



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

A Famous Friendship

by Jean McLeod



Susan B. Anthony

A chance meeting on a street in Seneca Falls, New York, dramatically altered history. In the spring of 1851, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were introduced after an abolitionist meeting. It was the beginning of one of the most famous friendships in U.S. history.

Cady Stanton lived in Seneca Falls with her abolitionist husband and young children. Anthony, born in Adams, Massachusetts, was a Quaker reformer. She traveled and lectured on the evils of liquor and the importance of abolition. When she called later at the Stanton home,

the two women spent the next several hours sharing thoughts on abolition, temperance, and women's rights. Anthony was particularly interested in hearing Cady Stanton talk of the women's rights convention that she and four other women had organized in 1848. The visit passed quickly. Each woman found in the other a friend with whom she could share ideas.

Over the next few years, Anthony became more interested in women's rights. She visited Cady Stanton often. She grew to share her friend's conviction that the right to vote was the most important step in gaining

A **Quaker** is a member of the Society of Friends, who tolerated other cultures and opposed war.

A **conviction** is a fixed or strong belief.

An editorial cartoon captures women's situation in the 1800s. It shows all the ways that a woman is trusted and respected—as a mother raising children and giving advice and as a wife managing the home and supporting her husband. But the final frame points out that women are treated no better than “the convict and the idiot when it comes to her competency to vote.”



equal rights for women. Together, the two women committed themselves to that goal.

Anthony was unmarried. It was easier for her to travel, attend conventions, and organize groups to work for suffrage. She also was skilled in raising money to help pay for leasing halls and printing posters and pamphlets. Cady Stanton, on the other hand, was tied to her home and the care of her seven children. She had a way with a pen, however. She could write speeches, resolutions, and newspaper articles in a crisp style that caught people's attention. Cady Stanton said of Anthony, "I forged the thunderbolts; she fired them." The two women made a good team. Armed with Anthony's research and facts, Cady Stanton prepared the speeches that Anthony gave. When either woman faltered, the other one offered encouragement.

At first, Anthony felt uncomfortable speaking in front of groups, but Cady Stanton told her, "I have no doubt that a little practice will render you an admirable lecturer." Likewise, when Cady Stanton hinted that at times she was tired and thought of retiring from public

view, Anthony would show up with a bag, "stuffed with facts . . . the statistics of women robbed of their property, shut out of some college, half paid for their work, the reports of some disgraceful trial; injustice enough to turn any woman's thoughts from stockings and puddings."

When Cady Stanton's children were older and she could leave them, she traveled with Anthony. For 10 years, the two women campaigned for suffrage together. As soon as they reached a town, Anthony began organizing. She found a hall, put up posters, handed out leaflets. When the meeting time arrived, Cady Stanton stepped forward to do what she did best—give a humorous, well-planned address. Together, Anthony and Cady Stanton founded suffrage associations and organized annual conventions. They met with lawmakers, and campaigned in several states. From 1868 to 1872,



The first page of the first issue of *The Revolution*, a women's suffrage publication produced by Cady Stanton and Anthony



In 1921, a statue of Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Lucretia Coffin Mott was enshrined in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.



FAST FACT

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, published by English author Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, made the earliest public case for recognizing women's rights.

The National American Woman Suffrage Association gathered for its convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1919.



they published *The Revolution*, a weekly newspaper that advocated for women's rights. They also co-edited the first three volumes of *A History of Woman Suffrage*.

Then, the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870. It stated, "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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude." But there was no mention anywhere of the right to vote for women.

For decades, Cady Stanton and Anthony had worked for freedom

and justice—for the abolition *and* the suffrage movements, for African Americans *and* women. When Congress passed the 15th Amendment, legislators refused to expand the wording to grant voting rights to women. And with the nation trying to recover from the Civil War (1861–1865), women were told that the timing wasn't right to fight for women's suffrage.

Cady Stanton and Anthony refused to be patient. In May 1869, they formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Their goal was to pass a constitutional



amendment giving women the right to vote. In addition to suffrage, the NWSA pushed for other rights, such as easier divorce and property laws for women. It also criticized the 15th Amendment for not including women.

The NWSA's agenda did not appeal to all women. So, a second women's suffrage organization emerged in 1869. The leaders of the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) included men and women. They decided to focus just on the vote for women. They also believed it would be easier to achieve suffrage by changing laws state by state, instead of trying to amend the Constitution. The more moderate AWSA became the larger and better-organized group.


In 1890, efforts to unite the two groups into one were successful. The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) carried the fight for the next 30 years. Cady Stanton and Anthony led the organization for the first decade. New suffrage leaders, such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, took over in 1910. After the 19th Amendment was rati-



DID YOU KNOW?

Racism threatened the unity of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). The group did not exclude African American women, but southern white women did not want to work alongside black women. Southern NAWSA chapters made their own rules that excluded black women from joining. In an effort to address the issue during the 1913 women's march in Washington, D.C., African American women were allowed to participate, but they were told to march in a segregated group toward the back of the parade. Some black women leaders, such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett (LEFT), ignored the rule and marched with their state delegations.

fied, the NAWSA evolved into the League of Women Voters.

Neither Cady Stanton nor Anthony lived to see their dream of full women's suffrage in the United States come true. Cady Stanton died in 1902. Anthony died in 1906. But together, the two women devoted more than 50 years to the cause. Truly, they can be considered the Founding Mothers of women's rights. 



FAST FACT

In 1878, Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced the first attempt at a women's suffrage amendment in Congress.

