, "and they will succeed in giving truth a tongue. Woman suffrage will be a law in Nebraska."<sup>14</sup>

What were the basic arguments of the suffrage supporters? Summarized from the Woman Suffrage Platform of 1882,<sup>15</sup> they were:

- 1) suffrage is women's birthright as citizens of the United States;
- 2) equal suffrage is inherent to democratic-republican philosophy and to the meaning of the Declaration of

14. *Western Woman's Journal*, II (September, 1882), 280, quoting *The Omaha Republican*.

15. *Nebraska Party Platforms, 1858-1940*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1940), p. 99.

Independence and the Constitution;

3) the larger electorate would eventually increase the strength and power of the country; and

4) women share the concern and consequences in governmental affairs, and thus should also be able to share power in controlling that government; they cannot accept taxation without representation.

On hearing these arguments, a fair, thoughtful man should have seen their logic. But opponents refused to listen. The *Omaha Herald* classed woman suffrage as a "species of lunacy." Other editorials in the *Herald* (typical of the opposition) gave such convincing arguments against suffrage as "no woman has ever had the courage to confess to wrinkles." Or: "A woman in Denver got so mad that she bursted a blood vessel and died on the instant. But women when they get mad invariably burst something."<sup>16</sup>

How many people accepted these arguments is, of course, unknown. More common were those that feared for the future of the home and motherhood.

Should a woman neglect her home to join in the giddy turmoil of the world, either the propagation of the race would ultimately cease, or the mortality of children, which is now so great, owing to the relegation of the tender offsprings to artificial nourishment, as to alarm the most thoughtful people, would multiply infinitely.<sup>17</sup>

But however they argued, on November 7 the voters rejected the amendment by a margin of two to one. Despite the eloquence, support, logic and optimism of the suffragists, "they were not able to prevail against the inherent prematurity of their issue."<sup>18</sup> Nebraska had again lost the opportunity to boost her image: acceptance of this amendment would have made Nebraska the first state in the Union to give women the right to vote.

How did the suffragists accept defeat? Some thought further attempts were futile and turned their interests elsewhere, as did the Grand Island Suffrage Society which

16. *Western Woman's Journal*, I (April, 1881), 2.

17. *Omaha Herald*, October 1, 1882, p. 2.

18. J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1907), III, 285.

donated its funds for the building of a library.<sup>19</sup> Others saw "no cause for discouragement but great need of continued and renewed activity."<sup>20</sup> They were determined to fight, regardless of the opposition. As one suffragette said to a weaker sister, "Call on God, my dear. She will help you."

Activity resumed in January of 1887 with the arrival of Susan B. Anthony to address the state suffrage convention in Lincoln. Since full suffrage seemed to be temporarily unattainable, interest turned to municipal suffrage. A Senate bill received favorable committee action, but, though conservative in its demands, was not voted upon. "Man was afraid of petticoat government. He had been king so long that he did not wish to make room for a queen."<sup>21</sup> Attempts were made again in 1889, 1891, 1893, 1897 and 1909, but each municipal suffrage bill met defeat.

On January 20, 1909, Senate File 120 was introduced to amend Article VII, Section 1 of the constitution. It passed the House sixty-two to thirty-four and the Senate eighteen to thirteen, lacking two votes of the necessary three-fifths majority. A second vote was taken in the Senate eleven days later, but the suffrage proposal failed again. "It is generally believed the bill of 1909 was defeated by the liquor interests," wrote Mrs. Grace Mason Wheeler to a suffragist friend in New York.<sup>22</sup>

A famous British suffragette, Mrs. Emmaline Pankhurst, came to Omaha in 1911 and "took this town by storm."<sup>23</sup> Two years later, another suffrage amendment was introduced in the House, but it too failed in a close vote: forty-nine to fifty with one person absent. Senators explained their negative votes:

[enfranchising women would] double the expense of election with practically the same result and if not a division in the family. . . . the introduction of women into the man's political world of strife and

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19. Othman Abbott, "Struggle for Woman's Rights in Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, XI (July-September, 1928), 151.

20. *Nebraska Party Platforms . . .*, p. 102.

21. Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska, the Land and the People* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), I, 642-643.

22. Personal letter of Grace Mason Wheeler to Mrs. Mary Dennet, December 15, 1910. Nebraska State Historical Society, MS1073, Box 2.

23. Interview with Mrs. Ada Shafer (a Nebraska suffragette) in *The Omaha World-Herald*, September 15, 1966.

contention, of ambition, jealousies, and bitterness as we know it to be, would tend directly to the decay of the home. . . . even under woman suffrage no woman would ever sit in the White House as President, for the reason that not one could be found who would admit she was 35 years of age. . . .<sup>24</sup>

Senator Charles H. Busch remarked that this state had adopted (in 1912) the initiative and referendum to meet such problems. The suffragists took the hint and circulated petitions in every county during the spring and summer of 1913. The names totaled 48,035 and made at that time, according to a Lincoln paper, "the largest [initiative petition] that has ever been filed in Nebraska."<sup>25</sup>

*Nebraska! Nebraska!*

*She's all right, —*

*Organize! Organize! and in the fight!*

*Right up the stream we'll row our boat,*

*For Nebraska women are bound to vote.*

And bound they were! Nebraska women made the 1914 campaign the most enthusiastic to date, employing everything from songs, slogans and street meetings to parades and posters. This time they were assured of victory.

Let the Lassies Try

(Air: "Coming through the Rye")

*If a lassie wants the ballot*

*To help to run the town,*

*If a lassie gets the ballot,*

*Need a laddie frown?*

*Many a laddie has the ballot*

*Not so bright as I,*

*Many a laddie votes his ballot*

*Overcome with RYE.*

24. *Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Session of the Nebraska House of Representatives* (House Journal), (Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1913), pp. 739-741.

25. "Outlook Is Bright," [n.d.] Newspaper clipping, presumably The *Lincoln Star*, in Nebraska State Historical Society, MS1058.

## CHORUS

*Every laddie has the franchise  
Nane, They say, hae I.  
Hands and hearts and brains for service  
Let the lassie try.*

*If a lassie works for wages  
Toiling all the day,  
When her work the laddie's equals  
Give her equal pay.  
If a body pays the taxes  
Surely you'll agree  
That a body earns the franchise  
Whether HE or SHE*

But they did not agree. The election returns showed 90,738 for the amendment, but 100,842 against. Why did the amendment fail? Two strong reasons appear: (1) the possibility of fraudulent voting and (2) the activities of the opposition.

First, was there fraud? After the election Attorney General Willis E. Reed stated "that most of the amendments...would have carried if pains had been taken to correctly count the vote."<sup>26</sup> Fraudulent counting had been reported, but a recount bill was not offered in the Legislature. Too many feared their interests would be hurt.

The other reason for the suffrage defeat was strong opposition from three principal groups. The first was comprised of leading business and professional men, such as those in Omaha who signed the "Omaha Manifesto" against suffrage. The second group consisted of women who did not want the vote. Some were strictly *Hausfrau* who wanted only *Kuche, Kinder und Kirche*; others were working women who felt they benefited more from men's efforts on their behalf than by equal suffrage.<sup>27</sup>

26. "Should Have Carried," *Suffrage Messenger*, II (July 1, 1916), 1.

27. See "Anti-Suffragists Plan Big Meeting Next Saturday," *Omaha Bee*, September 23, 1914, in MS1073, Box 1.

It was, however, the third group that played the most important role. These were the foreign-born citizens, specifically those influenced by the German-American Alliance. Having brewery interests, the Alliance was strongly against woman suffrage. The national convention of the Alliance in August, 1914 declared against the Anti-Saloon League and also the "equally obnoxious advocates of female suffrage."<sup>28</sup> Letters were circulated in German to the German citizens and local alliances. They appealed to German nationalism, urged them to stand together and to oppose woman suffrage, which was only intended to saddle the "yoke of prohibition" on their necks.<sup>29</sup> The Alliance was not entirely without grounds in linking suffrage with prohibition. After all, the Nebraska Prohibition Party included suffrage in its platforms continually from 1884 to 1920, and often they shared the same reformists. It also was not uncommon to hear a suffragist condemning the evil and drunkenness in this male-ruled world or singing "Many a laddie votes his ballot/Overcome with RYE."

Actually, it was not the principles of the Anti's that hurt the suffragists, but their tactics. They cut into suffrage parades with suffrage-bannered cars intended to make the suffragettes look foolish. And at the last minute they circulated a tale concerning a woman locked up with eleven men for forty-eight hours while serving on a jury. "Men, do you want *your* Mother, *Your wife*, *your* daughter to serve on a jury? If not, vote *no*." In reality, suffrage would not have opened jury duty to women; nevertheless, Mrs. Katherine Sumney felt the most damage was done by this "terrible tale." "I shall always think our campaign was too 'ladylike.' Everyone was afraid to fight,"<sup>30</sup> she wrote.

Suffragists refused to give up, however, even if their ladylike fighting postponed the victory. Activities included

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28. James Clifton Child, *The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-1917*, (University of Wisconsin, 1939), p. 17.

29. Letter to Local Alliance of Columbus from German-American Alliance, MS1073, Scrapbook 1, p. 21.

30. Personal letter of Mrs. Katherine Sumney to Mr. Charles Halliman, September 28, 1915, MS1073, Box 1.

taking over the Legislature after it adjourned *sine die* (in which they showed their skill and efficiency), invading a boiler factory with their petitions or crusading to nearby towns. One suffragette "blithely joined in a crusade to Lincoln, forgetting her husband entirely. Not only did he miss supper, but he had no idea where she had gone."<sup>31</sup>

Headlines of 1915 described the failure of another municipal suffrage bill, the winning of converts for suffrage by the eloquence of William Jennings Bryan and the Rev. Billy Sunday, and the organizing of the Nebraska Suffrage Pig Committee. The chairman, Mrs. Harriet C. King, urged suffragists to "Bring on your pigs!" The fat of these sacrificial pigs was converted into money for the campaign.<sup>32</sup> Other sources of revenue were donations, bazaars and the sale of old rags, papers, bones and rubber.

Then came 1917 and what seemed to be just another municipal suffrage bill. It passed the House easily with a vote of seventy-three to twenty-four. But Senate power was in the hands of two German-American politicians (John Mattes and Philip Kohl), and the bill died in committee. It would have met the fate of previous suffrage bills had not another bill appeared, a repeal of a law requiring that German be taught in grade schools whenever a designated number of people requested it. The Alliance made a deal: municipal suffrage in exchange for defeat of the repeal. Suffragists agreed and rejoiced that they now could vote for all offices not mentioned in the constitution, i.e. city and county officials and presidential electors. "With this good beginning," stated Mrs. W. E. Barkley, president of the Nebraska Woman's Suffrage Association, "the women of Nebraska hope to complete the work by getting full suffrage in 1918."

We will call in suffragists from Colorado and Wyoming on the west, from Dakota and Minnesota on the north and northeast, from Iowa and

31. *Omaha World-Herald*, September 15, 1966.

32. "Pig for Suffrage," *Suffrage Messenger*, I (November 1, 1915), 2.

Missouri on the east and southeast, and from Kansas on the south. . . .  
 [to] help carry Nebraska for woman suffrage . . . 33

Success was short-lived. No sooner was the bill signed than Senator Mattes headed a group to circulate a petition seeking annulment of the new statute. In less than a month, the Alliance and other Anti's had obtained the necessary signatures, filed a referendum and suspended operation of the suffrage law. The suffragists contested the petition immediately, and investigation found one-third to one-half of the signatures the result of fraud, forgery and misrepresentation. After two years of an exhausting court battle, Judge Leonard Flansburg declared the petition invalid.<sup>34</sup> Riding on the heels of the national suffrage amendment, this municipal suffrage law was too late to aid its original purpose. It did, however, become important in other ways.

First, "the case" won national attention. The *Woman Citizen* claimed "no battle for suffrage was ever fought harder than this legal battle in Nebraska."<sup>35</sup> Suffragists in every state awaited the outcome and helped to support their Nebraska friends. (The examining of witnesses often cost the Suffrage Association \$150 a day.) Secondly, the Anti's had to pay the court costs, totaling several thousand dollars. They also lost considerable influence because of their dishonesty. Finally, the 1917 case had demonstrated weaknesses in the referendum law and brought about needed changes. The solicitor of petition signers, for example, must now live in the county in which he works.

The close of an era was rapidly coming. A full suffrage amendment was introduced in the Senate in March of 1919, but Mrs. Barkley requested withdrawal "because a new constitution will be submitted to the voters in 1920."<sup>36</sup> A few months later, the Federal Congress passed the Nine-

33. "Plan for 1918 Suffrage Fight," *Omaha News*, May 5, 1916, MS1073, Box 1

34. MS1073, Scrapbook 3 deals with the 1917 case.

35. "Nebraska Suffragists Win," *Woman Citizen*, IV (July 19, 1919), 168.

36. "Killed by Request of Suffrage Women," *Lincoln Journal*, March 28, 1919. MS1073, Box 2.

teenth Amendment, and the Nebraska Legislature accepted it unanimously.<sup>37</sup>

On August 2, 1919, Nebraska became the fourteenth state to ratify the amendment. In commemoration of this event, Governor Samuel R. McKelvie addressed the people, telling them to "rejoice and break forth into singing." He also recommended that "September twenty-eight be observed as a day for general celebration, and that at twelve o'clock high noon, let all the bells ring out the old and ring in the new."<sup>38</sup>

A new age had indeed begun. In 1920 the Nebraska Woman Suffrage Association reorganized as the Nebraska League of Women Voters, and the women prepared to exercise their first voting privileges. It had taken sixty-five years to achieve this victory. Men were still everywhere—but no longer alone.

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37. An amendment granting suffrage to women was first submitted to Congress in 1875 by Miss Anthony. It was not introduced in the Senate until 1878 and was voted on four times before it passed. (*See Congressional Record*, LVIII, Pt. 1 [May 21, 1919] 83). In the fourth vote (February, 1919), the German-American Alliance was almost successful again in defeating suffrage. Nebraska's Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock, supported by the Alliance, defied his constituents and voted against the amendment. Only one more positive vote would have made the necessary two-thirds majority.

38. *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Nebraska*, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1942), III, 425.