

The Nineteenth Amendment

Overview

Students will examine the advocacy of women suffragists that led to the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment via images, historical documents, and readings.

Courses

Civics and Economics
American History II

North Carolina Essential Standards for Civics and Economics

- CE.C&G.2.3 - Evaluate the U.S. Constitution as a “living Constitution” in terms of how the words in the Constitution and Bill of Rights have been interpreted and applied throughout their existence (e.g., precedents, rule of law, Stare decisis, judicial review, supremacy, equal protections, “establishment clause”, symbolic speech, due process, right to privacy, etc.)
- CE.C&G.2.6 - Evaluate the authority federal, state and local governments have over individuals’ rights and privileges (e.g., Bill of Rights, Delegated Powers, Reserved Powers, Concurrent Powers, Pardons, Writ of habeas corpus, Judicial Process, states’ rights, Patriot Act, etc.)
- CE.C&G.3.4 - Explain how individual rights are protected by varieties of law (e.g., Bill of Rights, Supreme Court decisions, constitutional law, criminal law, civil law, Tort, Administrative law, Statutory law and International law, etc.)
- CE.C&G.3.8 - Evaluate the rights of individuals in terms of how well those rights have been upheld by democratic government in the United States.
- CE.C&G.4.3 - Analyze the roles of citizens of North Carolina and the United States in terms of responsibilities, participation, civic life and criteria for membership or admission (e.g., voting, jury duty, lobbying, interacting successfully with government agencies, organizing and working in civic groups, volunteering, petitioning, picketing, running for political office, residency, etc.)
- CE.C&G.4.5 - Explain the changing perception and interpretation of citizenship and naturalization (e.g., aliens, Interpretations of the 14th amendment, citizenship, patriotism, equal rights under the law, etc.)

North Carolina Essential Standards for American History II

- AH2.H.2.1 - Analyze key political, economic, and social turning points since the end of Reconstruction in terms of causes and effects (e.g., conflicts, legislation, elections, innovations, leadership, movements, Supreme Court decisions, etc.).
- AH2.H.2.2 - Evaluate key turning points since the end of Reconstruction in terms of their lasting impact (e.g., conflicts, legislation, elections, innovations, leadership, movements, Supreme Court decisions, etc.)
- AH2.H.4.1 - Analyze the political issues and conflicts that impacted the United States since Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., Populism, Progressivism, working conditions and labor unrest, New Deal, Wilmington Race Riots, Eugenics, Civil Rights Movement, Anti-War protests, Watergate, etc.).
- AH2.H.4.3 - Analyze the social and religious conflicts, movements and reforms that impacted the United States since Reconstruction in terms of participants, strategies, opposition, and results (e.g., Prohibition, Social Darwinism, Eugenics, civil rights, anti-war protest, etc.).
- AH2.H.4.4 - Analyze the cultural conflicts that impacted the United States since Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., nativism, Back to Africa movement, modernism, fundamentalism, black power movement, women’s movement, counterculture, Wilmington Race Riots, etc.).

Essential Questions

- What is the purpose of the Nineteenth Amendment?

- Who were some of the most prominent women suffragists and what actions did they take to encourage the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment?
- What was the Seneca Falls Declaration?
- Compare and contrast the roles of women in the 1800s-1900s to the roles of women in today's society.

Materials

- Internet access
- Nineteenth Amendment, image attached
- Seneca Falls Declaration, handout attached
- "Remembering Susan B. Anthony's Pioneering Vote" NPR Clip: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6738537>
- Road Trip for Suffrage, story attached
- Suffragist Image and Election Day Political Cartoon, attached
- Women's Civil Rights in NC, timeline assignment attached

Duration

70-90 minutes

Procedure

Introduction to the Nineteenth Amendment

1. Explain to students that in today's lesson, they will be examining a time when women were treated very differently, not only by society, but by the law. Project the attached image of the **Nineteenth Amendment** and ask students to share what they already know about this amendment and also to note what they see in the image. Discuss:
 - What was the purpose of the Nineteenth Amendment?
 - According to the image, when was the Nineteenth Amendment passed by Congress?
 - Imagine living in a time when you would be unable to vote based on your race or your gender. What do you think this would feel like? Why do you think our government restricted women from voting up until 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified?
 - What do you imagine it took for the 19th Amendment to be ratified (passed)?
2. Have students do the math to figure out how many years it has been since the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified; write this as large as possible at the front of the room and remind students that this is how many years women have been allowed to vote. Further explain to students:
 - Passed by Congress on June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920, the milestone of the Nineteenth Amendment required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. Between 1878, when the amendment was first introduced in Congress, and August 18, 1920, when it was ratified, champions of voting rights for women worked tirelessly, lecturing, writing, marching, lobbying, and practicing civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change. Some pursued a strategy of passing suffrage acts in western states, with nine states adopting woman suffrage legislation by 1912. Others challenged male-only voting laws in the courts. Militant suffragists used tactics such as parades, silent vigils, and hunger strikes. Often supporters met fierce resistance. Opponents heckled, jailed, and sometimes physically abused them. *Source:* <http://www.historicaldocuments.com/19thAmendment.htm>

Discuss:

- Why do you think women suffragists fought so hard to achieve the right to vote?
- Compare and contrast the role of women in the 1900s to women's roles today. How do you imagine women were viewed and treated in 1900s society? How do you imagine 1900 society reacted to the idea of women voting?

- What does it take to bring about change in society?

Seneca Falls Convention

3. Explain to students that in 1848, the first women’s rights convention to be held in the United States took place in Seneca Falls, NY. The convention was organized by **Lucretia Mott** and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, two Quakers whose concern for women’s rights was aroused when Mott was denied a seat at an antislavery meeting in London (many women suffragists were also abolitionists). At the **Seneca Falls Convention** 240 sympathizers, including 40 men, met to discuss the limitations imposed on women, such as the lack of voting rights. The delegates adopted a statement, the **Seneca Falls Declaration**, that they modeled after the Declaration of Independence, as well as a series of resolutions calling for women’s suffrage and the reform of laws that gave women an inferior status.
4. Divide students into small groups of 3-4, and hand out copies of the attached Seneca Falls Declaration. Instruct students to read the declaration together, then discuss and answer the questions underneath. Once students have finished, debrief the document as a group:
 - Describe the complaints that are issued in this declaration.
 - Which complaints do you feel are most valid/serious and why?
 - How does this document compare to the Declaration of Independence? How do these complaints resemble complaints of Patriots?
 - Based on what you learned about 1800s society after reading this document, how would your life differ if you lived then rather than now?
 - Are any of the complaints outlined still problematic in today’s society? Explain.
 - Why is this document relevant to us today?

A Continuing Fight for the Right to Vote

5. Explain to students that while this declaration was written in 1848, little progress came of it for years. However, women continued to fight for their rights, often simultaneously while fighting for the rights of those who were enslaved. Next, project the attached image of Susan B. Anthony and ask students if they know who the image is, and if they can share anything about this woman. After students share, play the following clip from NPR describing Susan B. Anthony’s arrest for illegally voting in 1872 (this clip is also followed by several excellent current event connections to the women’s suffrage movement that you may choose to share with students): <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6738537>
Discuss:
 - Why did Susan B. Anthony and her sisters go to a Rochester barber shop in 1872?
 - When Susan is met with refusal to register her to vote, what Amendment does she cite as giving her the right to do so? In what way does this amendment give her the right to register to vote?
 - Why were Susan B. Anthony and 14 other women arrested on Election Day?
 - Why do you think it was so important for Susan B. Anthony to vote?
 - Based on this story, how would you characterize Susan B. Anthony?
 - Given what so many suffragists went through to gain the right to vote for women, what do you make of the fact that many citizens today do not exercise their right to vote? What do you think Susan B. Anthony would want to say to women today who don’t vote?
 - What “firsts” for women does the reporter note at the beginning of this story? Evaluate what this says about our society.
 - Do you feel that the fight Susan B. Anthony and other suffragists started in the 1800s is over today? Explain.
6. Ask students to think about the various ways that have been discussed thus far in which women fought for their right to vote (holding conventions, writing declarations, breaking the law, etc.) Hand out the attached story from Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org), *Road Trip for Suffrage*, and tell students they will be reading about even more steps taken by active citizens who fought for equality. Instruct

students to read the story individually, in partners or reading circles, or read the story out loud.

Afterwards, discuss:

- How would you characterize suffragists like Sara Bard Field?
- Why do you think it took so many years for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment?
- What did it take to get the right to vote for women? In what ways did Field's road trip help women gain the right to vote? What other measures contributed to the cause?

7. Project the attached image of a suffragist and ask students:

- What do you see in this image?
- Where do you think this picture was taken?
- What is this woman's purpose? What evidence makes you think this?
- What message does the poster in this image convey?

8. Explain to students that fed up with President Woodrow Wilson's foot-dragging over supporting a federal women's suffrage amendment, the NWP started sending pickets such as the one pictured to the White House in 1916. "For the next year and a half, in snowstorms and torrential rain, and during Washington's hot, humid summers, the NWP pickets protested in front of the White House. At first, the public eagerly supported the pickets. But after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, public support turned to hostility. Any form of dissent against the government was considered treasonous. The police began to arrest the demonstrators, usually on the flimsy charge of obstructing traffic. Judges sentenced picketers and administered fines — only a few dollars — but the women almost always chose imprisonment instead. About 168 women served time in prisons with dreadful conditions. The picketers endured spoiled, wormy food, filthy sheets and blankets, putrid open toilets that could be flushed only from outside their cells and thus at the whim of guards, rats and cockroaches, lack of ventilation, and even solitary confinement. Some picketers went on a hunger strike to protest the violation of their right to see a lawyer and their treatment as criminals instead of political prisoners. Jail authorities resorted to forced feeding. From August to November 1917, the abusive treatment by prison authorities worsened. One night in November — later known as "the Night of Terror" — the guards at Occoquan Workhouse savagely beat the suffragists. The heroic suffragists who chose to go to prison risked losing not only their freedom but their lives for the right to vote."

9. In review, project the attached political cartoon *Election Day* and have students respond either in writing or verbally:

- What do you see in this cartoon? What seems to be happening?
- How does this cartoon relate to the Nineteenth Amendment?
- How would you characterize the image of the woman in this cartoon?
- Describe the man and his facial expression. Why does he appear as he does?
- What message is the artist trying to convey?

Additional Activities

- Assign the attached Women's Civil Rights in NC timeline activity
- Have students choose a suffragist of the 1800s-1900s to research and then write her eulogy. Hold a memorial service in which students dress up in time appropriate clothing and share their suffragist eulogies.
- Have students assume the role of a suffragist living in the years before 1920 and write and deliver a speech in which they advocate for a woman's right to vote.
- Connect the fight of suffragists for the Nineteenth Amendment to current events, such as the controversy over voting rights for felons, immigrant voting rights, and voting rights for Afghan women.

Resources

- Famous Women in History: <http://lkwdpl.org/wihohio/figures.htm>

- The ABC's of Women's History Month: <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=804> and <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?p=0&ar=804&pa=2>
- National Women's Hall of Fame: <http://www.greatwomen.org/>
- Suffrage Documents: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/woman-suffrage/>

The Nineteenth Amendment

Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;

At the First Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the nineteenth day of May,
one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right of suffrage
to women.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein),
That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution,
which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when
ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.*

“ARTICLE ————.

“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.

“Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate
legislation.”

F. H. Gillett

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Thos. R. Marshall

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*

Source: <http://womenshistory.about.com/library/graphics/19amend.gif>

Seneca Falls Declaration

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men--both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming to all intents and purposes, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women--the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her. He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation--in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

Source: E.C. Stanton, S.B. Anthony and M.J. Gage, eds., History of Women's Suffrage, vol. 1 (1887), 70.

Discuss the following in your group and summarize your answers on notebook paper.

1. Describe the complaints that are issued in this declaration.
2. Which complaints do you feel are most valid/serious and why?
3. How does this document compare to the Declaration of Independence? How do these complaints resemble complains of Patriots?
4. Based on what you learned about 1800s society after reading this document, how would your life differ if you lived then rather than now?
5. Are any of the complaints outlined still problematic in today's society? Explain.
6. Why is this document relevant to us today?

Image of Susan B. Anthony



Road Trip for Suffrage

by Harriet Sigerman
(From www.tolerance.org)

In 1915, suffragists organized a daring cross-country auto trip to promote women's voting rights

On a stormy night in October 1915, three women drove through the desolate Kansas plains in a downpour, hoping to get to Emporia before morning. It was late, and they had the road to themselves. Suddenly, their car lurched and stopped: They had driven right into a mud hole and were stuck. The car would not budge -- it just sank deeper and deeper in the mud.

The travelers cried out for help, but their pleas evaporated in the howling wind and rain. Finally, one of the women remembered seeing a farmhouse two or three miles back. She climbed out of the car and, bending forward to brace herself against the wind, started walking. With every step, she sank knee deep in the soggy ground, and her brown wool suit and high heels were soon covered with mud.

"How had the journey come to this?" Sara Bard Field must have wondered as she struggled through the wind and rain. Only a few weeks before, on September 16, Field had stood in a grand hall decked out in colorful banners and ribbons and crowded with more than 1,000 women. The occasion was a majestic ceremony marking the end of a three-day women's rights convention in San Francisco, Calif., and the beginning of a historic cross-country trip that Field was undertaking to publicize the cause of women's suffrage. As the ceremony drew to a close, Field climbed into a waiting car covered with streamers. Then, to the cheers and whistles of the crowd, she and her traveling companions had driven off into the foggy night. Their mission: Carry an enormous petition across the country pledging support for a federal women's suffrage amendment to the Constitution.

The women would make stops along the way to rally support for the amendment and add signatures to the petition before delivering it to President Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. Congress. The journey would also serve a symbolic purpose. In 1915, twelve western states -- with their more enlightened social and legal institutions and a long tradition of women's social activism -- had already granted women the right to vote.

Field, who hailed from one of these states, Oregon, represented a movement of four million Western women voters demanding the same political rights for their disenfranchised Eastern sisters, via a federal amendment. Now, as she sloshed toward a remote farmhouse in the wilderness, Field did not feel like someone who symbolized the political hopes and dreams of so many American women.

After trudging through the wind and rain for two hours, she finally stumbled upon the farmhouse she had seen from the road. Soaking wet and caked with mud, she explained her predicament to the sleepy-eyed farmer who opened the door. He hitched up two sturdy workhorses to his truck and drove Field back to the stalled car.

On the way, she explained the purpose of her cross-country trip. The farmer seemed somewhat baffled by Field's description of their mission and simply responded, "Well, you girls have guts."

Indeed, it had taken pluck and courage to make such a journey and endure the harsh road conditions. In 1915, cars were still a luxury item that few people could afford. Cross-country excursions were considered risky. There were no superhighways and few gas stations, restaurants, and other conveniences along the way. Most roads were little more than dusty, poorly marked two-lane byways.

In fact, never before had a group of women driven alone across the United States. The announcement of the journey had created a sensation, capturing newspaper headlines around the country -- just as its organizers had intended.

Field had been hand-picked to make the journey by the leaders of the **Congressional Union**, the militant branch of the **National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)**. She was an ideal choice for the task. Petite and youthful, Field was poised and personable in front of large crowds.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1882, she first became active in women's suffrage after she moved to Oregon with her husband, a minister. She became a paid state organizer for NAWSA and soon emerged as an eloquent and charismatic speaker for the western suffrage movement

The work was grueling. Field spoke on street corners throughout countless small towns, snatched whatever rest she could and ate on the run.

Meanwhile, she divorced her husband, who opposed her suffrage work and expected her to devote herself to the duties of a minister's wife. She reclaimed her maiden name and joined the Congressional Union to work for a Constitutional amendment for women's suffrage — the same demand firmly expressed in the petition she now carried across the country.

Accompanying Field on the transcontinental trip were Ingeborg Kindstedt and Maria Kindberg, two Swedish immigrant women who were also ardent suffragists. They owned the car and would serve as driver and mechanic. Mabel Vernon, also of the Congressional Union, traveled ahead of the convoy by train to organize parades, rallies and receptions for Field's arrival, like a silent scout paving the way.

The first leg of the journey took the women through California, Nevada and Utah, then on through Wyoming, Colorado and Kansas. Enthusiastic crowds greeted the travelers at dozens of stops along the way. Before entering each town, the women decorated the car with purple, gold and white flags and with a suffrage banner that read: "We Demand an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Enfranchising Women."

In some cities, suffrage workers welcomed the voyagers with huge motorcades, bands, fireworks, and other pageantry. Women thronged around the car to add their names to the growing petition. Governors, mayors and congressmen greeted the suffrage envoys at formal receptions, and Field succeeded in persuading some to sign the petition as well.

At every stop, Field gave impassioned speeches. In Colorado Springs, she aimed a stinging rebuke at opponents of women's suffrage, especially men. "They are very slow in awaking to the fact that the womanhood is being wasted in the struggle for enfranchisement, when it could be used to better advantage in creating a real civilization," Field chided. "Steam cars and airships do not make a civilization, but give woman the ballot and she will use it as a tool for the up-building of civilization, such as the world has never seen before."

As the travelers passed through small towns and villages, curious onlookers often gathered to see the banner-bedecked car rumble by. Never missing an opportunity to win a convert to the suffrage cause, Field sometimes stopped at street corners to deliver an impromptu speech from the back of the car.

The trip was exhilarating. And exhausting. The women drove through rain, sleet and dust storms. They endured frigid temperatures, flat tires and engine difficulties. Outside Reno, Nev., the voyagers spent an entire day lost, without a map, in the stretch of barren land known as the "Great American Desert." On several occasions, the women had to get out and push the car through huge snowdrifts to make it to the next stop on time. But buoyed by the outpouring of support, and the importance of their cause, they pressed on.

Not every reception was a warm one, however. Women's suffrage was, after all, an issue that divided households, as well as the nation. As the women progressed eastward, they prepared themselves for their entry into "enemy territory" — those states that had rejected legislation giving women the vote.

As Field told a gathering in Kansas City, "Hard times still are ahead of us. Up till now we have been traveling in suffrage states, and it is hard to readjust ourselves now to the attitude of men who say, 'No, we don't want women to vote because they don't get up and give us their seats in streetcars.' I'd rather have a seat of justice than a streetcar seat, anyway."

After stops in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri, Field got a taste of those hard times in Chicago, Illinois. There, a massive crowd of supporters turned out to meet Field and her companions. Scattered throughout the audience, however, were some suffrage opponents — "antis" — who tried to shout Field down as she delivered her speech.

"The women were the worst opposers," Field said later, "the right-wing DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) and all associations of that kind were extremely anti, and they sent their speakers right on my trail in the East."

Despite these new difficulties, the hardy band of travelers continued on, making stops in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan before heading to Albany, the capital of New York. Reports of Field's exploits had reached the state's governor, who greeted the suffrage crusader in the executive mansion. He paid the diminutive Field the highest compliment of all: "I thought you would be ten feet tall." He then signed the petition, despite the recent defeat of women's suffrage by the male voters of New York State.

But Sara Bard Field felt neither tall nor powerful. Instead, she was tense and exhausted after traveling two months in a crowded car over bumpy, pitted roads, making countless speeches, stopping in a different town or city almost every day.

Although the petition was growing longer with every stop, her task was not yet finished. She still had most of the East Coast to cover. After a quick succession of stops in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York City, Delaware, and Maryland, the weary travelers approached their last stop: Washington, D.C.

They had spent nearly three months on the road, logging more than 5,000 miles and collecting numerous signatures for their petition. The women prepared the valiant little car — now dented and scratched and covered with stickers from every stop — for its entrance into the nation's capital. Shortly after 11:00 a.m. on December 6, 1915, the car moved slowly down the Baltimore Turnpike, like a war-weary soldier triumphantly marching into the final battle.

Across its dusty front fender stretched a vivid purple streamer with the words emblazoned in white, "On to Congress." The car stopped just outside the city. There, they were met by a welcoming committee befitting royalty. Undaunted by the bitterly cold weather, the crowd assembled for a parade through Washington, D.C. As a band began to play, Mrs. John Jay White, the grand marshal, led the way on horseback, holding her riding crop aloft like a torch.

Behind her came Field and her fellow envoys in the battered car that had carried them across a continent and now toward their final destinations, the Capitol and the White House.

Several women on foot carried the enormous petition, unrolled to only 100 of its almost 19,000 feet. They were followed by more women on horseback, each rider representing one of the 12 states and Alaska Territory that had already granted women the right to vote. And behind them marched another group, representing the 36 states that had not yet granted that right.

Next came flag and banner bearers dressed in purple and gold capes, their colors snapping smartly in the wind. They escorted a replica of the Liberty Bell decorated in purple, gold and white. Scores of other women proudly followed, waving their pennants at the cheering crowds along the way.

Finally, the parade reached the Capitol, where a large delegation of congressmen stood at the top of the polished white marble steps to receive Field. Slowly, she made their way to the delegation, followed by 20 women carrying the partially unrolled petition as if they were ladies in waiting carrying the queen's royal robes.

Field, along with two pro-suffrage congressmen, spoke briefly, and the parade moved on to the White House. The procession of cars stopped in the semicircular drive in front of the president's mansion, and Field, her traveling companions and 300 other invited guests were ushered into the enormous East Room to be greeted by President Woodrow Wilson.

To Field, the president looked "stern and annoyed" — he had, after all, already endured similar pleas for a federal suffrage amendment from delegations of Eastern women and had told each of them in turn that women's suffrage was a matter for each state to decide, not a Constitutional question.

Dwarfed by the huge, sparkling chandeliers overhead, Field spoke first. "Mr. President, ... I know what your stand [on suffrage] has been in the past... . But we have seen that, like all great men, you have changed your mind on other questions ... and we honestly believe that circumstances have so altered that you may change your mind in this regard."

The women drew his attention to the petition, which Field had unrolled across the polished hardwood floor. Then Field gently but pointedly reminded him that many of the signatures came from governors, mayors and congressmen.

Wilson turned to Field, and said, "I hope it is true that I am not a man set stiffly beyond the possibility of learning. ... Nothing could be more impressive than the presentation of such a request in such numbers and backed by such influences as undoubtedly stand behind you. ... This visit of yours will remain in my mind not only as a delightful compliment, but also as a very impressive thing, which undoubtedly will make it necessary for all of us to consider very carefully what is right for us to do."

But Field knew that he had not been persuaded. Later she said, "I could see at once that he would be a hard man to convince of anything that he did not spontaneously believe. But he listened to what you were saying. And his face — you could tell by his eyes that he was following what you said.

"Oh, the women went out jubilant. They thought this was the turning point. They thought he was going to back the amendment in Congress."

But, sadly, they were very wrong. As rumblings of war in Europe consumed the president's and the nation's attention, the federal suffrage amendment moved at a snail's pace first through the House of Representatives and then through the U.S. Senate.

Sara Bard Field and other dedicated suffragists did not give up the cause, however. In 1917, women won the right to vote in eight more states: North Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Nebraska, Arkansas, Michigan, Rhode Island and New York.

Field had visited most of these states during her cross-country tour. Whether her rallying efforts made the difference in those states remains unknown, but she surely helped to raise public awareness wherever she stopped.

World War I ended on November 11, 1918, and Congress soon took up the unfinished business of the women's suffrage amendment. On August 26, 1920, women's suffrage finally became the law of the land.

It had been 72 years since American women had met in Seneca Falls, N.Y., to demand their right to vote, and nearly five years since Sara Bard Field had made her momentous cross-country road trip.

As for Field, she remained active in the women's rights movement for a few more years. In 1920, she moved to San Francisco with her companion, the lawyer-poet Charles Erskine Scott Wood and in 1938, they were married.

Gradually, Field turned her energy from politics to poetry, and over the following two decades she published three volumes of verse. After her husband passed away, Field lived quietly in Berkeley, Calif., where she died on June 15, 1974.

Although she championed women's issues throughout her life, Field made her greatest contribution to women's social and political progress during her historic journey for justice. Like the larger movement that she represented, she surmounted obstacles and hardships along the way, and pushed on, undefeated, toward her goal.

Years later she proudly declared, "The cross-country trip meant waking up a nation to national suffrage. ... [W]e have made history."

Source: <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?p=0&ar=438&pa=1>

Image of Suffragist



Source: Record Group 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff, National Archives and Records Administration

Election Day!



Create a Visual Timeline - Women's Civil Rights in North Carolina

Directions:

1. Using the website www.ibiblio.org/uncpress/ncbooks/suffrage/sufferage.html , your textbook, and additional resources, create a visual timeline of the history and impact of civil rights on woman in North Carolina.
2. Your timeline should include at least 12 major events that fit within one or more of the following categories:
 - NC milestones
 - US milestones
 - Examples of civic participation
 - Most important moments
3. Once you have identified the 12 (or more) major events, create a visual timeline on poster board or chart paper. Include sketches, symbols, drawings, or any other artistic additions to make your timeline visual, educational, and creative.
4. Be prepared to present your timeline in small groups.