

“NO ORDINARY FEELINGS”: MORMON WOMEN’S
POLITICAL ACTIVISM, 1870–1920

By

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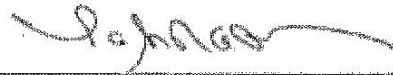
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To the women and men who paved the way.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the rhetoric and strategies Mormon women employed in their efforts to defend and secure suffrage in the 19th and 20th centuries. Women citizens in Utah Territory became the first in the United States to cast ballots under an equal suffrage law in 1870. Their votes immediately attracted national scrutiny, enmeshing their suffrage rights in the national conflict over the Mormon practice of polygamy. They entered the suffrage movement to defend their voting rights against Congressional legislation and to support the push for a federal suffrage amendment.

From indignation meetings and petitioning to printing a newspaper and lobbying public officials, Mormon women’s activism shaped and was shaped by the evolving national struggle for women’s voting rights over the next 50 years.

Because Utah women’s voting rights were entangled in the conflict over Mormon polygamy from the beginning, their contributions and connections to the national suffrage movement have been obscured in public memory. This dissertation weaves this early and important part of the suffrage story back into the narrative, showing where Utah women’s experiences and choices fit into national trends and where they do not.

Mormon women’s newspaper, petitions, diaries, and female Relief Society records reveal the politically astute strategies they employed to mobilize local organizations and build connections with open-minded suffragists in the east. Neither pawns nor militants, they drew on established patterns of women’s political engagement to speak in their own behalf, claim the

rights and privileges of citizenship, and push for a federal women's suffrage amendment. They also pioneered a new era of women in politics after Utah statehood in 1896. Telling their story from their perspective reframes U.S. suffrage history to include the women who pioneered the vote and first countered anti-suffrage arguments with their own experience.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AERA	American Equal Rights Association
AWSA	American Woman Suffrage Association
BYU	Brigham Young University
CHL	Church History Library
LCRS	Ladies' Cooperative Retrenchment Society
LOC	Library of Congress
NAB	National Archives Building
NAWSA	National American Woman Suffrage Association
NFRS	Nauvoo Female Relief Society
NWSA	National Woman Suffrage Association
SYG	Susa Young Gates
UA	Utah State Archives
USU	Utah State University
WFCW	Western Federation of Colored Women
WSA	Woman Suffrage Association

CHAPTER 1

A SUFFRAGE ORIGIN STORY

“We most respectfully entreat Your Excellency,” two women wrote US President Rutherford B. Hayes in February 1879, “as the highest executive power in the land, to have patience while we call your attention to a few facts in relation to a people, who are greatly misunderstood and cruelly misrepresented.”¹ Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Williams wrote as representatives of the Mormon women of Utah, who had convened a mass meeting in the Salt Lake City Theatre a few months earlier in order “to protest against the misrepresentation and falsehood now being circulated...against [their] people, and to declare [their] sentiments upon the subjects at present being agitated.”²

Wells and Williams had been tasked with traveling to Washington, D.C. to plead against measures proposed in Congress to break up polygamous families.³ The women spent three weeks in the nation’s capital, speaking at the National Woman Suffrage Association convention, meeting with President and First Lady Rutherford and Lucy B. Hayes, lobbying and petitioning federal lawmakers on behalf of Utah women, and also testifying before the House Judiciary Committee in favor of woman suffrage.⁴

¹ Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Williams to Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States, February 1879; Letters Received Concerning Polygamy, January 27, 1879–December 17, 1897; Interior Department Territorial Papers: Utah, 1850–1902 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M428, roll 4, Frame 0044); Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

² Zina D. Young, M. Isabella Horne, and Emmeline B. Wells, “Mass Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 12 (November 15, 1878): 92; “Woman’s Mass Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 13 (December 1, 1878): 97–99, 102–103.

³ Wells was a rising leader in the women’s Relief Society organization and the editor of the *Woman’s Exponent*, and Williams was the daughter of Brigham Young and a faculty member at Brigham Young Academy.

⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, January 9–30, 1879, *The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells*, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 9 September 2020, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/1870s/1879/1879-01>.

In this attempt, Wells and Williams expressed “no ordinary feelings,” as one of their fellow protestors had declared in a mass meeting years earlier.⁵ Mormon women like them had occupied a visible and highly contested place in both local and national politics ever since 1870. Utah women citizens became the first in the United States to cast their ballots under an equal suffrage law that year, beating Wyoming women to the polls for both municipal and general elections.⁶ But their political participation was enmeshed from the beginning in national conflicts over polygamy and Utah statehood. While federal legislators threatened to revoke Mormon women’s suffrage in an attempt to stamp out plural marriage, many Mormon women trumpeted their political freedoms and legal rights in territorial Utah as evidence of the independence that practice afforded them.

As the first substantial population of voting women in the United States, Mormon women’s political engagement would already have attracted scrutiny, opposition, and national attention. But their suffrage also became a political football as Congress wrestled with the “Mormon Question” and attempted to stamp out polygamy. This unique dynamic made Utah the place where woman suffrage was first debated, contested, and worked out on the ground. The contour of this struggle helped shape the framework for national suffrage debates in the decades that followed.

⁵ Bathsheba W. Smith, in Proceedings in Mass Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest Against the Passage of Cullom’s Bill, January 14, 1870 ([Salt Lake City]: [publisher not identified], 1870), 1, M243.91 P963 1870, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as CHL).

⁶ Wyoming Territory passed a suffrage law in December 1869, two months before Utah Territory did. But Utah women voted both in early 1870 municipal elections and an August 1 general election in 1870 before Wyoming women first cast ballots on September 6. “The Election,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 14, 1870, p. 2; “Utah,” *The New York Herald*, August 14, 1870, p. 11; “General,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 8, 1870, p. 3.

From 1870 to 1887, Mormon women's political rights were vehicles of both federal control and local protest. As Congress continued to debate legislation to end polygamy and restrict the franchise in Utah Territory, Mormon women there sent petition after petition to Washington appealing for statehood and protesting what they saw as their religious persecution by anti-polygamist activists and legislators. After their disfranchisement in 1887, Utahns organized local chapters of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), successfully fought for the inclusion of woman suffrage in Utah's state constitution in 1895, and continued efforts to secure a federal suffrage amendment.

Thousands of Mormon women participated in this collective political action to defend their practice of polygamy and their voting rights, both of which transgressed the boundaries of respectable womanhood in contemporary American culture. Leading Mormon women mobilized the organization and network of the Female Relief Society of their church in this effort and adapted the forms of political engagement pioneered by the abolition and nascent women's rights movements. They held indignation meetings, circulated petitions, lobbied lawmakers, and pled their cause through newspaper articles and convention speeches.

This grassroots strategy was not initially successful in protecting Mormon women's religious practice or their voting rights, but it did generate and sustain long-term, committed suffrage activism among them. Their political engagement eventually made Utah the third suffrage state in 1896 and contributed to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Pursuing their political strategy over the decades since 1870 shaped how Mormon women saw their place in their church, their community, and American society writ large.

This dissertation traces how Mormon women's political strategy developed from 1870 to 1896 and beyond as they gained, lost, and regained the vote in Utah, and then continued working

to secure a federal women's suffrage amendment. But Mormon women's politicization began well before their first votes. The foundational elements of their political organizing were laid in the violent persecutions they experienced because of their faith in the 1830s and 1840s. And these elements were first translated into collective action in the female spaces of the Relief Society, where Mormon women learned to speak, lead, and coordinate collective political action—first on behalf of others, and eventually in their own interests as well.

To engage in political debates and influence public policy, Mormon women adapted the forms of political expression available to nineteenth century women: petitions, personal appeals, indignation meetings, and more. They borrowed tactics from the nascent movement for woman suffrage, while also influencing its rhetoric and approach. Arguments honed both for and against Mormon women's right to vote would shape the contours of the national conversation about women's suffrage for decades to come. After Mormon suffragists secured voting rights in Utah's state constitution, they continued to play an outsized role in efforts to pass a federal amendment even as the battles moved eastward.

Historians have failed to incorporate Mormon women's drive for political rights into the histories of the national conflict over polygamy and the American women's suffrage movement. Although scholars have chronicled Mormon men's efforts to protect polygamy and secure Utah statehood in detail, they have often downplayed or ignored Mormon women's grassroots organizing, their newspaper, their political strategy, and the connections they forged with some open-minded suffrage leaders in the East. The result is that the Mormon Question and woman suffrage, tightly intertwined in both local and national politics of the nineteenth century, have remained largely disconnected in historical narratives.

This dissertation joins these elements by exploring the implications of Mormon women's political action in Utah Territory and the early years of Utah statehood, from roughly 1870 through 1920. It focuses on Mormon women's words and actions in their own behalf, analyzing the forms and rhetoric of their collective political action to defend their marriages and their voting rights against federal encroachment. By examining their political activism, it explores how the debates surrounding and created by Mormon women both reflected and influenced the broader suffrage movement by raising questions of women's rights, religious freedom, and citizenship in the American republic. It centers the narrative on Mormon women's own words and actions, restoring their agency and paying attention to their exercise and pursuit of voting rights on a local and national stage.

Further, this study brings Mormon women's struggle for suffrage into the broader narrative of American women's history, anchoring it within the histories of women's education, organizations, and political participation. Historians of the women's suffrage movement have done much in recent years to broaden the scope of that scholarship, especially incorporating women of color and others whose work for voting rights has previously been forgotten, ignored or sidelined.⁷ But many works still largely dismiss the experience of women west of the Mississippi as an outlier, treated as a mere side note or prologue rather than part of the main story.⁸

⁷ Martha S. Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Cathleen D. Cahill, *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

⁸ Sally Roesch Wagner's edited anthology completely excludes western women from the narrative in *The Women's Suffrage Movement* (New York: Penguin, 2019). New broad histories of the movement mention western suffragists briefly in shaping the 19th-century narrative, but drop them after 1900 as the battles move to Washington, D.C. and New York City. Ellen Carol DuBois, *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020); Johanna Neuman, *And Yet They Persisted: How American Women Won the Right to Vote* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

Mormon women's early political activism developed their self-image as citizens whose civil and religious rights merited protection. This study shows where that activism fits within existing historical frameworks and where it does not. It highlights how national debates in the 1870s and 1880s about woman suffrage, and Mormon women's suffrage in particular, shaped the contours of the argument for decades to come. It also shows what leading Mormon women learned from the national suffrage movement and incorporated into their own strategy.

By piecing together the history of Mormon women's political action, this study brings a new perspective to important questions at the nexus of nineteenth-century political debates. Previous studies of the Mormon Question analyze public discourse, federal policymaking, and male Mormon leaders' strategy in the national conflict over polygamy, but they rarely include the words and perspectives of the women whose plight was central to that conflict. This distortion downplays the significance of Mormon women's political activism in convening indignation meetings to protest congressional legislation, gathering thousands of signatures on petitions appealing to federal leaders to protect their civil rights, and forging connections with women's rights leaders in the East. It also downplays the influence of this first substantial population of women voters in the United States in the nationwide struggle for suffrage.

Building a narrative of the women whose marriages and politics were at the heart of the Mormon Question opens new connections to both learn from and enrich the broader story of the American women's movement. Mormon women's activism deserves its own history, extending the analytical possibilities of American women's history to the western suffragists who gained voting rights *twice* in the nineteenth century and worked toward a federal suffrage amendment for longer than nearly anybody else.

There is a thick documentary record surrounding Mormon women's lives in territorial Utah, so it is surprising that historians have failed to sufficiently include their political action and their contribution to public discourse surrounding the Mormon Question. Scholars of Reconstruction in the West, state formation, and other topics often show Mormon women as a *subject* of political debate rather than *participants* in it, sometimes writing as though men practiced politics and made laws in a vacuum.⁹ But petitions and indignation meeting speeches, leading women's papers, Relief Society meeting minutes, and *The Woman's Exponent*, the semi-official newspaper of the Relief Society, show that Mormon women were important political actors who cannot be ignored any longer.

Mormon women engaged in collective political action through the network of Relief Society to defend their political rights and religious beliefs. Their voices are just as important to understanding Mormon history and Western history as those of the men who have previously dominated the narratives. As this dissertation will demonstrate, Mormon women made themselves into citizens through their collective action as they began to speak out in their own behalf and adopt a stance as loyal American citizens in their political expression. They became committed suffragists who continued to devote time, funds, and effort to the national movement decades after securing their own voting rights with Utah statehood.

No project has yet traced the long arc of Mormon women's political socialization, organization, and activism stretching from the 1830s to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. In order to tell that story and place it within the broader narrative of American

⁹ Clyde A. Milner II and Brian Q. Cannon, eds., *Reconstruction and Mormon America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019); Spencer W. McBride, Brent M. Rogers, and Keith A. Erikson, eds., *Contingent Citizens: Shifting Perceptions of Latter-day Saints in American Political Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

history, this study brings in new sources and forges connections among several disparate strands of scholarship that are rarely placed in conversation but have much to say to each other. The general narrative of American women's history fails to sufficiently integrate religious history or the experience of Western women into the picture, but each can offer important insights into the history of the women's suffrage movement.¹⁰ A careful analysis of Mormon women's political activism on their own terms can illuminate connections between west and east and highlight how their experience and their strategy influenced and was influenced by the national movement.

The following sections discuss the historical literature on Mormons' conflict with the American state, the roles of Mormon women in their Utah communities, and American women's involvement in nineteenth-century politics.

Mormons in America

In the past few decades, Mormon studies and Mormon history have moved from the realm of critics and hobbyists to that of nationally respected academics and top-tier presses. Scholars of history, literature, and religion have described Joseph Smith, the faith's founder, through the eyes of contemporaries as both a religious genius and a dangerous charlatan, while detailing the rise of the new American faith from persecuted sect to worldwide religion.¹¹ Histories of the Mormon experience have generally been slight in their coverage of women, but

¹⁰ Susan Ware incorporates several western women and some discussion of religion in her book *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), which shows the possibilities for this integration.

¹¹ See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2005); Terry L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myth, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

recent works are bringing new historical sources by and about women to light, as well as analyzing more contemporary Mormon women's experience.¹²

Several historians have tried to explain Mormons' unique and uneasy position in the American body politic as members of a persecuted faith community.¹³ Ben Park's analysis of Mormon Nauvoo (Illinois) highlights how anti-democratic elements of city and church government emerged out of Mormons' dissatisfaction with contemporary American democracy and capitalism.¹⁴ Anne Hyde notes that as those institutions further developed in territorial Utah, they "disrupted Anglo-American assumptions about how settlement should occur and who should benefit from it. Unlike native societies, however, Mormonism developed out of the heart of Anglo-American culture and religion and operated as a sort of shadow critique, which is why it upset people so much."¹⁵ And Paul Reeve shows how racialized depictions of Mormons in nineteenth-century popular culture claimed that polygamy was creating a new, inferior race,

¹² Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women's History* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016) publishes important sources from the Female Relief Society, the organization for Mormon women. See also Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (New York: Knopf, 2017); Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017); Rachel Cope, Amy Easton-Flake, Keith A. Erikson, Lisa Olsen Tait, eds., *Mormon Women's History: Beyond Biography* (Vancouver, BC: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017); Kate Holbrook and Matthew Bowman, eds., *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016); Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, and Hannah Wheelwright, eds., *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹³ McBride, Rogers, and Erikson, *Contingent Citizens: Shifting Perceptions of Latter-day Saints in American Political Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020); Milner and Cannon, *Reconstruction and Mormon America*.

¹⁴ Benjamin E. Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2020).

¹⁵ Anne Farrar Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 358.

tracing Mormons' construction of a white American identity in response to this national discourse.¹⁶

Many other scholars have focused on Mormons' process of 'Americanization' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Matt Bowman's work generated significant attention during Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign for his argument that Mormons became ultra-loyal American citizens through military and government service as a response to the anti-Mormon anti-polygamy campaigns that stretched into the early twentieth century.¹⁸ Thomas W. Simpson claims that it was at American universities that Mormons began to move from outsider to insider status. Mormons sent from Utah to study medicine and law at universities in the States in the late nineteenth century found a sense of belonging there that helped them see themselves as both Mormon and American.¹⁹ These and other scholars' work makes interesting connections between late nineteenth-century Mormon and American cultures, but misses the opportunity to say something about Mormon women in particular, who were often described as the victims of their faith and sometimes had more room to operate in cultivating relationships with other Americans.

Mormon women forged connections with national and international women's organizations in their efforts to defend their voting rights and work for women's advancement. These relationships, though fraught with the complications of politics, strategy, and stereotyping,

¹⁶ Paul W. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of An American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012).

¹⁹ Thomas W. Simpson, *American Universities and the Birth of Modern Mormonism, 1867–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

ended up connecting Mormon women and the Relief Society more closely to (some) national cultural leaders than their male counterparts, both before and after the official end of plural marriage in 1890.²⁰ Women's relationships have largely been ignored in work on Mormons' place in nineteenth and twentieth-century American society, but they are an important piece of the puzzle.

The Mormon Question

Historians chronicling public debates over polygamy had originally equated Americans' opposition to polygamy with Victorian anxieties about sexual morality and women's rights activists' concern for their sisters' freedom.²¹ These interpretive frameworks made sense in light of the swirling religious discourse condemning polygamy and Mormons' determined defense of it as a higher religious and moral way of life, but they only captured part of the picture. More recently, scholars have begun to unpack the political implications of the Mormon Question for the rest of the nation and for women in particular. Their work looks more closely at the role of anti-polygamy debates in constructing American identity and values and suggests that they served as a proxy debate for questions about religion, politics, women's proper role in American families and society.

In the first scholarly investigation to situate the Mormon Question squarely within the broader framework of American history, Sarah Barringer Gordon argued that it was Mormon

²⁰ Carol Cornwall Madsen, *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells, 1870–1920* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2006).

²¹ For both characterizations, see Joan Smyth Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in the U.S. Women's Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland Press, 1997) and Iversen, "The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship: Personal and Political Quandaries," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (1990): 8-16.

women's 'failure,' once enfranchised, to vote against polygamy that presented the largest danger in the minds of many Americans.²² Gordon's work highlights the problems posed by both polygamy and woman suffrage in Utah for an American political culture in which consent was viewed as foundational to republican government. She traces Congressional lawmakers' development of new constitutional doctrines about individual liberty, territories, and statehood as they expanded the reach of national power into the judicial, electoral, and economic systems of Utah Territory to address the threat of Mormon polygamy.²³ Carol Cornwall Madsen and others have also noted that an "intricate political triangle" emerged connecting woman suffrage with polygamy and Utah statehood to raise the specter of a church essentially governing American citizens.²⁴

More recent cultural and political histories have helped to illuminate why Mormon polygamy occupied Americans' attention and prompted sustained anti-polygamy campaigns for decades.²⁵ Christine Talbot claims that Mormons' defense of polygamy as the constitutionally protected exercise of religious liberty demonstrated the vulnerability of a gendered public/private divide perceived to be the foundation of republican government in the United States. Talbot writes that because Mormon arguments in favor of polygamy often rejected the discourse of separate spheres, this self-defense threatened America's social order. Thus, both polygamous marriage and Mormon women's suffrage threatened other Americans' government as well as

²² Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The Liberty of Self-Degradation: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (December 1996): 815–97.

²³ Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Political and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁴ Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed., *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870–1896* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997), 7.

²⁵ Jana K. Riess, "Heathen in Our Fair Land: Anti-polygamy and Protestant Women's Mission to Utah, 1869–1910," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000); Iversen, *Antipolygamy Controversy*.

their way of life. Spencer Fluhman notes this perceived threat and shows how nineteenth-century anti-Mormonism and anti-polygamy campaigns functioned in public discourse to construct American ideas about ‘true’ religion and its proper relationship to the state.²⁶

These and other historical inquiries clearly show that the national debate around Mormon practices reveals much about both Americans’ and Mormons’ deeply held beliefs and anxieties. What is striking in their analyses is the absence of the voices of the women at the center of the debate. Despite the fact that so much of the national discourse described plural wives as oppressed slaves in need of federal rescue or as Brigham Young’s domestic army of deluded voters, scholarly treatments mention the women themselves as minor characters in the drama and fail to engage in some of the most interesting questions about American womanhood that their experience raises. Some of these issues are addressed in the developing body of scholarship on Mormon women, but no work has yet fully grappled with the implications of their long history of political activism for the women’s movement writ large.

Mormon Women

The glaring question this dissertation addresses is what to make of the Mormon women themselves, who clearly did not fit neatly into the categories within which federal lawmakers attempted to circumscribe them. How can historians explain their motivations and aims and the seemingly paradoxical choices they made as individuals, as women, as wives and mothers, and as Mormons? Little if any of the work discussed above draws upon evidence of Mormon women’s own political action and role in public discourse, even though it was their marriages

²⁶ Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852–1890* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Spencer H. Fluhman, *“A Peculiar People”: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

and their politics that were so hotly contested at the time. Religious historian Catherine Brekus attributes this oversight to the persistence of nineteenth-century stereotypes depicting Mormon women as backward and passive. “Neither women’s historians nor American religious historians,” she contends, “have seemed interested in including Mormon women in their narratives, implicitly suggesting that they should not be considered as serious historical actors who made things happen.”²⁷ This is slowly changing.

Historical inquiry into the experiences of Mormon women began with *Mormon Sisters*, the pioneering historical study of Mormon women first published in 1976 in a field which had almost exclusively focused on the faith’s male leaders.²⁸ The book contains essays and biographical sketches on a range of women’s experiences in nineteenth century Utah from polygamy to spiritual healing to suffrage and broke essential ground by opening lines of inquiry into the dynamics of frontier life, polygamy, and women’s public roles in territorial Utah. Unfortunately, much of the work that directly followed was aimed at shoring up researchers’ positions on contemporary women’s rights issues and presented either an overly simplified picture of Mormon women’s autonomy or an overly limited one of their imprisonment within patriarchal structures of the family, church, and local government.²⁹

This dissertation builds on literature from the past few decades which addresses the paradox of nineteenth-century Mormon women as part of religious and family structures that

²⁷ Catherine Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 61.

²⁸ Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997).

²⁹ For examples of the two approaches, see Marilyn Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978) and Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992) on the one hand, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992) on the other.

appeared to diminish their rights, yet also helped to make them the first women in the nation to cast their votes at the ballot box.³⁰ As Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher wrote at the beginning of their edited volume on women in Utah history for the Utah State Historical Society, “these historical essays show women in Utah as sharing much with other American women, particularly in the West—in other words, as not unique. But they are also diverse and distinctive—in other words, not as expected.”³¹

Lola Van Wagenen’s work marked one of the first attempts to explain the paradox of Mormon women’s polygamous marriages and political freedoms up to Utah statehood in 1896.³² She argued that Mormon women were politicized through their participation in the autonomous Female Relief Societies of the church as they followed parliamentary procedure in meetings, preached to and organized the relief efforts of fellow women, and worked alongside men in economic cooperation schemes. Sadly, Van Wagenen’s thread of inquiry was not fully developed by later scholars who narrowly focused on Mormon women’s political action in their direct agitation for restoring suffrage in the Utah state constitution but left out their earlier (and later) mobilization and agitation for women’s voting rights.

Carol Cornwall Madsen’s edited volume included perspectives on several aspects of Mormon women’s involvement to secure suffrage in Utah’s state constitution in the 1890s, and Rebecca Mead showed that Mormon women were well connected to Eastern suffragists through national organizations despite the strains the national polygamy debate put on those

³⁰ Ulrich, *House Full of Females*.

³¹ Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher, eds., *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), ix.

³² See Lola Van Wagenen, “In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise,” *Dialogue* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 31–43, and Lola Van Wagenen, “Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1994).

relationships.³³ However, neither book connects the full arc of Mormon suffragists' previous experience as organizers, voters, and petitioners in the 1870s and 1880s with their successful fight for suffrage in the 1890s and continued efforts to secure a federal amendment afterward.³⁴ Carol Madsen's two biographies of Emmeline B. Wells' public and private lives provide excellent windows into Utah's suffrage story from the perspective of one of its leading instigators, but this dissertation examines Mormon women's long genealogy of political involvement to give a broader sense of its scope, strategies, and meaning for Mormon women and national suffrage leaders.³⁵

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Mormon women's lives to untangle is their experiences within polygamous marriage, practiced openly from 1852 to 1890. Kimberly James and Constance Lieber took the first step by describing the experiences of plural wives who chose self-imposed exile to avoid testifying as witnesses during federal anti-polygamy raids in the 1880s.³⁶ Jessie L. Embry and Lois Kelley argue that polygamous and monogamous wives' lives were more similar than different in territorial Utah, but more analysis is still necessary to

³³ Madsen, *Battle for the Ballot*; Rebecca Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1869-1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

³⁴ Mead only begins discussing Utah suffrage efforts with the founding of the Woman Suffrage Association in 1889.

³⁵ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*; Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Emmeline B. Wells: An Intimate History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017).

³⁶ Kimberly Jensen James, "'Between Two Fires': Women on the 'Underground' of Mormon Polygamy," *Journal of Mormon History* 8 (1981): 49–61; Constance L. Lieber and John Sillito, eds., *Letters from Exile: The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon, 1886–1888* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1989).

understand the unique dynamics plural marriage introduced into Mormon women's life cycles, domestic work, and public lives.³⁷

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's recent book *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870* contributes much to bridging this gap by offering rich insight into the seeming paradox of Mormon women's experience.³⁸ Ulrich analyzes men's and women's diaries to better understand the relationship between plural marriage and female activism, asking questions of her sources to explore long-held assumptions about the ways in which the dynamics of polygamy enhanced plural wives' independence while generating female solidarity in territorial Utah.³⁹ Her work establishes the importance of Mormon women's relationships and organizational networks that laid the groundwork for their women's rights activism. Much ground remains to be broken on Mormon women in the years from 1870 onward, when their activism took to the national stage. This dissertation traces that story forward, showing how Mormon women's political strategy and self-image as citizens evolved as they gained, lost, and regained the right to vote in Utah and worked to extend that right through a federal suffrage amendment.

Mormon Women's Political Activism

The works discussed above too often stand in isolation, but they could speak to each other in illuminating ways if placed in conversation about Mormon women's motives for and

³⁷ Jessie L. Embry and Lois Kelley, "Polygamous and Monogamous Mormon Women: A Comparison," in *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?*, ed. Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 1–35.

³⁸ Ulrich, *House Full of Females*.

³⁹ See Bowman's *The Mormon People*, 135 for a characteristic description of "a powerful, strongly bound female society" alongside the very real difficulties plural wives faced.

modes of political activism. Re-centering Mormon women in the narrative requires a careful look at their own words. A sustained analysis of their actions and rhetoric can offer answers to questions about their religious motivations, their connections with eastern suffragists, and their evolving understandings of citizenship and women's role in public life. This dissertation responds to the lacuna identified by scholars such as Catherine Brekus and Rachel Cope by incorporating Mormon women's stories into the broader discipline of American women's history.⁴⁰

Many of the building blocks for this work illuminate small glimpses of Mormon women's activism without suggesting longer relationships between these instances. They have yet to be placed together in productive ways. Rebecca Mead notes the importance of the *Woman's Exponent* in articulating "the concerns of many (white) western women about their lack of political and economic rights," but she still essentially dismisses Mormon women as conservative upholders of a patriarchal religious order.⁴¹ Her work fails to address Mormon women's activism through indignation meetings, petitioning, and local suffrage associations, all of which is directly relevant to her study of suffrage work in Western states and territories.

Whether this and similar omissions come because scholars are unaware of this activism or do not view it as significant, these oversights could possibly be tinged by what Catherine Brekus identified as historians' reproduction of nineteenth-century stereotypes in their assumption that women within patriarchal institutions somehow only expressed agency when

⁴⁰ Rachel Cope, "The Unexplored Drama within the Drama," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 195–200. In some ways this ghettoization is unsurprising because frontier life and polygamy have had little purchase outside of Western history, but Cope argues convincingly that Mormon women's religious lives and practice can add much to historians' understanding of American religious experience. The same holds true for their political participation.

⁴¹ Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 34.

directly opposing those structures.⁴² T. A. Larson made a similar observation in 1970 that historians and contemporaries alike tended to consider Utah's suffrage story as "seriously compromised by theocracy and polygamy."⁴³ For example, Beverly Beeton's initial work on Mormon women dismissed their public defense of suffrage and polygamy as simply a parroting of male Mormon leaders, but this characterization is overly simplistic without an investigation into the process by which those women chose to engage in public debate and selected their words.⁴⁴ Dismissing woman suffrage in Utah as an experiment has obscured the very real experience Utah women gained by engaging in the political process.

Andrea Radke-Moss provides an in-depth look at one part of the suffrage story, highlighting how the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and Congress of Women was a springboard to Mormon women's push for suffrage in the upcoming Utah state constitution.⁴⁵ At Chicago, carefully crafted speeches and presentations aimed both to combat stereotypes of Mormon women as unrefined, backward, and subordinated, as well as to promote woman suffrage by celebrating their past history of voting. Radke-Moss concludes that the World's Fair helped Mormon women to solidify male support behind their suffrage narrative.⁴⁶ This opportunity was

⁴² See Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), and Brekus, "Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 58–87.

⁴³ T. A. Larson, "Woman Suffrage in Western America," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 17.

⁴⁴ Beverly Beeton, "Woman Suffrage in Territorial Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 100–120. See also Beverly Beeton, *Women Vote in the West: The Woman Suffrage Movement, 1869–1896* (New York: Garland, 1986).

⁴⁵ Andrea Radke-Moss, "Mormon Women, Suffrage, and Citizenship at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair," in *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, ed. T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010): 97–112.

⁴⁶ Radke-Moss, "Mormon Women, Suffrage, and Citizenship," 105. Reid L. Neilson reaches a similar conclusion in *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-Day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

indeed important, but it would have meant less if Mormon women had not already been organizing, protesting, and seeking opportunities to speak to national audiences for more than a decade.

Much of the work on Mormon women's political involvement remains piecemeal. A few studies published decades ago examined the rhetoric defending polygamy and suffrage in the pages of the *Woman's Exponent* in the 1870s and 1880s.⁴⁷ But the *Woman's Exponent* was only one part of a broader strategy including Mormon women's indignation meetings, petitions to federal leaders, lobbying, and other efforts to obtain governmental protection for their rights as citizens. This dissertation traces how that strategy developed across multiple modes of political participation.

American Women's Political Participation

Mormon women's political activism must be understood in terms of the contemporary context of gender politics and Mormon-American relations that shaped their methods, opportunities, and reception. Although living outside mainstream American society both physically and culturally, they drew upon available models of women's political organizing and participation and crafted a strategy aimed to persuade federal leaders that they were loyal American citizens whose civil liberties and religious rights deserved protection. Mormon women in Utah broke new ground as the first voters with equal suffrage, casting ballots for a total of 41

⁴⁷ Leon C. Thurgood, "An Analysis of the Rhetoric Used by Mormon Women to Argue Equal Suffrage in Utah: 1870–1896," (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1973); Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The "Woman's Exponent": Forty-two Years of Speaking for Women," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1976): 222–39; Julie Dunfey, "'Living the Principle" of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," *Feminist Studies* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 523–36; Suzanne Larson, "An Ideograph Analysis of the Mormon Women and Non-Mormon Women's Public Argument on Polygamy and Suffrage, 1870–1886," (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1992).

years before the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification. They influenced both local and national politics by voting, protesting, parading, lobbying, and making policy. Thus, their experience builds on and adds to the story of American women's participation in national politics, in public life, and in the movement for women's rights.

Historians of women's political participation in nineteenth-century America focus the bulk of their attention on the progression of women's benevolent organizations, antislavery activism, and the post-Civil War women's movement. Moving beyond the separate spheres framework that dominated women's history in the 1960s and 70s, the new women's history, as Linda Kerber noted, brought attention to the social construction of that metaphor and highlighted the ways in which both men and women shaped both private and public spaces.⁴⁸ The growth of gender analysis in the past few decades has generated a profusion of work on the gendered nature of American political life from the early republic to the age of empire.⁴⁹ Histories of American expansionism discuss how American masculinity shaped U.S. domestic and foreign policy in the last half of the nineteenth century, advancing a project seemingly at odds with women's welfare and women's suffrage.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9–39.

⁴⁹ The bulk of these focus on the growth of an expressly female political culture with antislavery agitation and the women's rights movement, but rest on work detailing women's earlier participation in public life beyond the circles of republican motherhood. See for example Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics, in Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000). For the earlier period, see Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁵⁰ This has obvious connections to federal relations with the uncooperative Mormon inhabitants of Utah. See Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) and Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question 1870–1929* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008).

However, scholars like Mary Kelley point out that the early republic afforded opportunities for women to participate in civil society and formulate a women's political culture.⁵¹ While Nancy Cott, Linda Kerber, and others saw women's education as somewhat of a consolation prize in the service of republican motherhood rather than an expansion of women's rights, Kelley argued that academy-trained women were gaining a sense of themselves as citizens with rights, obligations, and the tools to make a difference in public life. Kathryn Kish Sklar observed that gender was a strong vehicle for women's political mobilization in the late nineteenth century, especially drawing on American traditions of voluntarism.⁵² Rebecca Edwards argues that American politics were actually much more open to women in the Gilded Age (the high point of Mormon women's suffrage and political activism) than in later years, when the death of third parties and the rise of the new American manhood closed down many of the opportunities for political participation women enjoyed in the late nineteenth century.⁵³

One of the most important modes of female participation in nineteenth-century public life was the proliferation of women's organizations, initially benevolent or educational societies, and later often suffrage organizations. Scholars have examined participation in women's organizations as a mechanism that furthered both "radical and conservative implications of two very different ideologies of gender."⁵⁴ Lori Ginzberg characterized women's benevolent work as

⁵¹ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁵² Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁵³ Rebecca Edwards, *The Angel in the Machinery: Gender in American Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵⁴ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 214. Also see Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

a vehicle for the emergence of middle-class identity based on ideologies of women's moral authority.

Anne Boylan's social history of organization members in New York and Boston in *The Origins of Women's Activism* also noted the ways in which benevolent societies reinforced contemporary class and gender systems, but her more nuanced approach and focus on women's life cycles allowed her to hone in on ways in which they negotiated the demands of domesticity to fill public roles that would otherwise be unavailable to them.⁵⁵ Both of these aspects are relevant to Mormon women's activism, which was largely organized through the Female Relief Society, enabled by the public roles that organization allowed them to fulfill, and built on claims of moral authority and American belonging.

Petitioning was one method through which American women could insert themselves into expressly political debates in the nineteenth century. Alisse Portnoy shows that the earliest instance of women's political petitioning in America (against Indian removal in the early 1830s) was an important step toward women's political rights because it established the legal precedent that female petitioners could be lawfully heard on political matters. She notes that early women petitioners aimed to negotiate the tension between female decorum and political activism by employing "distinctly gendered arguments in their political appeals to constitute their own agency rather than imitate men."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁵⁶ Alisse Theodore Portnoy, "'Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard': Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829–1831," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 4 (2003): 573–610. Also see Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 15–40.

Although petitions were gendered forms of political expression, they contained radically transformative power for the women who employed them. While most work on women's petitioning begins and ends with its role in the antislavery movement, Susan Zaeske presents an elegant argument about the relationship between women's petitioning and their perceptions of themselves as American citizens.⁵⁷ Examining petitions sent to Congress as part of the abolition campaign from 1831 to 1865, Zaeske demonstrates how this petitioning provided a means for women "to assert a modified form of citizenship."⁵⁸ As abolitionist women began to join their male counterparts in employing petitions as a means of agitation, they initially justified this political involvement in terms of Christian duty and likened the act of signing a petition to that of prayer. This humility and disavowal melted away as women gained confidence and skills in political organizing, circulating petitions, and defending their participation in the public sphere.

Zaeske argued that these women's involvement in petitioning thus "marked a significant change in women's political activism and signaled the growth of an identity of national citizenship."⁵⁹ Once women had firmly demonstrated (to themselves, at least) their right to petition, they came to see themselves as constituents to whom representatives were accountable. Many continued to petition for other reforms such as temperance, antipolygamy, and eventually, suffrage. According to Zaeske, women made themselves into citizens by exercising political power on behalf of enslaved workers, which empowered them to identify with and claim their own natural rights as Americans. Mormon women experienced something similar as they came to claim the political rights they articulated in their petitions to Congress against antipolygamy

⁵⁷ Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁵⁸ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 2.

⁵⁹ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 6.

legislation. After first petitioning and protesting on behalf of male family members and church leaders, Mormon women soon began to speak up for their own political rights as well.

Complicating the Suffrage Narrative

The history of American women's struggle for voting rights has been dominated by the story of the national movement and eastern leaders, due partially to the staying power of Susan B. Anthony's own narrative in the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*.⁶⁰ Interestingly, popular narratives of suffrage history from PBS American Experience's THE VOTE (2020) to podcasts, radio, and newspapers almost always begin by describing the 1848 Seneca Falls convention as the origin of the suffrage movement. They mention the 1869 split in the universal suffrage movement over the Fifteenth Amendment and generally skip ahead to the parades, protests, and progress that began in the second decade of the twentieth century.⁶¹ If these narratives do mention something about suffrage activism between 1870 and 1909, it might be Susan B. Anthony's illegal vote in 1872 or the merger of NAWSA in 1890. Very rarely do the early successes in the west make an appearance, perhaps due to a mistaken impression that women in those territories and states did not agitate for the vote and western legislators simply granted rights to women as publicity stunts.

This impression is understandable given the absence of western history from scholarship presenting the history of women's voting rights, both for academic and more popular audiences.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper, eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols, 1881–1922.

⁶¹ This is certainly influenced by the perception that nothing of importance happened from the 1870s and 1880s, as well as the greater availability of film, photographs, and other media chronicling the suffrage campaigns of the twentieth century—partially due to advancing technology and partially a testament to Alice Paul's success in creating a recognizable visual language and iconography of suffrage in the Congressional Union (later National Woman's Party) beginning in 1913.

Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle*, published in 1959, opened the way for the second-wave feminists who began writing women's history as they entered the academy in the 1970s.⁶² Still, as Linda Kerber and several colleagues noted, traditional paradigms of separate spheres meant that even histories of women's activism had difficulty in extracting meaning from the words and actions of early feminists.⁶³ Historians like Ellen Carol DuBois continued to write about suffrage over the course of long careers, reflecting updated knowledge and the state of women's history each time they added a new element, such as highlighting the fractures in the movement over the issue of race or the possible influence of Indigenous women on early suffragists' political philosophies.⁶⁴ DuBois' latest book, published ahead of the Nineteenth Amendment centennial, finally includes a short discussion of the initial expansion of suffrage in the west and the backlash against it as local legislators, political factions, or even Congress (in Utah's case) sought to erase the earliest gains.⁶⁵

Recent scholarship highlights the ways in which the familiar narrative of American women's long march toward the Nineteenth Amendment obscures many of the women's movement's other goals, participants, and origins. Lisa Tetrault's thorough analysis locates the construction of a suffragist memory in the struggle over the direction and leadership of the women's movement during a time of chaotic disunity. As the universal suffrage coalition

⁶² Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, 1959, enlarged edition (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁶³ Linda K. Kerber et al., "Beyond Roles, Beyond Spheres: Thinking About Gender in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 565–85.

⁶⁴ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁶⁵ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 123.

fractured over the Fifteenth Amendment, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony articulated a memory of suffrage work beginning at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention in order to cement their leadership, their strategy, and their organization (NWSA) as the heart of the movement. The resultant narrative “foregrounded woman suffrage and a federal strategy as the pinnacle of a rights agenda.”⁶⁶

Tetrault argues that the coalescing of this myth of Seneca Falls transformed the movement, established Anthony as its head, and framed the history of suffrage for the next century and more. Her work shows the importance of memory in making history—those who write and preserve history and those who articulate it publicly will always shape the story in seen and unseen ways. Historians such as Lori Ginzberg and Sally Roesch Wagner have pointed to other possible origin stories for the women’s rights movement and suffrage in particular, including women’s demands for the vote before Seneca Falls and the influence of Haudenosaunee women’s leadership on the thinking of suffragists like Matilda Joslyn Gage and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁶⁷ They disrupt the timeframe of the narrative, but still locate the origins of suffrage in upstate New York.

The triumph of Susan B. Anthony’s suffragist memory in the myth of Seneca Falls has obscured the contributions of millions of women and men who were not NWSA (and later NAWSA) leaders, as well as those whose efforts were directed at other aims in addition to a

⁶⁶ Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women’s Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2014), 17.

⁶⁷ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman’s Rights in Antebellum New York* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Sally Roesch Wagner, *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists* (Summertown, TN: Native Voices Books, 2011); Sally Roesch Wagner, ed., *The Women’s Suffrage Movement* (New York: Penguin, 2019).

federal woman suffrage amendment.⁶⁸ This has especially been true for women of color, whose broader human rights agenda included efforts to secure voting rights, fight lynching and racial discrimination, and open up educational and professional opportunities for women and men in their communities.

Important new work has done much to disrupt the narrative of a slow but linear, 72-year march toward a federal suffrage amendment that has too often ended the narrative in 1920, when millions of American women still could not cast ballots due to discriminatory U.S. citizenship laws and state regulations. Martha S. Jones' latest monograph traces a more than 200 year arc of Black women's political activism, locating the origins of their work for women's rights in mid-nineteenth century efforts to obtain preaching licenses in Black churches and carrying the story of women's voting rights forward to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and beyond.⁶⁹ Cathleen Cahill also has done much to broaden the cast of characters in popular suffrage narratives by continuing the story beyond 1920 through the lives of Indigenous and Spanish-speaking advocates for voting rights.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Mormon women's work for suffrage actually appeared in two volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* in chapters written by Emmeline B. Wells and Susa Young Gates, but as separate chapters this Utah history can be read as aside rather than important drivers of the main suffrage story. Emmeline B. Wells, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 1883–1900, eds. Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1902), 936–56; Susa Young Gates, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, 1900–1920, ed. Ida Husted Harper (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1922), 647.

⁶⁹ Martha S. Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* (New York: Basic Books, 2020). She developed this origin story in Martha S. Jones *All Bound up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁷⁰ Cathleen D. Cahill, "'Our Democracy and the American Indian': Citizenship, Sovereignty, and the Native Vote in the 1920s," *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 41–51; Cahill, *Recasting the Vote*.

In addition to this important work, other scholarship points to additional possible origin stories for suffrage history.⁷¹ Susan Ware's insightful analysis opens with a description of Carrie Chapman Catt's suffrage markers in the woods at her Juniper Ledge estate, noting the racism, Euro-centrism, and regional chauvinism in Catt's and Anthony's top-heavy histories of the suffrage movement.⁷² Ware argues that suffrage activism unfolded in many more places and over a much longer duration than these narratives acknowledge, and she uses objects in the Schlesinger Library to anchor each chapter of her book with a different woman's story that adds a lesser-known aspect to the body of suffrage literature. She includes a chapter on Emmeline B. Wells and the *Woman's Exponent* to move the suffrage story forward in the 1870s and 1880s, acknowledging that Utah Territory was the place where suffrage was first worked out in practice on a large scale.

This, then, is another suffrage origin story: As the first substantial body of women voters in the United States, Mormon women in Utah pioneered the vote for those who would eventually follow them to the polls across the nation. The backlash against voting Mormon women prompted their committed participation in the national suffrage movement, and it also shaped debates about suffrage for decades to come. When anti-suffragists later argued that women would only vote as their husbands directed, or that women were too emotional or unintelligent to cast ballots, they used arguments that had first been levied against Mormon women—and countered by them in petitions, personal appeals, convention speeches, and newspaper articles. The story of Mormon women's suffrage work in practice should take its rightful place as an important chapter in voting rights history.

⁷¹ See Wagner, *Women's Suffrage Movement*.

⁷² Ware, *Why They Marched*; Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

Women in the West

West of the Mississippi, women initially appeared in the historical narrative as calming and civilizing forces in a male dominated wild West. More recently, a growing body of borderlands scholarship is incorporating women into larger narratives of American nation-making and state-building in the West by looking at their place in families and other networks of relationships. Anne Hyde's masterful account of families and empire in the American West recovers Native women's vital role in building families, trade networks, and cultural arrangements that defined the West amid imperial competition, war, and the uneven impositions of fledgling American power.⁷³ Bethel Saler argues that regulating marriage helped to establish settler empires in the cultural and political process of state-building in places like Wisconsin. "Legal marriage proved a primary signifier and cornerstone of establishing American sovereignty," Saler argues, and she emphasizes the contingencies and fluidities involved on the ground in America's domestic empire as agents of state power attempted to articulate and enforce common social beliefs and customs.⁷⁴

Honor Sachs' study of eighteenth-century Kentuckians suggests that "peripheral populations...exerted greater pressure on the course of empires and nation-states than governing officials."⁷⁵ At the heart of violence and conflicts over land, property rights, and institutions in this new state, she writes, "were white male anxieties over their right to govern their own households."⁷⁶ Proper gender and racial order were essential to these men's conceptions of

⁷³ Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families*.

⁷⁴ Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 9.

⁷⁵ Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 9.

⁷⁶ Sachs, *Home Rule*, 33.

independent manhood, and ultimately, political leaders came to realize that “securing the borders of empire required stabilizing order within households.”⁷⁷ All of these works show that women, their roles in families, and the gender ideologies shaped the process of state and nation-building in the American West. The same is certainly true for Mormon women in territorial Utah, so these analytical lenses offer useful insights for making sense of their actions in the frameworks of imperialism and nation-making.

Perhaps due to the mistaken assumption that women did not have to fight for the vote in western territories, work on suffrage history generally reduces nineteenth-century suffrage victories and women’s voting patterns in western states and territories to mere asides in the story of politically active women’s crusades in cities like New York and Washington, D.C. On the other hand, examinations of suffrage in the West (and Utah in particular) have remained largely unrooted in the literature on the broader American women’s movement, presenting a prologue without connecting the dots.⁷⁸

Scholarship on woman suffrage in the western region of the United States was anchored in Beverly Beeton’s initial survey from the mid-1980s. Seeking to explain why it was adopted so much earlier to the Rocky Mountain states than the rest of the nation, Beeton argued that Western men’s pragmatic politics played a greater role than any ideologies of equality.⁷⁹ Her narrative centered on lawmakers rather than female voters or would-be voters.

⁷⁷ Sachs, *Home Rule*, 119.

⁷⁸ Some scholarship is connecting different aspects of the Western suffrage story to broader themes of contemporary interest like empire and racism, such as the chapter on woman suffrage in Wyoming in Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See also Sara Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest, 1870–1920* (University of Iowa Press, 2018).

⁷⁹ Beeton, *Women Vote in the West*.

Writing a generation later, Rebecca Mead brought Western women into the story. She highlighted Western suffragists' political adaptability and sophisticated activism while pointing to the destabilized nature of regional politics that allowed suffragists to ally with rural and progressive reformers in places like Colorado and California.⁸⁰ Mead did connect this western story to the eventual success of the national suffrage movement, but her focus was on women's activism to win the vote after 1890. This meant she glossed over Wyoming and especially Utah, where the largest difficulty lay in defending suffrage from 1870 to 1887. Again, the complex struggle for Utah women's votes was not integrated into the story of what followed, both in the west and in the rest of the nation.

Carol Cornwall Madsen compiled and edited the first volume discussing Utah's suffrage story in depth after decades of researching and writing about women's organizing in Utah and especially Utah's leading suffragist Emmeline B. Wells.⁸¹ In *Battle for the Ballot*, Madsen and other historians highlighted Mormon women's connections with suffragists in the East, but stuck to local history and ended with Utah statehood in 1896.⁸² Much remains to be done to contextualize Utah women's activism within the framework of national politics and the national suffrage movement, both before and after Utah statehood.

⁸⁰ Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*.

⁸¹ See for example, Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Emmeline B. Wells in Washington: The Search for Mormon Legitimacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 140–78; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Decade of Détente: The Mormon-Gentile Female Relationship in Nineteenth-Century Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 298–319; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Emmeline B. Wells: 'Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?'" *Brigham Young University Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 161–78; Madsen, "Creating Female Community: Relief Society in Cache Valley, Utah, 1868–1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 126–54; Madsen, "'The Power of Combination': Emmeline B. Wells and the National and International Councils of Women," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1993): 646–73; Madsen, "'Femme Covert': Journey of a Metaphor," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 43–61; Madsen and David J. Whittaker, "History's Sequel: A Source Essay on Women in Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 123–45.

⁸² Madsen, *Battle for the Ballot*.

Sources and Methods

When they touch on it at all, historians have generally looked at Mormon women's suffrage activism from the perspective of their narratives about the Mormon Question, describing these women's participation in public debates about polygamy and highlighting how those debates constructed notions of religion, Americanness, and morality.⁸³ They generally mentioned women's voices only as a sidenote to the political action in the halls of Congress or Utah's territorial legislature, so their analyses sidestepped important questions about women's participation and influence in local and national politics. This study shifts the frame of reference, centering on the lives and beliefs of the women whose marriages and politics were so hotly contested in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Such an approach allows a rich body of sources to speak to Mormon women's construction of their own political identities and rights.

The focal point of this study is the previously unexplored body of Mormon women's petitions and memorials to federal lawmakers, preserved in the files of U.S. House and Senate Committees on the Territories and on the Judiciary at the National Archives. Mormon women sent these documents to federal officials between 1870 and 1887 to protest federal bills and laws aimed at stripping political rights from polygamists and eventually all women in Utah Territory. A close reading of the rhetoric, forms, and production of these petitions illuminates how Mormon women sought to position themselves vis-à-vis the federal government and other American citizens in their efforts to defend their voting rights. The changing nature of Mormon women's appeals to government officials signaled not only a pragmatic response to changes in the political environment over time, but also their own evolving understanding of themselves as political actors. The purpose and rhetoric of these petitions offers an interesting juxtaposition to

⁸³ Gordon, *The Mormon Question*; Fluhman, "*A Peculiar People*"; and Talbot, *Foreign Kingdom*.

those prepared by suffrage associations and individual women across the country asking for voting rights during the same time period.

Additionally, this study brings in the varied forms of political communication Mormon women employed in addition to petitions to express their complaints against federal intrusion on their religious and civil rights. Mormon women certainly understood that their media were as important as their message; carefully staged indignation meetings, printed pamphlets, and the pages of the semi-monthly *Woman's Exponent* were no less important to Mormon women's political strategy than their petitions. In all the forms of political expression Mormon women employed, they appropriated the language of citizenship as they argued that the federal government was obligated to protect rather than rescind their voting and civil rights.

Other important sources shed light on the ways in which Mormon women crafted and broadcast their message. These include the minutes of local Relief Societies across Utah Territory, the extant papers of four county women's suffrage associations, and the papers and correspondence of leading women in the Relief Society, such as the newly transcribed and digitally-published diaries of Emmeline B. Wells.⁸⁴ These sources help shed light on how Mormon women's individual life experiences and participation in the Relief Society prepared them for political action and enabled them to mobilize their sisters in the cause of suffrage. They also provide a glimpse of the process of organizing indignation meetings, drafting memorials, circulating them for signatures, and transmitting them to representatives in Washington, D.C.

Additionally, the *Woman's Exponent*, a semi-monthly feminist newspaper published from 1872 to 1914, is a treasure trove of Mormon women's writing. The *Exponent* discussed women's

⁸⁴ The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells, Church Historian's Press (Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), <https://churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells>.

issues from suffrage to education to mothering, shared news of women's achievements in the United States and abroad, and reprinted editorials by or about women from national newspapers. Although never officially a publication of the Relief Society, the *Exponent* also shared Relief Society news and regularly published reports from Society meetings throughout the Territory.⁸⁵ The *Exponent* was more than simply a women's journal sharing tidbits of interesting information; its publishers envisioned it as an instrument for disseminating a true picture of their religion, education, interests, and domestic and political arrangements.⁸⁶ The pages of the *Exponent* reveal much not only about Mormon women's interests, but also about the image of respectability they attempted to appropriate and communicate to the outside world.

Finally, Utah newspapers reveal many details about Mormon women's suffrage activism that has otherwise been lost to the archives. While records have only survived from four local Woman Suffrage Associations (WSAs) active in Utah Territory in the 1880s and 1890s, newspaper articles show that WSAs were organized in at least twenty-one of the twenty-seven counties, with many more town and city associations as well. The *Exponent* and local and regional papers printed news of association meetings, events, and leadership that is found nowhere else—not in these women's obituaries or autobiographies, and not in organizational Relief Society histories.

Several of the important figures in the following narrative such as Sarah M. Kimball and Emmeline B. Wells are already well known in Mormon history. However, a biographical

⁸⁵ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Remember the Women of Zion': A Study of the Editorial Content of the *Woman's Exponent*: A Mormon Woman's Journal," (MA thesis, University of Utah, 1977).

⁸⁶ Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The *Woman's Exponent*: A Utah Case Study in the Campaign for Women's Suffrage," in *Front Pages, Front Lines: Media and the Fight for Women's Suffrage*, eds. Linda Steiner, Carolyn Kitch, and Brooke Kroeger (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 61–77; Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "Forty-two Years of Speaking for Women"; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "The 'New Woman' and the *Woman's Exponent*: An Editorial Perspective," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 71–122.

approach to these women sometimes treats them as individuals at the expense of placing them within what Matthew Bowman describes as the “powerful, strongly bound female society” created by plural marriage within territorial Utah.⁸⁷ New work is moving beyond portraying leading women as a small, insulated set of actors or regurgitating organizational histories of the Relief Society, instead showing how their life experience influenced how they led women into political action through the Relief Society.⁸⁸ This dissertation follows well-known Relief Society leaders, but also highlights the local leaders who made political mobilization possible on the ground by holding indignation meetings, circulating petitions, lobbying local leaders (both in the church and in politics), and exhorting their sisters to join with them.

When read together, these sources tell the story of Mormon women’s shrewd, self-consciously political strategy to defend their religious liberty and civil rights against federal encroachment. They also show how that strategy both reflected and shaped participants’ views of their place in their religion, their communities, and the American republic. And placing those sources in conversation with the broader narratives of suffrage history show how suffragists in Utah both learned from and influenced national leaders in the movement for women’s voting rights. This dissertation pulls together the strands of scholarship on Mormon identity and the conflict over polygamy as well as Mormon women’s political engagement to show how Mormon women’s political strategy both reflected and shaped the strategies and tactics of suffragists working to advance voting rights across the nation.

⁸⁷ Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 13. Ulrich’s *House Full of Females* avoids this problem and is an important model to follow.

⁸⁸ See Cope et al., *Mormon Women’s History*. Several great examples include Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, *Eliza: The Life and Faith of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, and Madsen, *Intimate History*. But there is still no biography of Sarah M. Kimball, who catalyzed the development of the Female Relief Society in Nauvoo and led the Fifteenth Ward Salt Lake Relief Society for forty years, or of many other important Mormon women.

One of the thorniest, and therefore, most important, questions to address in this study is that of historical agency. Scholars such as Catherine Brekus, Rachel Cope, and Ann Braude have pointed out the unfortunate tendency to overlook religious women in American history because they were largely sitting in the pews rather than preaching from the pulpit. There is much to untangle in looking at Mormon women's ability to act, to effect change, and to exercise power while living in a patriarchal religion and marriage system. Sarah Gordon noted in an aside that "the actions of [Mormon] women...challenged their status as passive victims" in the national conflict over polygamy.⁸⁹ My study demonstrates the truth of this assessment by linking Mormon women's resistance to federal agents of power with their collective organization for political agitation, then situating that story in the broader tapestry of the American women's movement of the time. This dissertation attempts to move one step beyond Rachel Cope's question of "how...women [are] connected to agency and causation in Mormon history" to ask how these women are connected to larger movements in American history.⁹⁰

This requires moving toward a model of the history of religious women that expands on or reframes the notion of separate spheres. This metaphor, dating back to de Tocqueville's observation that American men and women led parallel lives, has been both useful and detrimental to historians studying women. Linda Kerber describes how historians have used separate spheres as a lens to uncover women's activities in the home, but this lens can also focus on men's oppression of women in ways that obscure their own agency.⁹¹ The most useful

⁸⁹ Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 163.

⁹⁰ Rachel Cope, "Shifting the Plot: Possibilities in Mormon Women's History," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 106.

⁹¹ Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds."

histories examine the connections and mutual influences between ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres to recreate a women’s world that was never completely separate from that of men.

Ann Braude observes that “even as women departed daily from the unrealistic ideology of the Cult of True Womanhood, they used its assumptions about women's natural piety to assert authority in the home and in the public realm.”⁹² Mormon women who raised children alongside plural wives, preached and collected charitable offerings in the community, and petitioned federal officials for protection of their civil rights certainly did so. Just as their anti-polygamist opponents did, Mormon women drew on certain forms of authority and power to claim respectability and justify their participation in local and national politics. By analyzing their rhetoric closely, considering the forms of political expression they employed, and tracing the associations and organizations through which they acted, this dissertation aims to tell a fuller story of how Mormon women came to be political actors in their own behalf.

This dissertation examines sources created by and about Mormon women in Utah from 1870 to 1920 in order to trace their long genealogy of political involvement. The questions they grappled with of women’s rights, religious freedom, and the definition and limits of citizenship in the American republic had great bearing on the direction of the nation as a whole, but also on their own personal lives as wives, mothers, devout Mormons, and suffragists. I draw on the history of Mormon women’s autonomous organizing and traditions of women’s political participation to trace the long arc of their political activism and restore their voices and actions as surprising and articulate actors in the movement for woman suffrage.

⁹² Ann D. Braude, “Women’s History *Is* American Religious History,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, Thomas A. Tweed, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 99.

My research contradicts contemporaries and many historians who have underestimated nineteenth-century Mormon women's political power because it was not deployed to end the practice of polygamy. It shows that Mormon women's resistance to federal antipolygamy laws and their suffrage activism was not only important in Utah. By providing the first test of woman suffrage in the United States, Mormon women's political involvement would shape the discourse deployed in national debates over plural marriage and woman suffrage even after the 1870s and 1880s. This dissertation shows how Mormon women's words and actions shifted the landscape

As Mormon women engaged in collective political action to defend their civil rights, they dismayed both supporters and opponents of woman suffrage. They also developed their own self-image as American citizens and a deep commitment to women's political equality, becoming some of the staunchest supporters of a federal suffrage amendment. The discourse they created over more than fifty years of political expression raised questions of women's rights, religious freedom, and notions of citizenship and belonging in the American republic. That discourse is rich, and it deserves to be fully explored.

After Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920, the National Woman's Relief Society sent a congratulatory letter to NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt, stating "Utah's hive of busy workers...join the song of victory which rises from every enfranchised woman in these United States of America."⁹³ A few days later, a parade of suffragists once again made its way up Salt Lake City's State Street to the steps of the Utah Capitol Building, where city and state government officials stood waiting. There,

⁹³ Minutes of the Relief Society General Board, August 19, 1920, cited in Madsen, *Intimate History*, 488.

longtime suffragists, both men and women, reminded the crowd of the long struggle for suffrage and urged listeners to take advantage of voting as a precious privilege of citizenship.⁹⁴

92-year-old Emmeline B. Wells was the guest of honor on the Capitol steps that day.⁹⁵ The editor of the *Woman's Exponent* and Utah's leading suffragist, Wells had lent her energies and talents to the cause for nearly fifty years as three successive generations of Utah women had joined the struggle. Wells' and other Utahns' engagement with the question of woman suffrage raised important questions for the movement as a whole while shaping their own identity as political actors. This dissertation tells that story.

The next chapter traces Mormon women's politicization through the Relief Society and contextualizes Utah's 1870 woman suffrage law. Women gained opportunities for public speaking, leadership, and participating in large-scale social projects through participation in the Relief Society. This growing organizational capacity laid the groundwork for Mormon women's entry into politics as local and national politics created the necessary conditions for Utah women citizens to gain voting rights in 1870.

Like others in nineteenth-century America, Mormon women first collectively entered the political arena to help others—in this case, to defend husbands and church leaders from antipolygamy legislation. This political engagement helped them to envision and claim rights for themselves. Chapter Three analyzes Mormon women's petition campaigns to defend polygamy and their own voting rights as both came under attack in the 1870s and 1880s. It also shows how leaders like Emmeline B. Wells cultivated relationships with national suffrage leaders in pursuit of common goals.

⁹⁴ "Utah Women Observe Suffrage Victory," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 1, 1920, 3.

⁹⁵ Madsen, *Intimate History*, 488.

Chapter Four shows how Mormon suffragists worked to regain the vote after the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act disenfranchised all Utah women. Thousands worked through the Woman Suffrage Association of Utah to educate each other, raise awareness, and petition Utah's constitutional convention to restore equal voting rights. Mormon suffragists drew on their theology and emphasized a cooperative vision of politics to build local support for suffrage and anchor women's equal political rights firmly into Utah's political culture.

Chapter Five describes Mormon suffragists' political participation after regaining the vote with Utah statehood. Their engagement helped make space nationwide for women to participate in politics. As suffragists urged for women's inclusion in local politics, they continued to press Congress for a federal suffrage amendment, working with both factions of the suffrage movement.

The Epilogue explores how Mormon women's suffrage history was used in the growing national campaign for a federal amendment, how it was commemorated in Utah, and how it was obscured in popular memory. This dissertation attempts to begin the work of restoring this rich and complex story to the national suffrage narrative.

CHAPTER 2

“THE SISTERS OF THE SAINTS KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING”: MORMON WOMEN’S POLITICIZATION AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

February 14, 1870 was election day in Salt Lake City. There was all the usual hubbub of electioneering in nineteenth-century America, with crowds gathered on street corners to joke and jeer and a brass band playing outside the polling place at City Hall.⁹⁶ However, this was anything but a typical municipal election. It was the first in the Territory—and in the United States—in which women citizens could vote with equal suffrage rights as men.⁹⁷ Twenty-three-year-old schoolteacher Seraph Young (later Ford) was the first woman to cast her ballot in Salt Lake City that day, making her the first woman in the United States to vote under an equal suffrage law.⁹⁸ Although Wyoming Territory had passed woman suffrage two months earlier, Young would go to the polls twice in Utah—for both a municipal election and a general election—before Wyoming women would cast their first ballots in September.⁹⁹

Young’s ballot was one of the earliest steps forward in the slow progression of woman suffrage. She likely arrived early at the polls to vote because she had a workday ahead of her as a

⁹⁶ “The Election,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 14, 1870, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Until 1807, some women had been able to vote in New Jersey if they met the property requirement, and some women could vote in local school elections in Kentucky (beginning in 1838) and Kansas (beginning in 1861). Judith Apter Klinghoffer and Lois Elkis, “The Petticoat Electors’: Women’s Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776–1807,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (Summer 1992): 159–93; Kathryn A. Nicholas, “Reexamining Women’s Nineteenth-Century Political Agency: School Suffrage and Office-Holding,” *Journal of Policy History* 30, no. 3 (2018): 452–89.

⁹⁸ “The Mormon Feud,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), February 23, 1870, p. 1. Seraph’s relationship to Brigham Young was incorrectly reported in the national news; she was his grandniece rather than his granddaughter.

⁹⁹ Wyoming Territory was the first to pass a woman suffrage law, on December 10, 1869. But Utah Territory passed its own law on February 12, 1870, and Utah women citizens were first to go to the polls. They voted in this municipal election as well as a territory-wide general election on August 1, 1870, while Wyoming women first voted in the territory’s general election on September 6, 1870. “Utah,” *The New York Herald*, August 14, 1870, p. 11; “General,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 8, 1870, p. 3.

teacher in the University of Deseret's primary school.¹⁰⁰ Although both national and local newspapers noted Young's name, her role in history soon faded from public memory. It would be another fifty years after Young's historic vote before the Nineteenth Amendment enshrined women's voting rights in the U.S. constitution in 1920. And it took nearly another fifty years after that for federal legislation to knock down some of the largest structural barriers facing voters of color.

How did Utah women come to be the first to cast their ballots, and how did their votes shape the contours of the suffrage movement? The idea of women voting was laughable to most Americans in 1870, but the notion of women voting in *Utah* was particularly surprising. The vast majority of the white settlers in the territory were Latter-day Saints, who believed in the practice of plural marriage, often called polygamy. So most Americans saw Utah as a backward place where women were deluded and oppressed, almost enslaved, by the Mormon patriarchy. As the *Phrenological Journal* mused: "Utah is a land of marvels. She gives us, first, polygamy, which seems to be an outrage against 'woman's rights,' and then offers the nation a 'female suffrage bill,' ... Was there ever a greater anomaly known in the history of society?"¹⁰¹ Contrary to popular belief, Mormon women did not gain the vote *only* because of polygamy, and they were well prepared to engage in public debate and exercise political power.

After becoming voters, Mormon women's political strategy continued to develop as they exercised suffrage rights, lost them, and regained them with Utah statehood. From 1870 onward, thousands of Mormon women participated in collective political action to defend both their

¹⁰⁰ *Second Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students in the University of Deseret, for the Academical Year 1869–70* (Salt Lake City, 1870), Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, The University of Utah. Seraph is listed as one of three assistants to the principal of the model school.

¹⁰¹ "William H. Hooper, The Utah Delegate and Female Suffrage Advocate," *Phrenological Journal* 51, no. 5 (November 1870): 328.

practice of polygamy and their own voting rights. Throughout the next two decades, they held indignation meetings, circulated petitions, lobbied lawmakers, and pled their cause through newspaper articles and convention speeches. But Mormon women's politicization began well before their first votes. The foundational elements of their political organizing were first translated into collective action in the female spaces of the Relief Society, where Mormon women learned to speak, lead, and coordinate large-scale projects—first on behalf of others, and then in their own interests.¹⁰²

Mormon women's politicization and mobilization through the Relief Society was one of several factors that led to Utah's woman suffrage law in 1870, but national politics sparked the first discussion of enfranchising Utah women. Reconstruction's expansion of federal power into voting rights presented a moment of opportunity for women's rights leaders to argue for expanding suffrage to women. The end of the Civil War and completion of the transcontinental railroad also turned Republican Congressmen's attention toward eradicating polygamy in Utah. Both anti-polygamists and woman suffragists attempted and failed to induce Congress to pass woman suffrage for Utah, but local Mormon lawmakers picked up the question themselves. Their unanimous passage of a woman suffrage law in February 1870 came in the context of growing pressure to expand the franchise, the threat of a drastic anti-polygamy bill making its way through Congress, and Mormon women's widespread indignation meetings to protest that proposed legislation.

This chapter places Utah women's first votes in context of their own politicization and the factors in national and local politics that set the stage. Mormon women did not gain the vote

¹⁰² Lola Van Wagenen, "In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise," *Dialogue* 24 (Winter 1991): 31–43; and Lola Van Wagenen, "Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896," (Phd diss., New York University, 1994).

simply because of polygamy, but rather because the convergence of local and national politics, as well as women's own actions, opened doors that made this radical notion possible in Mormon Utah. Women were politicized through the Relief Society, where they learned leadership skills and developed the organizational networks to mobilize for public action.

Reconstruction and Utah Territory

Reconstruction continued a redefinition and expansion of federal power that had begun before the Civil War. Federal projects included creating new social and economic institutions, establishing further control over Indian nations, and amending the U.S. Constitution to include language on citizenship and voting rights. In both the South and West, this power was constrained and contested by a multiplicity of actors: some citizens, some subjects, and some enemies of the state.

Utah Territory presented a unique case during Reconstruction.¹⁰³ Since its formation in 1850, the political issues in and surrounding Utah Territory centered on “determining who possessed and could exercise governing, legal, social, and even cultural power,” making Utah a testing ground for the principle of popular sovereignty.¹⁰⁴ Even the U.S. military outpost established at Fort Douglas during the 1857–58 “Utah War” illustrated how “thinly stretched” and dependent on local settlers the federal government was in Utah.¹⁰⁵ But if some historians

¹⁰³ Clyde A. Milner II and Brian Q. Cannon, eds., *Reconstruction and Mormon America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Brent M. Rogers, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Mormons and the Federal Management of Utah Territory* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 5. Rogers argues that Utah was as central to testing the doctrine of popular sovereignty as was Bleeding Kansas or the *Dredd Scott* decision.

¹⁰⁵ Rachel St. John, “Ambiguous Allegiances and Divided Sovereignty: Mormons and Other Uncertain Americans in Nineteenth-Century North America,” in *Contingent Citizens: Shifting Perceptions of Latter-day Saints in American Political Culture*, eds. Spencer W. McBride, Brent M. Rogers, and Keith A. Erikson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 191.

emphasize the weakness of the “sputtering state” in western borderlands, others see Utah as Reconstruction’s most successful undertaking because Mormons were more profoundly changed by it than any other targeted community.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, conflicts between Utahns and the federal government “illustrated the contingent, contested, and unstable nature of local sovereignty at the conjunction of state formation and territorial management.”¹⁰⁷ Conflicts between Utahns and the federal government over Mormon polygamy, Indian policy, the justice system, and more continued for decades after the Civil War.

After the war, the federal government began a “protracted effort to destroy polygamy,” attempting to eliminate the second of the “twin relics of barbarism” identified in the 1856 Republican party platform.¹⁰⁸ In this Reconstruction, some historians see the federal government acting “in rough parallel to the South, to set the terms of citizenship for groups...that in different ways were anomalous within the expanded nation.”¹⁰⁹ Mormons always had been outsiders, and their nineteenth-century contemporaries sought to determine whether they were citizens or foreigners, white or non-white, Christians or heathen.¹¹⁰ Following their persecution and expulsion from Missouri, Mormon leaders had attempted to carve out a space of political,

¹⁰⁶ Anne Farrar Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 24; Brett David Dowdle, “Beyond the Pale of Human Sympathy: Utah and the Reconstruction of the American West,” (Phd diss., Texas Christian University, 2018).

¹⁰⁷ Rogers, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ The twin relics were slavery and polygamy. Richard D. Poll, “The Political Reconstruction of Utah Territory, 1866–1890,” *Pacific Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (May 1958): 111.

¹⁰⁹ Elliott West, “Measuring Reconstruction,” in Milner and Cannon, *Reconstruction and Mormon America*, 3.

¹¹⁰ St. John, “Ambiguous Allegiances and Divided Sovereignty,” 177; Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852–1890* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Paul W. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Spencer H. Fluhman, “*A Peculiar People*”: *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

economic, and legal autonomy in Illinois in the 1840s.¹¹¹ But following the murder of founder Joseph Smith, the faith's adherents emigrated to the Mexican territory of the Great Basin beginning in 1847 in order to leave the United States behind. Given this history, suspicions about Mormon loyalties in Utah Territory were not unfounded.

Those suspicions led Congress to drastically shrink the size of the proposed state of Deseret when incorporating Utah Territory as part of the Compromise of 1850. And in the years that followed, the situation on the ground with Brigham Young as governor was contingent and fluid. In many ways, Mormon settlers in Utah were instruments of federal power as they extracted resources, established white settlements, displaced Indian nations, and built communication and transportation networks. However, these state-building projects also furthered Mormon interests, and they were carried out by Mormon settlers who had come to see the U.S. government as their enemy.

Women, their roles in families, and gender ideologies had shaped the cultural and political process of state and nation-building in America.¹¹² Therefore, it is unsurprising that federal lawmakers sought to regulate marriage in order to make Utah (and Mormon settlers) more American after the Civil War. As Bethel Saler noted, "legal marriage proved a primary signifier and cornerstone of establishing American sovereignty" in the nineteenth century.¹¹³ And Mormons in Utah were not practicing legal marriage.

¹¹¹ Benjamin E. Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020).

¹¹² Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families*.

¹¹³ Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 9.

Ever since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had publicly acknowledged the practice in 1852, Americans considered polygamy to be a grave threat to their way of life and their form of government.¹¹⁴ Congress banned bigamy and restricted LDS church ownership of property through the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act in 1862, but the law did not provide funding or means for enforcement and was largely ignored. By 1870, around 25 to 30 percent of Utahns lived in polygamous households.¹¹⁵ Very large families like Brigham Young's were exceptional; roughly two-thirds of polygamous husbands had two wives.¹¹⁶

After the Civil War, Congressional Republicans turned their attention toward eradicating polygamy as the second of the "twin relics of barbarism" identified in the party's 1856 platform.¹¹⁷ Talbot observes that although Reconstruction in the South entailed establishing black families and guaranteeing black citizenship rights (at least on paper), Greater Reconstruction in the Mormon West was about "controlling Mormon behavior, breaking up polygamous families, and disciplining Mormons through the revocation of citizenship rights."¹¹⁸ Both in the South and in the West, federal power was being used to create a unifying national vision of home and family.

¹¹⁴ Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Talbot, *Foreign Kingdom*; Fluhman, "A Peculiar People".

¹¹⁵ That percentage decreased over the next decades. Lowell C. Bennion, "Plural Marriage, 1841–1904," in *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Brandon S. Plewe (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2013), 122–25; Marie Cornwall, Camela Courtright, and Laga Van Beek, "How Common the Principle? Women as Plural Wives in 1860," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 149; Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 101.

¹¹⁶ Daynes, *More Wives than One*, 130.

¹¹⁷ Kirk H. Porter, comp., *National Party Platforms* (New York: MacMillan, 1924), 48.

¹¹⁸ Christine Talbot, "Constructing a National Marital and Sexual Culture," in Milner and Cannon, *Reconstruction and Mormon America*, 80.

This proper ordering of family was key to Americanization. Republican lawmakers in Washington believed that polygamous marriage was despotic, regressive, and incompatible with democracy. As Sarah Gordon masterfully describes, federal lawmakers believed that Mormons would be unfit for self-government until they progressed from the barbarism of polygamy.¹¹⁹

The status of Mormon women in Utah was central to this progression, so their marriages, families, and civil rights became a political football in the conflict over the “Mormon Question.” Federal and local lawmakers would contest what could and could not be done to women—as well as what women themselves could and could not do—for the next two decades. In the postwar years, congressional lawmakers attempted to free polygamous wives by restructuring Utah government and restricting polygamists’ civil rights through three bills. The Wade Bill in 1866, the Cragin Bill in 1869, and the Cullom Bill in 1870 each would have provided means to enforce the Morrill Act, but they all failed to pass.¹²⁰ The latter bill also sparked demonstrations from thousands of Mormon women and helped lead to Utah’s woman suffrage law.

Reconstruction anti-polygamy efforts helped provoke Mormon women’s collective entry into politics, but postwar suffrage activism put the possibility on the table in the first place. Reconstruction raised and then dashed the hopes of women’s rights advocates. As discussions about citizenship and voting played out in legislation, there were steps forward and backward for women. Congress overrode President Johnson’s veto in 1867 to extend suffrage to black men in the District of Columbia. In 1867, Kansas held two separate referenda on black men’s suffrage

¹¹⁹ Gordon, *The Mormon Question*.

¹²⁰ Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women’s History* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2016), 305; T. A. Larson, “Emancipating the West’s Dolls, Vassals, and Hopeless Drudges: The Origin of Woman Suffrage in the West,” in *Essays in Western History in Honor of Professor T. A. Larson*, ed. Roger Daniels (Laramie: University of Wyoming Publications, 1971), 9–13.

and woman suffrage, both of which failed. The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” in 1868, but it also inserted the word “male” in its description of voters.¹²¹ Now it was the federal constitution, not just state laws, that restricted voting rights to men.

The next Amendment split the nascent suffrage movement. Divisions had already emerged in the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) during the 1867 Kansas referenda. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton campaigned solely for woman suffrage with funding from George Francis Train, alienating them from many AERA members including president Lucy Stone. The rift deepened as Congress debated the wording of the Fifteenth Amendment, which eventually protected voting rights against discrimination based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude, but said nothing about sex. After the Amendment passed Congress in February 1869, Anthony and Stanton refused to back it and broke away from the AERA to form the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Stone, her husband Henry Blackwell, and others formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) later that year and supported the Fifteenth Amendment as a step toward women’s voting rights.

During this period of heightened discussion surrounding the franchise, the *New York Times* had published perhaps the first mention of woman suffrage for Utah in December 1867, just one month after both suffrage referenda failed in Kansas. In a satirical tone, the *Times* suggested that Utah was one place in the country where woman suffrage might have a positive effect. Due to their numerical majority, Utah women could carry elections if they had the vote, the *Times* suggested, which could “result in casting out polygamy and Mormonism in

¹²¹ U.S. Constitution, amendment XIV.

general.”¹²² “Here would be a capital field for woman suffrage to make a start,” the article concluded, “and we presume nobody would object to the experiment. Why will not Messers Train, Anthony, Stone, and other gentlemen engaged in the cause, turn their attention to this promising field?”¹²³

Notwithstanding the *Times*’ ridicule over their non-conformity to prescribed gender roles, some suffrage leaders *were* setting their sights on the West, and Utah in particular. It was proving difficult to force a reckoning on woman suffrage in state legislatures, and Anthony, Stanton, and some others were becoming increasingly convinced of the need to push the question of woman suffrage in Congress. Following a tactic the abolition movement had adopted decades earlier, they turned their attention to portions of the United States over which Congress held direct lawmaking power, such as the District of Columbia and western territories.¹²⁴ They needed to convince members of Congress that it was in the federal interest to intervene in the issue of suffrage in the territories, just as many of those lawmakers were considering the Fifteenth Amendment to assert federal authority to define and protect black men’s voting rights.

J. K. Hamilton Willcox of the Universal Franchise Association had already advocated experimenting with woman suffrage to end polygamy several months before the *New York Times* published its article.¹²⁵ Willcox urged the enfranchisement of women in all western territories,

¹²² “Minor Topics,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 1867, p. 4.

¹²³ “Minor Topics,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 1867, p. 4. The media often portrayed leading suffragists as masculine women who sought to subvert gender roles.

¹²⁴ Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Pennsylvania Senator Edgar Cohen introduced a woman suffrage amendment to legislation for the District of Columbia in December 1866.

¹²⁵ Hamilton Willcox, “Suffrage a Right, not a Privilege. Speech of J.K.H. Willcox ... before the Universal Franchise Association, Washington, D.C., July 19, 1867,” (Washington, D.C.: Universal Franchise Association, 1867).

but argued that Utah was an especially good place to test suffrage due to the large female population and the influence that women's votes could have in dismantling the system of polygamy.¹²⁶ By marrying the cause with anti-polygamy efforts, Willcox and the Universal Franchise Association attempted to broaden support for suffrage in Congress. But this was not merely political expediency; they were convinced that Mormon women did not want to practice plural marriage but were currently powerless to stop it. Willcox was so sure of the power of the ballot that he later lobbied against punitive anti-polygamy legislation in 1871. He argued, "Woman's enfranchisement has sealed polygamy's doom; let no blunder renew its strength."¹²⁷

Indiana Representative George Washington Julian was the Congressman most closely aligned with Willcox's strategy. Like Willcox, Representative Julian believed that suffrage was a right of citizenship rather than a privilege. He had been the vice-presidential candidate for the Free Soil party in 1852 and joined the Republican party in its infancy, where he advocated for African American suffrage and land reform.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Willcox later took credit for originating the idea of woman suffrage in Utah in an 1874 address to the House Committee on Territories. See Beverly Beeton, "Woman Suffrage in Territorial Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 102–3.

¹²⁷ J.K.H. Willcox, "Lost Time," *The Revolution* 7, no. 3 (January 19, 1871).

¹²⁸ George Washington Julian, *Suffrage in the District of Columbia* (Washington, Printed at the Congressional Globe Office, 1866), 1, Miscellaneous Pamphlet Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as LOC).

Representative Julian was closely associated with the American Equal Rights Association that sought to extend voting rights to black men as well as women after the Civil War.¹²⁹ In January 1867, he introduced a petition from the AERA to the House of Representatives “praying Congress to adopt such measures as will remove all discrimination founded on race or sex in the exercise of political power.”¹³⁰ In December 1868, Julian proposed a constitutional amendment stating that “the rights of suffrage in the United States shall be based upon citizenship,” and that “all citizens of the United States, whether native or naturalized, shall enjoy this right equally, without any distinction or discrimination whatever founded on race, color, or sex.”¹³¹ Clearly committed to the cause, he introduced a bill the next week to extend suffrage to female citizens in all U.S. territories, including Utah.¹³² Willcox testified in favor of the bill to a House Committee, arguing that it would attract women to the West and “destroy polygamy in Utah.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Julian later wrote that he had been convinced of women’s right to vote in 1847. See George Washington Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840–1872* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Company, 1884), 342. In February 1866, he introduced a petition from Indiana women asking for a constitutional amendment to prevent states from “disfranchising any of their citizens on account of sex.” See U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st session, 978 (1866). When the AERA split in 1869, Julian’s convictions and personal friendship with Lucy Stone led him to join the AWSA. He was made a Vice-President at large at AWSA’s first meeting in November 1869. American Woman Suffrage Association, “Constitution of the American Woman Suffrage Association and the History of its Formation: with the Times and Places in which the Association has Held Meetings up to,” (Boston: Press of George H. Ellis, 1881), 5, Lucy Stone, and National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, LOC.

¹³⁰ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 2nd session, 266, (1867).

¹³¹ Julian, *Political Recollections*, 342. He later altered his amendment to follow the text of the Fifteenth Amendment more closely, introducing a proposed 16th Amendment to the Constitution early in the next Congress. Julian apparently introduced this amendment on his own initiative, not at the request of the AERA. Grace Julian Clarke, *George W. Julian* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), 315.

¹³² *History of Woman Suffrage*, eds. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, vol. 2, 1861–1876 (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann Printing Company, 1881), 325.

¹³³ T. A. Larson, “Woman Suffrage in Western America,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (January 1970): 9-10. Larson bases this information on B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City, 1930), 323–26, who lists the February 28, 1869 *Washington Chronicle* as his source.

When that bill went nowhere, Representative Julian narrowed his focus with another that would be palatable to more of his colleagues. Like many Republican Congressmen of his time, Representative Julian was an anti-polygamist who called for the exertion of government power to abolish polygamy in the name of progress, freedom, and perfecting the American Union.¹³⁴ He had been considering interventions in Utah's territorial legal system for some time, having introduced a joint resolution in February 1867 requiring Utah's territorial legislature to send a copy of their laws to Congress.¹³⁵ And his next bill proposed enfranchising women in Utah for the purpose of abolishing polygamy.

Representative Julian introduced "A Bill to Discourage Polygamy in Utah" in March 1869, which simply proposed that the right of suffrage in Utah could be exercised "without any distinction or discrimination whatever founded on sex."¹³⁶ "Mormonism is invaded from a new point," crowed Susan B. Anthony's newspaper *The Revolution*. The paper argued that women's votes in the South could help prevent a "return of rebellion rule" and that "the vote of woman is needed no less in Utah for similar reasons."¹³⁷ The bill died in committee despite the rebranding attempt, but it sparked discussions about women's enfranchisement within Utah.

Utahns' reactions to Representative Julian's anti-polygamy bill surprised many federal lawmakers. Utah's territorial delegate to Congress William Henry Hooper expressed support for

¹³⁴ George Washington Julian, "Confiscation and Liberation," *Speeches on Political Questions by George W. Julian, with an Introduction by L. Maria Child* (New York City: Herd and Houghton, 1872), 188.

¹³⁵ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 2nd session, 1126 (1867).

¹³⁶ H.R. 64: A Bill to Discourage Polygamy in Utah by Granting the Right of Suffrage to the Women of that Territory ([Washington, D.C.]: [publisher not identified], 1869), 324.623 H64r 1869, CHL. Senator William G. Pomeroy of Kansas introduced the bill in the Senate.

¹³⁷ "Woman Suffrage for Utah," *The Revolution* 3, no. 12 (March 25, 1869): 185.

it before returning to the Territory, where he discussed woman suffrage with Brigham Young.¹³⁸

Other Mormon leaders did not seem to fear women's votes, and perhaps saw an opportunity to turn the tables on Congress. Apostle George Q. Cannon editorialized in the *Deseret News*,

The plan of giving our ladies the right of suffrage is, in our opinion, a most excellent one. Utah is giving examples to the world on many points, and if the wish is to try the experiment of giving females the right to vote in the Republic, we know of no place where the experiment can be so safely tried as in this Territory. Our ladies can prove to the world that...women can be enfranchised without running wild or becoming unsexed.¹³⁹

Cannon's confidence in Mormon women's ability to vote without breaking other norms may have been partially due to the fact that women had long participated in votes to sustain local church leaders in religious meetings.¹⁴⁰ George A. Smith, Utah legislator and Brigham Young's First Counselor would later note: "It has always been the practice in all our Church assemblages for women to vote & we see no reason why they should not have the same privilege in choosing civil officers."¹⁴¹

Cannon's assurance was also likely due to what he had seen in Relief Societies since their (re)organization in Utah in 1868. Relief Society women had taken on semi-public roles, working with male church leaders to pursue shared goals such as economic cooperation, retrenchment, and relief for the poor. Cannon would soon argue that Mormon women's

¹³⁸ "William H. Hooper, The Utah Delegate and Female Suffrage Advocate," *Phrenological Journal* 51, no. 5 (November 1870): 328; Edward W. Tullidge, *History of Salt Lake City* (Salt Lake City: E. W. Tullidge, 1886), 435.

¹³⁹ "Female Suffrage in Utah," *Deseret News*, March 24, 1869, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ Cannon had in fact editorialized the year before on this topic: "The people of Utah are not afraid of the consequences of giving the women of the Territory the right to vote. In an ecclesiastical capacity. . .women have for years exercised the right of suffrage in this Territory." See "The Female Suffrage Question," *Deseret Evening News*, January 9, 1868, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Of course, voting to sustain church leaders was very different than voting for political candidates. George A. Smith to E. F. Kinney, February 23, 1870, Historian's Office letterpress copybooks, 1854–1879, 1885–1886; Volume 3, 1870–1886; p. 142, CR 100 38, CHL.

engagement in public life had served the Kingdom of God: “With women to aid in the great cause of reform, what wonderful changes can be effected! Without her aid how slow the progress! Give her responsibility, and she will prove that she is capable of great things.”¹⁴² And of course, one of the largest “reforms” of Mormonism was the practice of polygamy.

Despite Mormon leaders’ confidence, opponents of polygamy still could not believe that Mormon women were willing participants in plural marriages.¹⁴³ Leaders of the dissident “New Movement” reprinted an article from the *Phrenological Journal* in their *Utah Magazine* in February 1869 that they believed showed advances in women’s rights would lead to the downfall of polygamy. The source was Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward Relief Society President Sarah M. Kimball, who had sent the *Journal* her address from the cornerstone ceremony for her Society’s women-owned and -financed hall. Kimball called for a “more extended field of useful labor for female minds and hands” and made no mention of the vote, but the *Utah Magazine* applauded this “bold” move and remarked that when women “inevitably” gained the franchise, Mormon wives would “fix things just as *they* please.”¹⁴⁴

As discussions of the possibility of Utah women’s suffrage grew in Congress, national periodicals, and Utah publications, local politics were also shifting within the territory. The transcontinental railroad, completed in Utah in May 1869, brought renewed national attention and interest to the West. It also connected Utah more closely with the rest of the United States

¹⁴² “Woman and Her Mission,” *Deseret News*, May 26, 1869, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Even later, after Utah women already actually held the franchise, Oregon suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway implied that despotic religious rule in Utah was only possible because women could not vote: “Isn’t Brigham Young a fit example of the dire consequences of man suffrage?” See Duniway, “Wyoming’s Noble Position,” *New Northwestern*, July 12, 1872, reprinted in *Yours for Liberty”: Selections from Abigail Scott Duniway’s Suffrage Newspaper*, Jean M. Ward and Elaine A. Maveety, eds., (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2000), 76.

¹⁴⁴ “Woman’s Sphere in Utah,” *The Utah Magazine* 2, no. 47 (February 13, 1869): 252.

through communication and transportation. Women in Utah were already reading women's periodicals and books from the "States," but now that material reached them even more quickly. And many leading Mormon women were thinking about and engaging with many of the same issues as other American women's rights leaders.¹⁴⁵ Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's newspaper *The Revolution* was likely one of several periodicals to which Relief Society leader Sarah Kimball subscribed.¹⁴⁶

The railroad also altered the political landscape within Utah. As the transcontinental railroad neared completion in 1869, Brigham Young had ushered in a new economic system of cooperative mercantilism to reduce Mormons' dependence on merchants and the outside world. Young encouraged home manufacture and urged local communities to pool their resources to make and sell goods cheaply. These measures were an attempt to insulate Mormon communities against an expected influx of railroad workers, cheap goods, and other newcomers.¹⁴⁷ They also sparked the ire of several disaffected merchants in Salt Lake City who chafed at Young's control over the economy.

Led by William Godbe, these dissidents formed what they called a "New Movement" within Mormonism. They turned to the spiritualism sweeping America at the time and published the *Utah Magazine* advocating for capitalism rather than a cooperative economy directed by

¹⁴⁵ Lori Motzkus Wilkinson, "Scribbling Women in Zion: Mormon Women's Fascination with Fanny Fern," *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 74–94; Van Wagenen, "Politicization of Mormon Women," 32.

¹⁴⁶ "Conference N.A.W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 61.

¹⁴⁷ David Walker, *Railroading Religion: Mormons, Tourists, and the Corporate Spirit of the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 71.

Young.¹⁴⁸ Protesting Young's interference with their freedom of conscience, the New Movement united with prominent non-Mormons in February 1870 to organize the territory's first political party, the Liberal Party. Mormon leaders quickly formed the People's Party in response as the territorial legislature debated and passed the suffrage law, meaning that women's votes emerged in the midst of this political struggle. The Liberal Party fielded its first candidates in the 1870 Salt Lake City municipal election where women cast their first ballots.

Amid this new phase in Utah politics, many Americans were watching to see how the railroad would affect polygamy. It was commonly believed that Mormon women were forced into polygamous marriages and only remained in them because they had no means of escape. With the coming of the railroad, reformers and politicians alike hoped that an influx of new people, goods, and ideas, as well as easier transportation, would give Mormon women space to resist.¹⁴⁹ As one periodical predicted, "Let the usurping "lords of creation" make their peace while they may. Clear the track for the locomotive is on its way to Salt Lake City."¹⁵⁰

Shifting local politics and national discussions around expanding the franchise created space for a real consideration of woman suffrage in Utah in early 1870. At the beginning of the new year, the *Deseret News* printed a summary of the past year's important events. It mentioned Representative Julian's suffrage bill for Utah women, the bill's introduction by Senator Pomeroy in the Senate, and the passage of the "female suffrage bill" in Wyoming on December 10.¹⁵¹ It also mentioned the opening of several cooperative stores and a mass meeting held in October to

¹⁴⁸ Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁹ Walker, *Railroading Religion*.

¹⁵⁰ "Woman's Sphere in Utah," *The Phrenological Journal*, reprinted in *The Utah Magazine* 2, no. 47 (February 13, 1869): 252.

¹⁵¹ "Summary of Events," *Deseret News*, January 5, 1870, p. 7-9.

petition Congress for Utah's admission to the Union. The *Deseret News* did not mention passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which would be ratified into law in February, but it did mention meetings of various ward Relief Societies.

The reorganization and development of Relief Societies did not create the political conditions necessary for woman suffrage in Utah, but they did foster women's networks, public roles, and desire to engage in political questions.¹⁵² As Carol Cornwall Madsen observed, Relief Societies "transformed the moral authority and spiritual superiority that society granted [women] into social power of measurable significance," generating "assertiveness and self-confidence" that would play a vital role in securing and then defending the vote.¹⁵³ In January 1870, a new anti-polygamy bill, the Cullom Bill, posed the greatest threat yet to Mormon women's way of life, proposing to strip (male) citizens of the right to vote, sit on a jury, or hold public office if they were in polygamous marriages. Because of the Relief Society, Mormon women were ready to have their say and insert themselves into this political debate.

Politicization Through Relief Society

Mormon women first worked together institutionally in the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, organized in March 1842 in Nauvoo, Illinois. Like many contemporary women's benevolent societies, the Relief Society enabled members to fill public roles based on their moral

¹⁵² Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (New York: Knopf, 2017).

¹⁵³ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Creating Female Community: Cache Valley Relief Society, 1868–1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 153.

authority while still operating in a largely ‘domestic’ sphere.¹⁵⁴ The Relief Society would become “a vehicle for transforming individual commitment into cooperative action toward the achievement of religious and social aims,” binding Mormon women together.¹⁵⁵ Lola Van Wagenen observed that “the activism that Mormon women initiated in Nauvoo established a pattern of participation that defined the first critical stage of their process of politicization.”¹⁵⁶

The Female Relief Society was born out of Sarah M. Kimball’s desire to contribute to the construction of a Latter-day Saint temple in Nauvoo, Illinois. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints settled in Nauvoo after their expulsion from Missouri in 1838, draining swampland on the banks of the Mississippi river and welcoming converts from Europe until the population of their city passed 12,000 and rivalled that of Chicago. The Saints embarked on building a temple, where they expected to receive a further endowment of spiritual gifts through ordinances revealed to Joseph Smith. Tithing financed the temple’s construction and many men worked on the temple lot every tenth day. Church leaders requested donations of supplies to feed, clothe, and equip the workers, who often lacked proper clothing and tools.

Twenty-three-year-old New Yorker Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball had converted to Mormonism with her family as a child and relished the intellectual and spiritual challenge of her new faith. Now as a young woman in Nauvoo, her marriage to a prosperous non-Latter-day Saint meant she could access means to respond to the church’s request for donations. “I wished to help

¹⁵⁴ See Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women’s Activism: New York and Boston 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (New York: Vintage, 2017); Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*.

¹⁵⁵ Madsen, “Cache Valley Relief Society,” 131.

¹⁵⁶ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 33.

on the Temple,” she later recalled, “but did not like to ask my husband (who owned considerable property) to help for my sake.”¹⁵⁷ Seeking to make a more independent contribution, she collaborated with her seamstress Margaret Cook to procure material and sew clothing. Additionally, the two “agitated the subject of organizing a Sewing Society” to aid temple workmen.¹⁵⁸

The women who initially gathered in Kimball’s parlor planned to perform domestic work in support of men’s work, but the purpose and scope of their organization soon widened. When poet Eliza R. Snow showed church president Joseph Smith the society’s constitution and by-laws she had written, he was complimentary but said there was “something better” for the sisters, whom he “desired to organize...in the order of the Priesthood.”¹⁵⁹ He invited them to meet with him the next week above his general store.

At the meeting, Smith laid out a broader purpose for Kimball’s sewing society. He suggested “that the Society of Sisters might provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor— searching after objects of charity, and in administering to their wants— to assist; by correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the female community.”¹⁶⁰ The twenty women in attendance agreed and unanimously elected Smith’s wife, Emma, as president. She named two counsellors and all three women were “ordained” to those positions by church apostle John Taylor.

¹⁵⁷ Augusta Joyce Crocheron, comp., *Representative Women of Deseret, a Book of Biographical Sketches, to Accompany the Picture Bearing the Same Title* (Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham & Co., 1884), 25.

¹⁵⁸ Sarah M. Kimball, “Early Relief Society Reminiscence,” March 17, 1882; Relief Society Record, 1880–1892, p. 29, CR 11 175, CHL.

¹⁵⁹ Kimball, “Early Relief Society Reminiscence,” 29.

¹⁶⁰ Nauvoo Relief Society, “A Book of Records, Containing the Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” Minute Book, March 1842–March 1844; March 17, 1842, p. 7; MS 3424, CHL.

The women named their organization the Nauvoo Female Relief Society (NFRS), avoiding the term of ‘benevolent society’ in order to draw a distinction between their work and that of other women.¹⁶¹ Many of them had come from communities in the eastern United States where they would have been familiar with women’s organizations for antislavery and charitable work, as well as prayer and missionary societies. But Mormons saw themselves as a chosen people, building the kingdom of God on earth. As Eliza R. Snow asserted, “the popular Institutions of the day should not be our guide...as daughters of Zion, we should set an example for all the world.”¹⁶² Sarah Cleveland emphasized, “we design to act in the name of the Lord—to relieve the wants of the distressed, and do all the good we can.”¹⁶³

The NFRS would provide Mormon women with the organization and authority to assist more formally in the project of building a new Zion. It encompassed religious instruction and exhortation as well as relief work. Through the Society and its later iterations in Utah Territory, Mormon women gained organizational capacity, leadership skills, and a measure of limited public authority that built the groundwork for their future political engagement.

The NFRS brought questions of gender and authority to the fore in the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁶⁴ By organizing the Society personally and patterning it in the organization of the male Priesthood, Joseph Smith placed Mormon women under male authority in some respects. But the Society also elevated them in the structure of the church and provided a

¹⁶¹ Additionally, Emma Smith and Eliza R. Snow both expressed concerns that a Nauvoo Female Benevolent Society might be seen as connected with Washington Benevolent Societies, grassroots political clubs used for electioneering by Federalists in the early 19th century. Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, March 17, 1842, p. 12. See also Ginzberg, *Work of Benevolence*, 202–204; Boylan, *Origins of Women’s Activism*.

¹⁶² Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, March 17, 1842, p. 12.

¹⁶³ Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, March 17, 1842, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 16.

means for women to take on public roles. In the Relief Society, women had opportunities for leadership, service, and religious instruction similar to a priesthood quorum.¹⁶⁵ Relief Society members raised and controlled their own funds, exercising a large degree of autonomy even while formally under the ecclesiastical authority of their ward bishops.

Many Mormon women felt that Smith had vested them with spiritual power and authority in an early Society meeting when he said, “I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time.”¹⁶⁶ Sarah Kimball and other leading women would later connect this turning of the key with the growth of the women’s movement and expansion of women’s legal rights. Responding to an anti-suffragist in the 1890s, Kimball famously wrote, “The sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid on the 17th of March 1842.”¹⁶⁷ She and others saw their later suffrage activism as part of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the last days—restoring women to their God-ordained position as men’s equals.

¹⁶⁵ One key difference was that male church leaders often spoke to Relief Society meetings, while women never addressed priesthood quorums.

¹⁶⁶ Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, April 28, 1842, p. 40. In a compilation project led by Church Historian (and Apostle) George A. Smith in 1854, the printed *History of the Church* edited the phrase from the Relief Society minutes to read “I now turn the key *in your behalf*.” *History of the Church* vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book: 1950), 607. For other interpretations of this statement, see Jill Mulvay Derr and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “‘Something Better’ for the Sisters: Joseph Smith and the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” in *Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration* (Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2005), 123–143; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 23–58.

¹⁶⁷ “Reply to ‘A Man’s Advice About Woman Suffrage’,” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 11 (December 1, 1891): 81. Lisa Tetrault and Lori Ginzberg have also pointed to other points of origin for the women’s rights movement predating the Seneca Falls convention, including Lowell Mills girls’ agitation for better working conditions and other women’s rights documents circulated in upstate New York. See Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women’s Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman’s Rights in Antebellum New York* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

As historians have noted, Latter-day Saints wrestled with many questions in the early years of the Church of Jesus Christ about women's roles in the Restoration of the Gospel. Joseph Smith's religious innovations in ordinances and church structure in the 1830s and 40s raised questions such as "whether women should be engaged in the structured charity work that had been the responsibility of bishops, whether women might speak in tongues and heal, the circumstances under which women could exhort the church, and the relationship between male and female church leaders."¹⁶⁸ Women were not originally incorporated into the formal ecclesiastical structure of the church, but the Relief Society carved out new and separate spaces for women in Mormon experience and theology. Early Mormons generally shared the assumption "that a well-ordered course of kingdom-building depended upon a gendered division of labor," and the workings of the Relief Society "developed in its members a distinct female consciousness."¹⁶⁹

Just a few months after its founding, members of the NFRS engaged in collective political action to protect Joseph Smith. Missouri's ex-governor Lilburn W. Boggs was shot in May 1842. Many blamed the Mormons, since Boggs had issued the infamous "extermination order" in 1838 that prompted their expulsion from the state. Rumors circulated that Smith had ordered a follower to shoot Boggs, and Missouri's current governor requested Smith's extradition. The request prompted three petitions to Illinois Governor Thomas Carlin, including one from the NFRS. It is unclear who authored the Relief Society's petition, but the surviving draft is in city council member John Taylor's handwriting, with corrections by Taylor and city

¹⁶⁸ Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 16.

¹⁶⁹ Madsen, "Cache Valley Relief Society," 130.

recorder John Sloan.¹⁷⁰ Both of these men had helped to prepare a petition from the city council, which highlighted many of the same themes as the Relief Society's.¹⁷¹

Still, the Relief Society's petition adopted a very different tone and approach than the men's did. These female petitioners acknowledged that the Governor might see their action as unnecessary or unladylike, and conceded that it appeared to be outside their sphere. "It may be considered irrelevant for Ladies to petition your excellen[cy] on the above named subject," they opened.¹⁷² They continued, "we will admit in ordinary cases...that it would be more consistent with the delicacy of the female character to be silent but on occasions like the present...The desire to save the lives of our husbands our our [sic] fathers our brothers our children & our own lives" would excuse them for taking this step.¹⁷³ Their petition was justified, the women claimed, because they were pleading on behalf of others.¹⁷⁴ This is what women were supposed to do.

The female petitioners connected Smith's potential extradition to the violence and persecution their faith community had suffered in Missouri years earlier.¹⁷⁵ They asked Governor

¹⁷⁰ Nauvoo Female Relief Society (hereafter NFRS), Petition to Governor Thomas Carlin, July 1842, MS 15535, CHL. See Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 136–141. Nearly 40 years later, Emmeline B. Wells wrote "in July 1842 it was suggested that some measure be taken by the Relief Society to interest the government of Illinois in protecting the Prophet Joseph from his enemies in Missouri," *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 1881): 13.

¹⁷¹ Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 136–37.

¹⁷² NFRS, Petition to Governor Thomas Carlin, 1.

¹⁷³ NFRS, Petition to Governor Thomas Carlin, 2.

¹⁷⁴ This approach mirrored women's early petitioning against Indian removal in the 1830s, discussed more fully in the next chapter. See Alisse Theodore Portnoy, "'Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard': Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829–1831," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 573–610.

¹⁷⁵ Many Mormon women had individually signed redress petitions in the late 1830s seeking compensation for lost and destroyed property in Missouri. The public accounts women gave of that conflict were largely similar to Mormon men's—highlighting the injustice of the American political system in public petitions and grievances—but that women emphasized their faith and the hand of God more than men did in private reminiscences written for their own community. Brent M. Rogers, "Gendered Memories of the 1838 Missouri War," presentation at Mormon History Association Conference, June 10, 2016; Clark V. Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1992).

Carlin to “let the voice of injured innocence in [Missouri] speak” and used their gender and dependence on men as an additional reason to hear and grant their request. If the Governor would not heed the requests of Mormon men, the women asked him to “remember that of their wives mothers sisters & daughters.”¹⁷⁶

A later account in the *Woman's Exponent* claimed that every member of the Relief Society signed the petition, which was delivered to Governor Carlin by Emma Smith, NFRS secretary Eliza R. Snow and Amanda Barnes Smith, whose husband and son had been murdered by a mob in Missouri in 1838.¹⁷⁷ Snow recorded that the Governor received the women cordially, “and it remains for time and circumstance to prove the sincerity of his professions.”¹⁷⁸ Carlin did issue a warrant for Smith’s arrest, but, as Emmeline Wells editorialized decades later, “the ladies had nobly manifested their zeal and courage and the Prophet appreciated their efforts... The Relief Society did much good work in many ways although at that time it was a new thing for a woman to lead out in any public matter.”¹⁷⁹ Acting together, women in the Relief Society began to exert public influence and gain a sense of their collective power.

The Relief Society afforded women spiritual and educational opportunities as well as public responsibilities, both in Illinois and later in Utah.¹⁸⁰ It gave Mormon women opportunities to speak publicly and hear religious instruction from other women for the first time in formal meetings. They developed practical skills as they worked together to relieve poverty, canvassing

¹⁷⁶ NFRS, Petition to Governor Thomas Carlin, 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 1881): 13.

¹⁷⁸ Eliza R. Snow, Journal, 1842–1882; July 29, 1842; MS 1439, CHL.

¹⁷⁹ “Amanda Smith,” *Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 1881): 13.

¹⁸⁰ Jill C. Mulvay, “The Liberal Shall Be Blessed: Sarah M. Kimball,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1976): 204–221.

neighborhoods to determine the needs in the community, then gathering resources and soliciting donations to meet those needs. Donations included items such as candles, shingles, fabric, and sugar, as well as time spent sewing, knitting, or weaving. The Society also raised cash; in its first year, the NFRS received about 500 dollars and spent nearly 400.¹⁸¹ Later, in Utah Territory, the Relief Society would coordinate efforts with male religious leaders on shared priorities such as economic self-sufficiency, retrenchment and reform, silk production, and grain storage. Van Wagenen notes, “In these efforts, they learned to move forward carefully enough to avoid problems, but forcefully enough to break new ground.”¹⁸²

As secretary of the NFRS, Eliza R. Snow kept a record of the thirty-three meetings held before it was disbanded around the time of Joseph Smith’s murder in 1844.¹⁸³ Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, assumed church leadership after Smith’s death and announced a “stay” in Relief Society proceedings in 1845 amid fears of violence and several alternate claims of authority, including from the Smith family.¹⁸⁴ Although the Nauvoo Female Relief Society was short lived, an “inchoate sisterhood had emerged” among its members that deepened on the upcoming trek west to the Great Basin.¹⁸⁵ Snow brought the Nauvoo Female Relief Society minute book with her across the plains.

¹⁸¹ Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, June 16, 1843, p. 90.

¹⁸² Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 34.

¹⁸³ Nauvoo Relief Society, Minute Book, March 17, 1842, p. 13. Willard Richards had initially been appointed the Secretary of the meeting and had taken minutes until the men withdrew. From this point on, Eliza R. Snow kept the minutes.

¹⁸⁴ Emma Smith’s opposition to the nascent practice of plural marriage certainly played a role as well, and Young believed her efforts had contributed to Smith’s murder. See Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 168–71; Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo*.

¹⁸⁵ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 33; Ulrich, *House Full of Females*.

Snow had already been a well-known poet when she joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio at the age of thirty-one. In Nauvoo, she taught school and secretly became a plural wife of Joseph Smith in 1842. Like many of Smith's plural wives, she married Brigham Young after Smith's murder. Snow was a prominent member of Young's family, and he commissioned her to help bishops reorganize Relief Societies in each ward (congregation) in Utah in 1868.¹⁸⁶ She often read from the original NFRS minutes as she traveled to various Mormon settlements in her organizing efforts.¹⁸⁷ Connecting newly reconstituted Relief Societies to the Society in Nauvoo provided continuity and standardization, grounding Utah Relief Societies that would take on new public projects.¹⁸⁸

Sarah M. Kimball played a pivotal role in the Relief Society both in Illinois and Utah, and she used the organization to expand women's spheres. Her life experiences between the disbanding of the Relief Society in 1844 and its reorganization in 1868 shaped her thinking about women's legal and social inequality. When the main body of Latter-day Saints left Illinois for the Rocky Mountains, Kimball's family stayed behind due to complications with her husband's business. She eventually journeyed to Salt Lake City in 1851 with her widowed mother and two sons, where her husband joined them the next year, "financially ruined and broken in health."¹⁸⁹

Kimball supported her family by teaching school. Emmeline B. Wells noted in Kimball's obituary that she had taught "under very trying circumstances, and while thus engaged in

¹⁸⁶ At least twenty-five Relief Societies formed in Utah in the 1850s, but these mostly ceased operating after the Utah War in 1858. See Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 177–87.

¹⁸⁷ Eliza R. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," April 13, 1885, p. 1, 36–37; BANC MSS P-F 57 v.1, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

¹⁸⁸ Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 240.

¹⁸⁹ Augusta Joyce Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret* (Salt Lake City, 1884), 27. This collection of essays contained an autobiographical sketch by Sarah M. Kimball.

teaching she became even more than ever convinced of the need of changed conditions for women engaged in work that came in competition with men, and determined to push the matter to the utmost.”¹⁹⁰ Kimball’s financial situation improved as her husband regained his strength, but he died in a steamboat explosion in 1863 on his way to serve a mission in Hawai’i. By the time she was called to serve as the President of the Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward Relief Society at age 49, she certainly had “moved in all grades of society... [and] been both rich and poor.”¹⁹¹

Kimball had sparked the Relief Society’s inception in Nauvoo, and she would use it in Utah to elevate women in economic, social, religious, and political affairs.¹⁹² Her experiences over the past two-and-a-half decades convinced her “of the need for greater opportunities and training for women in order to expand their sphere of usefulness.”¹⁹³ While Relief Societies continued a focus on charitable work in Utah, they also collectively engaged women in home industry, as the church under Brigham Young’s leadership focused on economic self-sufficiency to ward off outside influence and build up a Zion community.¹⁹⁴ Kimball’s projects, organizational structure, and programs in the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society influenced Eliza R. Snow’s approach to reorganizing local Societies throughout the Mormon settlements. They also catalyzed major developments such as indignation meetings and civic education in the 1870s.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ “President Sarah M. Kimball,” *Woman’s Exponent*, December 15, 1898, 5.

¹⁹¹ Ladies’ Cooperative Retrenchment Society (hereafter LCRS), “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Ladies Co-operative Retrenchment Society,” February 19, 1870, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 153; LR 2848 14, CHL.

¹⁹² Janelle M. Higbee, “‘President Mrs. Kimball’: A Rhetoric of Words and Works,” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1998), 27.

¹⁹³ LCRS, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting,” 153; Higbee, “President Mrs. Kimball,” 27.

¹⁹⁴ Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 240–42.

¹⁹⁵ Susa Young Gates, “The Suffrage Movement,” MS and “History, Chapter, Woman Suffrage in Utah,” 16, Utah State Historical Society.

Kimball transformed the Relief Society into a vehicle that would lead women into political action.

The projects and programs Kimball led as president of the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society in Salt Lake City, along with her own personal agitation, directly contributed to Utah's woman suffrage law in 1870. Her leadership was guided by the conviction that the Relief Society was a source of power for women, pointing the way to the greater rights and privileges God had in store for them. Kimball was outspoken about the importance of women's equality and partnership with men, while remaining deferential to male church leaders.¹⁹⁶ She had great confidence in the power of women connected by faith to transform their lives.¹⁹⁷

Anne Firor Scott observed that women's benevolent associations were often characterized by a "commitment to social change, usually in the form of concrete problem solving."¹⁹⁸ This was certainly true in Kimball's Fifteenth Ward Relief Society. Kimball invested women with real authority through the offices she laid out for her society of deaconesses, teachers, apprizers, and more.¹⁹⁹ She was serious about creating opportunities for women to fill public responsibilities; most members attending the weekly meetings were asked to lead a discussion, pray, teach, or participate in some way. Topics set for discussion in these meetings included charitable and religious work, but also literature, government, and even suffrage.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Higbee, "President Mrs. Kimball," 27.

¹⁹⁷ Jill Mulvay Derr, "'Strength in Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 153.

¹⁹⁸ Ann Firor Scott, "On Seeing and Not Seeing: A Case of Historical Invisibility," *Journal of American History* 71, no. 1 (June 1984): 15.

¹⁹⁹ "Duty of Offices of F R Society," May 1868, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 43, LR 2848 14, CHL.

²⁰⁰ Higbee, "President Mrs. Kimball," 83.

Kimball also led construction of a Relief Society Hall, with a cooperative store on the first floor and meeting room above. As the first woman-owned building in Utah, the Hall was a symbol of women's authority as well as the site of many later meetings for women's rights.²⁰¹ The Relief Society raised all the funds for the building, and Kimball hired contractors and personally oversaw its construction. In addition to the meeting space, Kimball hoped the cooperative store could help the members of her Society improve their economic conditions, gain practical experience, and prepare themselves "for any place they might be called upon to fill"²⁰²

Speaking at the cornerstone laying for the building, Kimball remarked,

It will readily be admitted that woman's allotted sphere of labor is not sufficiently extensive, and varied to enable her to exercise all her God-given powers and faculties in a manner best calculated to strengthen and develop the perfect woman...The object of the building is to enable the Society to more perfectly combine their labors, their means, their tastes and their talents, for improvements (Physically, Socially, Morally, Intellectually, Spiritually, and Financially) and for more extended usefulness.²⁰³

As Kimball's obituary would later state, "she did not believe in half measures."²⁰⁴ Other Relief Societies would dot Utah Territory with similar halls in the coming years.

Relief Society and Indignation Meetings

Kimball's leadership in the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society and her zeal for women's rights made her the natural instigator for Mormon women's collective political action

²⁰¹ Carolyn Butler-Palmer, "Building Autonomy: A History of the Fifteenth Ward Hall of the Mormon Women's Relief Society," *Buildings and Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 69–94.

²⁰² Fifteenth Ward Relief Society Minutes, April 29, 1869, p. 100.

²⁰³ S. M. Kimball, "Address Delivered at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Storehouse," Fifteenth Ward Relief Society Minutes, November 12, 1868, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 71-72, LR 2848 14, CHL.

²⁰⁴ "President Sarah M. Kimball," *Woman's Exponent* 27, no. 14 (December 15, 1898): 77.

when the opportunity arose in early 1870. As the anti-polygamy Cullom Bill wended its way through Congress, Kimball chaired a mass meeting in her Relief Society Hall attended by church-wide Relief Society president Eliza R. Snow and other female leaders. This bill appeared more likely to pass than previous measures, and, given the conversations that had been swirling about Mormon women's oppression and their possible enfranchisement, Kimball surely felt that this was the moment for Mormon women speak out. Women at this meeting passed a motion to "demand of the Gov the right of Franchise," and to send representatives to Washington, D.C.²⁰⁵ Snow called for women to hold indignation meetings in Salt Lake and throughout the territory, and the women published their meeting minutes in the *Deseret News*, omitting their demand for the franchise.²⁰⁶

With indignation meetings, Mormon women drew on well-established precedent in American political culture. Growing out of protests dating to the American Revolution, these meetings had become "staples of nineteenth-century political life" in both North and South as Americans gathered to voice their opposition to unpopular policies such as the Fugitive Slave Act.²⁰⁷ As participants made speeches, adopted resolutions, and drafted petitions, indignation meetings "channeled shared emotions into practical, collective responses" to government's

²⁰⁵ "Minutes of a Ladies Mass Meeting," January 6, 1870, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 139–42; LR 2848 14, CHL.

²⁰⁶ "Minutes of a Ladies' Mass Meeting," *Deseret Evening News*, January 10, 1870, p. 2; "Minutes of a Ladies' Mass Meeting," *Deseret News*, January 12, 1870, p. 8.

²⁰⁷ Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict in the Antebellum United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 120. Woods notes that apparently indignation meetings were so familiar to nineteenth-century Americans that no explanation was necessary. He has been unable to find accounts explaining indignation meetings to a domestic audience.

missteps.²⁰⁸ This ritualization “helped to *create* universal outrage, not merely *reflect* it,” bonding communities together and getting lawmakers’ attention.²⁰⁹

Mormons were no stranger to the practice, having been on the receiving end of indignation meetings in Missouri and Illinois in the 1830s and 1840s. And they had convened at least six of their own in territorial Utah during the 1860s to protest federally appointed officials and urge Congress to admit Utah as a state.²¹⁰ When Mormon women began to draw on this long tradition in the 1870s, they subverted it in significant ways to achieve their political goals.

Five thousand women packed into Salt Lake City’s “Old Tabernacle” on January 13 for what would come to be called the “Great Indignation Meeting.”²¹¹ In a highly unusual move calculated to draw publicity, the women organizing the event barred men from attending, with the exception of reporters.²¹² Women who addressed the crowds asserted their right and obligation to speak on a national stage by making it clear that they were there to defend their husbands, fathers, and brothers from the bill that would strip (male) polygamists of civil rights such as voting and sitting on juries. Sarah M. Kimball, president of the meeting, claimed, “We

²⁰⁸ Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 128.

²⁰⁹ Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 130.

²¹⁰ For example, “The Voice of the People,” *Deseret News*, March 11, 1863, p. 4; “Mass Meeting at Fillmore,” *Deseret News*, March 18, 1863, p. 5; and “The London “Standard” on Affairs in Utah,” *Deseret News*, December 22, 1869, p. 9.

²¹¹ “Minutes of a Ladies’ Mass Meeting,” *Deseret News*, January 12, 1870, p. 8. See Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s description and analysis of this meeting in the introduction to *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (New York: Knopf, 2017), xi–xvi.

²¹² “The Mormon Question,” *The New York Times*, February 8, 1870, p. 1. It is unlikely that the indignation meetings would have happened if Mormon church leaders opposed them, but what (if any) level of coordination took place between those leaders and the Relief Society is unclear. Michael E. Woods’ research on indignation meetings in the 1840s and 1850s has yielded only one instance of an all-women’s indignation meeting: a Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society meeting held June 12, 1856 to protest the caning of Charles Sumner. See Mary Grew to Charles Sumner, June 18, 1856, Charles Sumner Papers, microfilm, series 1, reel 14, frames 35–36, Harvard University Houghton Library.

are not here to advocate woman's rights, but man's rights."²¹³ In other words, women were simply fulfilling their female moral duty. Resolving to "unitedly exercise every moral power, every right which we inherit as the daughters of American citizens, to prevent the passage of such bills," thousands of Mormon women inserted themselves into the political conflict over polygamy by speaking on behalf of their husbands, fathers, and sons.²¹⁴

Mormon women's speeches show that they had both national and local audiences in mind. As speaker after speaker addressed the crowd about the sacrifices they had made for their religion and their belief in polygamy, they demonstrated a commitment to defending polygamy from foes both inside and outside Utah. Snow declared: "Were we the stupid, heartbroken beings that we have been represented, silence might better become us; but, as women of God, . . . we not only speak because we have the rights, but justice and humanity demand that we should."²¹⁵ Harriet Cook Young hoped that "the united voice of this assembly" would "give the lie to the popular clamour that the women of Utah are oppressed and held in bondage."²¹⁶ And Phoebe Woodruff thundered: "If the rulers of our nation will so far depart from the spirit and the letter of our glorious Constitution as to deprive our Prophets, Apostle and Elders of citizenship . . . let them . . . make their prisons large enough to hold their wives, for where they go we will go also."²¹⁷ Mormon women were clearly organized, determined, and ready to insert themselves into public debates and political questions.

²¹³ "Great Indignation Meeting," *Deseret News*, January 14, 1870, p. 2.

²¹⁴ "Proceedings in Mass Meeting," p. 4.

²¹⁵ "Great Indignation Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City," *Deseret Evening News*, Jan. 14, 1870, p. 2.

²¹⁶ "Great Indignation Meeting."

²¹⁷ "Great Indignation Meeting (continued)," *Deseret News*, January 15, 1870, p. 2.

Americans were as surprised that Mormon women would gather in support of the principle as they were by their eloquence. Many wrote the meeting off as something that Brigham Young must have organized behind the scenes, but some suffragists praised the move and predicted it would put pressure on Congress to consider a federal suffrage amendment.²¹⁸ The *New York Herald* admitted, “It will not be denied that the Mormon women have both brains and tongues. Some of the speeches give evidence that in general knowledge, in logic, and in rhetoric the so-called degraded ladies of Mormondom are quite equal to the women’s rights women of the East.”²¹⁹ The *Daily Evening Bulletin* in San Francisco called it “one of the most remarkable, perhaps, that has ever congregated on the Continent.”²²⁰ The London *Daily Telegraph* compared Mormon women to slaves holding a meeting in favor of the cat-o’-nine-tales.²²¹

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the indignation meeting was that fifty-eight more were held in towns throughout the territory in the following weeks, with approximately twenty-five thousand women participating.²²² All were organized by local Relief Society leaders, from

²¹⁸ Adile Summers, “A Woman on the Mormon Women,” *The Revolution* 5, no. 7 (February 17, 1870): 109; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Anniversary of the Woman’s Suffrage Association,” *The Revolution* 5, no. 7 (February 17, 1870): 104.

²¹⁹ “The Mormon Women in Council,” *New York Herald*, Jan. 23, 1870, p. 6.

²²⁰ *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), January 18, 1870.

²²¹ London *Daily Telegraph*, reprinted in *Deseret Evening News*, March 30, 1870, p. 4.

²²² See “The Ladies’ Mass Meetings—Their True Significance,” *Deseret News*, March 9, 1870, p. 1 for this claim. There were a little over 150 towns identified in Utah on the 1870 census. 1870 census, 275-6. The *Deseret News* published reports of indignation meetings in Cedar City, Ephraim, Fairfield, Franklin, Grantsville, Hyrum, Kanosh City, Lehi, Logan, Manti, Milton, Mona, Nephi, Paradise, Providence, Provo, Santaquin, Spanish Fork, Springville, Tooele City, and Wellsville. See “Great Indignation Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest against the Passage of Cullom’s Bill,” *Deseret Evening News*, January 14, 1870, p. 2, and January 15, 1870, p. 2; “Indignation Meeting,” *Deseret News*, January 19 1870, p. 5; “Mass Meeting at Nephi,” *Deseret News*, January 26, 1870, p. 5; “The Recent Mass Meetings—Their Real Significance,” *Deseret News*, January 26, 1870, p. 6; “Mormon Women in Council,” and “Indignation Meetings,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 1, 1870, p. 2; “Indignation Meetings in the Settlements,” *Deseret News*, February 2, 1870, p. 2.

Cache Valley in the north to Cedar City in the south. Relief Society had become a network of cooperation and communication in the past few years, and it was now becoming a network of political mobilization as well. Like other organizations, the Relief Society had created spaces for women to not only engage in charitable work, sewing projects, or religious instruction, but also to become political actors.²²³ The Society had become a schoolhouse for women's rights.

Indignation meetings held throughout the Utah Territory were a testament to the Relief Society's strong organization and grassroots power. Eliza R. Snow likely sent out a call to local Relief Society presidents, and local leaders across Utah made meetings happen by spreading the word, making arrangements to use local church or civic buildings, running the meetings themselves, and encouraging women to participate.²²⁴ As Relief Societies mobilized their members for political action, they found they were ready to speak.

250 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, women in the Cedar City Ward Relief Society gathered for their own "Ladies Mass Meeting" in February. They had met for years to discuss charitable work, sew rag rugs, and share their testimonies of their religious experiences. But on this occasion, the minute book clearly identified the purpose: "to protest against the passage of "Cullom's Bill.""²²⁵ As the meeting's president Eliza Ann Haight stated, "it was high time for the sisters to arise en masse, and do something in defence of their religion, and not leave it all for

²²³ Ginzberg, *Work of Benevolence*; Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism*; Ulrich, *House Full of Females*.

²²⁴ No announcement from Eliza R. Snow appeared in local newspapers or has been preserved in her papers, but local Relief Society leaders like Mary Ann Maughan, discussed later, referred to instructions she had received.

²²⁵ Cedar City Ward, Parowan Stake; Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856–1875 and 1892; February 1, 1870, p. 46; LR 1514 22, CHL.

the brethren to do.”²²⁶ While a committee prepared resolutions, Haight’s sisters rose to share their feelings as well.

Many of the speakers at the Cedar City meeting and at one further north in Smithfield disputed outside portrayals of Mormon women, speaking of their peaceful homes surrounded by loving children and husbands. They proclaimed that they were willing participants in plural marriage and saw the system as divine. Mary Ann Lunt of Cedar City declared: “We have not been coerced or driven to take this step for we are not the slaves that the originator of the Bill represents us.”²²⁷ Susan K. Green of Smithfield similarly stated, “We, as ladies of Utah, ask for no more liberty than is granted to us here in our Mountain homes.”²²⁸ Other speakers called on the heritage of ancestors who had fought in the Revolutionary War, lamenting that federal lawmakers disrespected constitutional protections and freedoms that their grandfathers had fought for.²²⁹ By expressing their indignation, these Relief Society women bound themselves more closely to their religious community and signaled their potential political power.

One Relief Society president who led several meetings was Mary Ann Maughan. Maughan had joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England in 1840 and emigrated to Nauvoo shortly after her husband died from being beaten by a mob. She married Peter Maughan, a widower with five children, in Nauvoo, and they would have eight more children together. The Maughans crossed the plains in 1850 and were in the first group of Mormon pioneers to settle in Cache Valley, one hundred miles north of Salt Lake City, in 1856.

²²⁶ Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, February 1, 1870, p. 46.

²²⁷ Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, February 1, 1870, p. 51.

²²⁸ Smithfield Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1906; Volume 1, 1868–1878; January 25, 1870, p. 55; LR 8359 14, CHL.

²²⁹ Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, February 1, 1870, p. 49; Smithfield Branch Relief Society minutes and records, January 25, 1870, p. 52, 63.

In early 1870, fifty-two-year-old Maughan was the president of the Relief Societies in Cache Valley. She had organized local Societies in Wellsville, Hyrum, and other small outlying settlements and often visited the meetings during the week. These local Societies helped to develop both formal and informal networks of relationships among women which “became a cohesive bond in the community.”²³⁰ Maughan noted in her journal that Mormon women had held an indignation meeting in Salt Lake City to protest the Cullom bill and that similar meetings “were held in most of the Settlements by the Sisters.”²³¹ Her Relief Societies had been asked to hold their own meetings as well.

At the end of January, Relief Society members in Wellsville invited Maughan to lead their mass meeting in the absence of their local president. She also learned that “the Sisters in Paradise were waiting for me to go and hold their Mass Meeting as they did not know what to do and the same at Hyrum.”²³² She quickly scheduled meetings in the coming days for Wellsville, Hyrum, and Paradise, arranged for them to be announced in church meetings, and found friends to transport her to the various locations in their sleigh.

On February 1, Maughan arrived at the first meeting in Wellsville. Her journal records:

This morning at 10 I went to the Hall, was surprised to find all the Brethren in and around the Hall the Bishop and his counselors and others were on the stand. The Brethren were feeling good thinking they were going to hear the Sisters speak on Polygamy. But my Instructions were to Copy after the Mass Meeting held in Salt Lake, and there was not one Man present. was sorry to disapoint [sic] the Brethren of their fun but I intended to obey my Instruction.²³³

²³⁰ Madsen, “Cache Valley Relief Society,” 152.

²³¹ Mary Ann Weston Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 20, Joel E. Ricks Collection of Transcriptions [from diaries and journals of pioneers who settled Cache Valley], 979. 2 R426 v. 1, Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library, Special Collection and Archives, Logan, Utah (hereafter USU), <https://digital.lib.usu.edu/digital/collection/Diaries/id/17015>.

²³² Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 20, USU.

²³³ Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 20–21, USU.

Maughan took a seat in the congregation and when the Bishop came to her, she said he could “hold his meeting and we would wait and then hold ours.” The Bishop spoke a few words, and when all the men had left except for the secretary and deacon, Maughan began, speaking “at some length on the injustice, Cruelity [sic] and Percussion [sic] of the Bills before us, and was followed [by] many of the sisters on the same subject.”²³⁴ The meetings ran similarly in Hyrum and Paradise, but without men on the stand.

Maughan did not record the community response to these mass meetings in her journal, nor did she note the passage of Utah’s woman suffrage law the next week. Instead, her record reflects what was important to her: that she had been called to preside at meetings as President of the local Relief Societies, that she followed instructions as exactly as she could to model after the meeting in Salt Lake, and that she felt she had been a benefit to the sisters.

In Hyrum, Maughan had prayed to God for words to speak to the women’s benefit, and she felt “well paid for [her] visit” when the sisters crowded around her afterward saying “we like to hear you talk...come again soon Sister Maughan.”²³⁵ The mass meetings bolstered her sense of leadership, gave her experience speaking on public affairs, and strengthened relationships between her and those who attended the meetings and spoke out against the Cullom Bill.

Maughan’s assessment of the mass meetings was centered on her personal leadership and the welfare of the women over whom she presided. Whether or not she personally hoped the meetings would influence legislative discussions on woman suffrage, she likely heard some of the discussions herself when she joined her husband, a member of the legislature, on an excursion to Ogden with prominent political and religious leaders a few weeks later. On the rail

²³⁴ Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 21, USU.

²³⁵ Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 21, USU.

journey between Salt Lake City and Ogden, “singing and speeches were made while in the Cars” and a suffrage speech was made in one.²³⁶ The topic was certainly in the air by that time, as the legislature had already introduced the issue. Whether or not Maughan intended to do so, she had helped to put it on the agenda.

Suffrage in the Utah Legislature

Women who participated in indignation meetings throughout Utah were speaking as much to Utah’s religious and political leaders as they were to a national audience. Their words and actions showed their organizational might and that they could be trusted to defend polygamy on the public stage. Utah’s Legislative Assembly took up the issue of suffrage two weeks after the first indignation meeting in Salt Lake City. On January 27, Wasatch County Representative Abram Hatch “moved that the committee on Elections be instructed to enquire into the propriety of bringing in a bill granting the right of Suffrage to the women of this Territory,” as well as a law for a voter registry.²³⁷ The *Deseret News* reported that “A number of ladies, for whom seats had been provided, graced the debate with their presence, and listened with much interest.”²³⁸ According to the *Ogden Semi-Weekly Junction*, “A preponderance of the members seemed in favor of the proposed extension of suffrage; some considered that female citizens of the United States had legally as much right to vote as male citizens.”²³⁹

²³⁶ Maughan Journal, book 2, p. 21, USU.

²³⁷ Utah Territory Legislative Assembly Papers, 1851–1872; Nineteenth Session, 1870; House minutes, 1870 January 20–31; January 27, 1870, img 33; MS 2919, CHL.

²³⁸ “Mormon Suffrage,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 10, 1870, p. 3.

²³⁹ “Our Salt Lake Letter,” *Ogden Semi-Weekly Junction*, February 2, 1870, p. 3.

The Committee on Elections spent more effort determining whether the legislature *could* legally enfranchise women than whether it *should*. Perhaps legislators had already decided to do so in conversations over the past few weeks before the session began. At any rate, on February 2, the Representative J. C. Wright of Box Elder County reported the Committee had determined that the Territory’s 1850 organic law allowed the Legislative Assembly to set voter qualifications, so long as only U.S. citizens had the right to vote and hold office.²⁴⁰ The Committee reminded current lawmakers the territorial legislature had passed a law in 1859 stating that voters must be “free while male citizen[s] of the United States,” then rescinded the word “white” in 1869.²⁴¹ The report concluded that the Legislative Assembly had the right “to grant suffrage to all citizens of the United States.”²⁴²

The question now at hand was whether Utah women were legally U.S. citizens. Here, the Committee seemed less concerned with whether the Fourteenth Amendment applied to women born on U.S. soil, and more interested in determining whether the wives and children of immigrant men became U.S. citizens when their husbands or fathers did.²⁴³ Turning to U.S. naturalization laws, the committee determined that the answer to the latter question was yes. Therefore, legislators believed they could legally extend the right of suffrage to women.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ “Report of Committee of the Whole in Regards Female Suffrage,” February 2, 1870; Utah Territory Legislative Assembly Papers, 1851-1872; Nineteenth Session, 1870; House minutes, 1870 February 1–3, img. 29–30; MS 2919, CHL.

²⁴¹ “Report of Committee,” img. 30.

²⁴² “Report of Committee,” img. 30.

²⁴³ Likely due to the large number of foreign-born women and men living in Utah, who had emigrated from Great Britain and Scandinavia after converting to Mormonism.

²⁴⁴ “Report of Committee,” img. 31.

Continuing the report, the Committee acknowledged that a woman suffrage law would be novel but defended its propriety. “Women in their social, property and marital relations, are according to existing codes very much curtailed; this enfranchisement would put them in a position to protect their own rights by an appeal to the ballot box which we think they are quite as competent to use as uneducated foreigners, the negro or the Chinese.”²⁴⁵ The Committee stated further that although it was in favor of allowing women to hold “some offices,” it could not recommend them for positions in the “executive judicial, or legislative department; to the office of marshall, constable and other administrators of justice or law.”²⁴⁶ Utah therefore did not follow Wyoming in allowing women to hold public office.

Following these recommendations, Committee on Elections Chair Peter Maughan of Cache County (Mary Ann Maughan’s husband) reported a bill to the House on February 5, titled “an Act granting to women the elective franchise,” which passed unanimously.²⁴⁷ On February 9, the Council discussed the issue as a committee of the whole and “were unanimous in recommending the passage of the bill granting to women the elective franchise.”²⁴⁸ The House and Council bills differed, but a conference committee agreed on a version which both chambers passed unanimously on February 10.²⁴⁹ The disagreement likely rested on lowering the voting

²⁴⁵ “Report of Committee,” img. 31. This racist argument was increasingly used by national leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton in later years, maintaining that if Black men and immigrants could vote, surely educated white women should not be placed beneath them.

²⁴⁶ “Report of Committee,” img. 32.

²⁴⁷ Utah Territory Legislative Assembly Papers, 1851–1872; Nineteenth Session, 1870; House minutes, 1870 February 4–5, 8–9; February 5, 1870, img. 19; MS 2919, CHL.

²⁴⁸ “Legislative,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 12, 1870, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Thomas G. Alexander, “An Experiment in Progressive Legislation: The Granting of Woman Suffrage in Utah in 1870,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 26; Utah Territory Legislative Assembly Papers, 1851–1872; Nineteenth Session, 1870, House minutes, 1870 February 10–12; February 10, 1870, img. 5; MS 2919, CHL.

age; initial draft bills show a voting age of eighteen for both men and women, although it is unclear whether these drafts were the initial bills passed by either chamber.²⁵⁰

The final bill preserved the voting age at twenty-one and extended voting rights (but not officeholding) to women citizens. It read:

Be it enacted by the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah: That every woman of the age of twenty one years who has resided in this Territory six months next preceding any general or special Election, born or naturalized in the United States, or who is the wife, widow, or the daughter of a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States, shall be entitled to vote at any election in this Territory.²⁵¹

It was still by no means certain that this bill would become law.

Utah's locally elected legislature had clashed with federally appointed governors ever since Brigham Young had been replaced during the Utah War. Acting Governor Stephen Mann was known to be opposed to the suffrage bill. However, Mann informed Speaker of the House Orson Pratt on February 12 that he had signed the act into law. "I have very grave and serious doubts of the wisdom and soundness of that political economy which makes the Act a law of this Territory," Mann wrote. But he ultimately approved the bill, "whatever these doubts and reasons may have been, in view of the unanimous passage of the Act in both the House and the Council, and in deference to the judgment of many whose opinions I very much respect." Mann expressed hope that the bill "may be found to be in harmony with "the spirit and genius of the age in which we live.""²⁵² Council President George A. Smith noted that "perhaps his gallantry had something

²⁵⁰ Utah Territory Legislative Assembly papers, 1851–1872; Nineteenth Session, 1870; Women suffrage act, 1870; MS 2919, CHL.

²⁵¹ An Act Confering [sic] upon Women the Elective Franchise, Series 3150, Legislative Assembly, Territorial legislative records, 1870, Acts and Bills, 12 Feb, 14; Box 7, Folder 49; Utah State Archives (hereafter cited as UA).

²⁵² Minutes, February 12, 1870, p. 150; Series 16660, Legislative Assembly, House; Journal record books, 1869–1878, UA; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah: Nineteenth Annual Session: For the Year 1870* (Salt Lake City: Joseph Bull, public printer, 1870), 122.

to do with it.”²⁵³ Whatever the reason, Mann’s action made Utah Territory the second place in the United States to extend voting rights to women on an equal basis with men.

While Acting Governor Mann wished to conform Utah’s laws to the spirit of the age, Utah legislators noted that they believed their action to be ahead of its time—or at least, ahead of the U.S. government. On the last day of the session, the Assembly unanimously passed a joint resolution of respect to Mann, specifically commending “the generosity of his Excellency, as recently manifested in the notable instance of waving his personal objections” in signing the woman suffrage law. As the legislature described it, the bill was “exceedingly characteristic of the growing spirit of our enlightened age, which we regret however, to notice, is still so unpopular in a Republican government noted throughout the civilized world as the foremost advocate of equal rights and universal freedom.”²⁵⁴

American observers’ reactions to Utah’s suffrage law were mixed. Many anti-polygamists and suffragists continued to argue that women’s newfound political power could bring about the end of polygamy in Utah. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* stated: “Now, all the Mormon ladies have to do is to submit the question of polygamy to the votes of the people and vote it down. This will be a shorter and easier way out of the difficulty than that prescribed in Representative Cullom’s bill.”²⁵⁵ *The Revolution* published a letter predicting “it will not be long ere these poor deluded women, victims of this dreadful faith, will find that they have in their hands a power which will give to them and their daughters a way out of the valley of the shadow

²⁵³ George A. Smith to E. F. Kinney, February 23, 1870, p. 141.

²⁵⁴ “Special Notices,” *The Deseret News*, March 2, 1870, p. 1.

²⁵⁵ “The Mormon Legislature,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 14, 1870, p. 4.

of death.”²⁵⁶ Many suffragists saw Wyoming and Utah’s successes as signs of growing momentum for their cause; one wrote to the *Revolution* that Utah’s “sun burst” had energized debates and suffrage petitions and “the question is growing serious.”²⁵⁷ But other Americans were skeptical, believing that Mormon men must be confident in their power to force their wives to vote as they directed.²⁵⁸

Historians have debated Utah legislators’ motives for the woman suffrage bill, with some previously dismissing it merely as a publicity stunt or an attempt to shore up the Mormon vote. Just as Mormons’ nineteenth-century contemporaries did, some “[consider] the Utah experiment seriously compromised by theocracy and polygamy,”²⁵⁹ and thus see the suffrage bill as an attempt to turn Mormon women into church leaders’ political pawns.²⁶⁰ Others described it as a “to some extent a gift from the male hierarchy,” something that women had nothing to do with.²⁶¹

Certainly, Mormon legislators would not have enacted the woman suffrage bill if they believed women would use their newfound political power to force an end to polygamy. And they clearly also saw the value of a move that could undercut arguments about women’s oppression in Utah. Council President George A. Smith expressed what many legislators likely felt in a letter to his cousin shortly after the law was passed: “it is morally certain that the

²⁵⁶ L.D.B., “Woman’s Suffrage in Utah,” *The Revolution* 5, no. 8 (February 24, 1870): 121.

²⁵⁷ “Women Running to Fires,” *The Revolution* 5, no. 10 (March 10, 1870): 149.

²⁵⁸ “Yesterday,” *Elmira Daily Advertiser* (Elmira, NY), February 16, 1870, p. 1.

²⁵⁹ T. A. Larson, “Woman Suffrage in Western America,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 17.

²⁶⁰ Beeton, “Woman Suffrage in Territorial Utah.”

²⁶¹ Anne F. Scott, “Mormon Women, Other Women,” *The Journal of Mormon History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 10; Alexander, “Experiment in Progressive Legislation,” 27.

doctrine of Patriarchal Marriage could not be sustained without the co-operation of the Ladies, & the Legislature of Utah in granting them the Elective Franchise has put in their hands the power to manifest at the ballot box their sentiments on the subject.”²⁶² Women’s votes would not directly protect polygamists from congressional legislation, but they could show the United States that women did not want to be rescued from polygamy.

During the legislative session, local newspapers bragged that enacting suffrage would show Americans that women were not degraded and oppressed in Utah. Reporting that “the question of woman suffrage is occupying the attention of the House,” the *Ogden Semi-Weekly Junction* continued, “What will those folks east and west, who are so worried about the women of Utah being enslaved, say to this step, which places Utah a long way ahead of the most radical New England State in extending to woman equal political rights with man?”²⁶³ That same issue had front page news of NWSA’s resolution at its national convention asking Congress to enfranchise Utah women “as the one safe, sure and swift means to abolish the polygamy of that Territory,” showing Utahns what easterners hoped women’s votes would accomplish.²⁶⁴ The *Deseret News* wrote that although “the degraded condition of the women in this Territory is a very fruitful theme among our friends outside...we are satisfied that the result will be exactly opposite to what our enemies anticipate.”²⁶⁵

Still, despite Utah politicians’ confidence in how women would vote and their desire to show the United States that polygamy was not oppressing women, there was likely more. It is

²⁶² George A. Smith to E. F. Kinney, February 23, 1870, p. 142.

²⁶³ “Our Salt Lake Letter,” *Ogden Semi-Weekly Junction*, February 2, 1870, p. 3.

²⁶⁴ “Correspondence,” *The Ogden Junction*, February 2, 1870, p. 1; “Petticoat Parliament!” *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D.C.), January 19, 1870, p. 4.

²⁶⁵ “Female Suffrage in Utah,” *Deseret News*, February 8, 1870, p. 2.

also possible many Mormon legislators in Utah genuinely believed there was no good reason why women should not vote.²⁶⁶ Some historians have hypothesized that these beliefs could have been socialized in the more open context of western frontier life, where gender roles were somewhat more fluid and women already enjoyed more legal rights than their sisters in the east.²⁶⁷

Additionally, Mormon women's political demonstrations in the previous weeks could not have been lost on Utah lawmakers. Their show of eloquence and organization had generated publicity, showing that women could be trusted as useful political partners, at least in countering anti-polygamy narratives in public opinion. It also showed that Mormon women desired to have a say in these conversations, to speak for themselves on a national stage, and to have a voice in political decisions about their marriages and families.²⁶⁸ By organizing women as political actors, leaders such as Sarah M. Kimball in Salt Lake City, Mary Ann Maughan in Cache Valley, and Eliza Ann Haight in Cedar City had helped to make them voters.

Women gathered for a meeting one week after gaining the vote in Sarah M. Kimball's Fifteenth Ward Relief Society Hall. These were the prominent women of Salt Lake City who were already tested leaders in their ward Relief Societies. As they discussed their plans for this reform movement, conversation also turned to recent political events. Eliza R. Snow, who presided, read an account of January's large indignation meeting from the *Sacramento Union* and

²⁶⁶ Alexander, "Experiment in Progressive Legislation," 30.

²⁶⁷ Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 10; Ulrich, *House Full of Females*; Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed., *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870–1896* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997).

²⁶⁸ Van Wagenen, "Politicization of Mormon Women."

called for a committee to draft a thank-you letter to Acting Governor Mann for signing the suffrage bill into law.²⁶⁹

Sarah M. Kimball arose to speak next, and this woman who had done more than anyone else to agitate for the franchise had something important on her mind. According to the records, she “said that she had waited patiently a long time, and now that we were granted the right of suffrage, she would openly declare herself a womans [sic] rights woman.”²⁷⁰ Although “many manifested their approval” when she asked for it, Kimball was well aware that her feelings were not shared by everyone. She emphasized that men’s and women’s interests were intertwined, described women’s legal disabilities, and expressed her conviction that better days for women lay in the future.²⁷¹

Kimball was a powerful speaker, and she knew how to appeal to her audience as she laid out her vision for future progress. She “said she had entertained ideas that appeared wild that she thought would yet be considered woman’s rights,” but referenced legislator Albert P. Rockwood’s recent remarks that women were helpmates in “every department of life” to support her claim.²⁷² She also reminded the women of Rockwood’s statement that “women would have as much prejudice to overcome in occupying certain positions as the men would in letting them.”²⁷³ President Mrs. Kimball was certainly willing and ready to lead that charge.

²⁶⁹ LCRS, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting,” 152; “Letter from Salt Lake,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 18, 1870, p. 1.

²⁷⁰ LCRS, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting,” 153.

²⁷¹ LCRS, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting,” 153.

²⁷² It’s possible Kimball had heard Rockwood speak on the suffrage issue during the legislative debate on January 27 which several women had attended. Derr et al., *First Fifty Years*, 346.

²⁷³ LCRS, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting,” 153.

The women gathered in Kimball's Relief Society Hall that evening certainly were not planning to foment rebellion, and they expressed a range of personal opinions on women's rights. Phoebe Woodruff said she "had looked for this day for years," but now that "the yoke on woman [had been] removed," she cautioned that they "must act in wisdom, and not go too fast."²⁷⁴ Margaret T. Smoot remarked, "I have never had any desire for more rights than I have. I have always considered these things beneath the sphere of woman. But as things progress I feel it is right that we should vote."²⁷⁵ Wilmirth East rose to say she did not quite agree: "I have never felt that woman had her privileges, I always wanted a voice in the Politics of the Nation, as well as rear a family...this is a bright day."²⁷⁶

Whatever these women's beliefs about their place in public life, it was their experience in the Relief Society that had brought them to this point. Over the past years, Relief Societies had been "teaching their members self-government" and coordinating projects that prepared them for political engagement.²⁷⁷ The organizational structure of Relief Society provided women with both the practice and the confidence to speak out on public matters, and eventually, to insert themselves into political affairs. And as evidenced by the 1870 indignation meetings, Relief Society had developed a strong network of women across Utah Territory (and beyond) who could mobilize to meet needs and defend their religious practice.

Just as importantly, the Relief Society had also demonstrated women's capacities and loyalties to Mormon men in Utah. Through economic cooperation, relief of the poor, and the

²⁷⁴ LCRS, "Minutes of the 2nd Meeting," 153.

²⁷⁵ LCRS, "Minutes of the 2nd Meeting," 155.

²⁷⁶ LCRS, "Minutes of the 2nd Meeting," 156.

²⁷⁷ Scott, "On Seeing and Not Seeing," 7–21.

finance and construction of their own buildings, Relief Societies had taken on large projects and seen them through. They had also shown the men in their communities that they would work with and under local male leadership and that they could be trusted to promote the cause of Zion. As historian Lola Van Wagenen observed, “the women were more interested in being effective than [visible.]”²⁷⁸ Without this approach, it is difficult to imagine how their enfranchisement would have happened.

Although it was not likely a conscious effort, leading Mormon women’s political activity in early 1870 appears to have furthered Sarah Kimball’s goals through Eliza R. Snow’s strategy. By expressing gratitude, saying they had not asked for suffrage, and thanking Acting Governor Mann, Snow led Mormon women in “deflecting credit for their achievements,” according to Van Wagenen, in a way that “contributed to the illusion” that they were not acting in their own behalf.²⁷⁹ While reorganizing Relief Societies in Utah under the direction of Brigham Young, Snow was careful to work within rather than against the system, applying lessons she drew from the dissolution of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society as President Emma Smith clashed with Young.²⁸⁰

Expansive views of women’s rights like Sarah Kimball’s were likely only shared by a very few women in 1870, and even she refrained from proclaiming all of her beliefs.²⁸¹ But decades later, Kimball would recall that she had been reading Susan B. Anthony’s *The*

²⁷⁸ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 37.

²⁷⁹ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 41.

²⁸⁰ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women.”

²⁸¹ Madsen, “Relief Society in Cache Valley,” 141 (fn 46).

Revolution before she first gained the vote. “The seed was planted within my soul and I have been laboring for the same cause.”²⁸²

Van Wagenen noted that “For Mormon women, 1870 signaled the end of a politicization that had begun in the 1840s and the beginning of a visible and aggressive political activism.”²⁸³ Mormon women’s first indignation meeting had allowed them to enter the body politic, crossing constructed boundaries of gender and propriety meant to keep them out. Over the next decade and a half, they would continue to stage similar meetings, responding to new threats like calls for their disenfranchisement, the establishment of the Ladies’ Anti-Polygamy Society, and federal marshals’ invasion of their homes and privacy.²⁸⁴ They would attempt to position themselves rhetorically within a legal system that defined them as citizens whose rights should be protected by local and federal law.

In January 1879, at yet another indignation meeting to protest yet another attempt to end polygamy, Farmington resident Susan Grant rose to have her say and emphasized that “the sisters of the Saints knew what they were doing.”²⁸⁵ Grant was speaking of Mormon women’s choice to enter polygamous marriages, but her statement was also true in relation to the indignation meeting itself and the women’s broader political strategy in action. Mormon women *did* know what they were doing because the Relief Society educated them, organized them, and mobilized them to engage in politics.

²⁸² “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 61.

²⁸³ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women,” 32.

²⁸⁴ See the published proceedings of these meetings, for example: “Mormon” Women on Plural Marriage, November 16, 1878 ([Salt Lake City?]: [publisher not identified], [1878?]), M234.71 U895m, CHL; Mormon Women’s Protest: An Appeal for Freedom, Justice, and Equal Rights, March 6, 1886 ([Salt Lake City]: Deseret News Co., 1886), M243.9 M865, CHL.

²⁸⁵ “Correspondence,” *Deseret News*, January 29, 1879, p. 11.

CHAPTER 3

“HONORABLE WOMEN COMMAND AS MUCH RESPECT AT THE POLLS AS IN THE DRAWING-ROOM, THE PARLOR, AND THE CHURCH”

When Mormon women began voting in 1870, their ballots attracted national attention and scrutiny. Seraph Young and about twenty-four other women cast ballots in Salt Lake City’s municipal election on February 14, just two days after Utah’s woman suffrage bill became law.²⁸⁶ Outside papers reported that some women voted for and some against the Mormon People’s Party ticket.²⁸⁷ Six hundred women voted in Provo’s municipal election a few days later; Church Historian and Legislative Council President George A. Smith observed that “although there was but one ticket in the field, the Ladies were determined to exercise their right.”²⁸⁸

Most Utah women citizens’ first opportunity to cast a ballot came with the Territory’s general election on August 1, 1870, the first in the U.S. in which women voted for a representative in Congress.²⁸⁹ Thousands of women participated, and according to a dispatch in the *New York Herald*, “the principal feature of the whole election was the novelty of women voting.”²⁹⁰ Women cast about one third of the total ballots in Salt Lake City, using separate

²⁸⁶ Brigham Young to Heber Young, February 16, 1870, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 140.

²⁸⁷ “Utah,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1870, p. 8; *New Hampshire Gazette*, February 26, 1870, p. 4.

²⁸⁸ George A. Smith to E. F. Kinney, February 23, 1870, Historian's Office letterpress copybooks, 1854-1879, 1885-1886; Volume 3, 1870-1886; p. 142, CR 100 38, CHL.

²⁸⁹ Because Utah was a territory, its delegate was a non-voting member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

²⁹⁰ “Utah,” *New York Herald*, August 14, 1870, p. 11; “The Election,” *Ogden Semi-Weekly Junction*, August 3, 1870, p. 2.

entrances provided for them at polling places.²⁹¹ Seraph Young voted again, and many women went to the polls for the first time in family groups. Smith wrote to a cousin, “I had the pleasure of staying at home and taking care of the children while my wives went to the election.”²⁹²

Mormon women’s voting rights were entangled in the national controversy over polygamy from the moment they cast their first ballots. As discussed in the previous chapter, many American observers hoped Mormon women would use the franchise to end polygamy, while others assumed the church would control their votes. The Liberal Party in Utah opposed suffrage “when that means placing in the hands of women, irrespective of nationality, a power which can be and is illegally used by an unscrupulous hierarchy.”²⁹³ Its members filed local lawsuits several times throughout the 1870s and 1880s to overturn Utah’s suffrage law.²⁹⁴

When it became clear that Mormon women were not employing the power of the ballot to cast off polygamy’s shackles, reformers across the country urged Congress to repeal woman suffrage in Utah. They charged that the vote dangerously afforded Mormon women the “liberty of self-degradation,” as popular lecturer Kate Field described it, to uphold an immoral practice that oppressed women.²⁹⁵ Starting in 1873, congressmen proposed anti-polygamy laws that

²⁹¹ “Votes Polled in the City,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 2, 1870, p. 3; “The Election,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 2, 1870, p. 3.

²⁹² George A. Smith to Miss Sophronia Lyman, August 3, 1870; Historian's Office letterpress copybooks, 1854–1879, 1885–1886; Volume 3, 1870–1886, p. 384; CR 100 38, CHL.

²⁹³ Joseph Salisbury, “The Herald and Woman Suffrage,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 19, 1872, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ “Proposed Memorial to Congress for a Registration Act for Utah,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 16, 1872, p. 1; “Female Franchise,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 2, 1880, p. 3; “Local News,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 2, 1880, p. 2; “The Decision,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 2, 1880, p. 2; “The Woman Suffrage Issue,” *Deseret Evening News*, September 13, p. 3; “The Woman Suffrage Decision,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 17, 1882, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Kate Field, *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1886, p. 15. For an explanation of this characterization, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, “The Liberty of Self-Degradation: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (December 1996): 815–897.

would simultaneously disenfranchise Utah women to “purify” and “reform” Utah’s elections.²⁹⁶

In response to this threat of disenfranchisement, Mormon women mobilized an extensive grassroots network to defend their voting rights and the practice of plural marriage.

Utah Territory was the first place where women cast ballots in large numbers, so it was the first place where female suffrage was debated and worked out in practice. As local politicians, national reformers, Congressmen, and Mormon women themselves contested what it meant for women to cast ballots in Utah, their arguments staked out the contours of the national suffrage debate in America for decades to come. Mormon women were the first to counter anti-suffrage arguments with their own practical experience. Voting by the thousands, they claimed the franchise “by possession and usage.”²⁹⁷ They also drew on established nineteenth-century patterns of political engagement—such as indignation meetings and petitioning—to stake out the moral high ground and protect their rights from punitive federal legislation.

1870 marked not the beginning of Mormon women’s politicization and collective action, but rather the beginning of a shift in how they saw their place in the body politic. Like others in nineteenth-century America who worked to alleviate poverty, care for orphans, end slavery, or agitate for suffrage, Mormon women first spoke publicly on behalf of others. Both in Nauvoo and in Utah, they had initially entered the political area through the Relief Society in order to

²⁹⁶ See “Proposed Memorial to Congress for a Registration Act for Utah,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 16, 1872, p. 1; “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent* 4, no. 18 (February 15, 1876): 139; Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁹⁷ Memorial to the President of the United States and the Members of Congress, by the “Mormon” Women of Utah, ([Salt Lake City?]: [publisher not identified], 1886), p. 1, M243.3 U887m, CHL; Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah to the President and the Congress of the United States: The Outrages of Which They Complain—The Justice They Demand, (Washington: [publisher not identified], April 6, 1886), p. 1, M243.3 U887m 1886 CHL.

protect their religious community. But as they began voting, they eventually had to engage in politics to stand up for themselves.

Entering Politics through Petitioning

Relief Society provided an organizational framework and institutional capacities for Mormon women to engage in a new era of collective political action in the 1870s and 1880s.²⁹⁸ In local Relief Societies across Utah, Mormon women had learned to speak, lead, and coordinate action to influence public affairs.²⁹⁹ As those women now sought to defend polygamy and suffrage in national politics, they also drew on the methods employed by female reformers and abolitionists before them. Petitioning provided a rare “conduit for women to assert a modified form of citizenship” and exercise political power.³⁰⁰ By petitioning, Mormon women could maintain their respectability while claiming contested rights to transgress traditional boundaries of womanhood.

In the first coordinated women’s petition campaign in U.S. history, led by Catharine Beecher in 1829, women had attempted to negotiate the ostensible tension between proper female behavior and public political activity. To sign, circulate, and present petitions meant stepping beyond private, female spaces to coordinate public action. But despite the widely accepted discourse of separate spheres for men and women, woman’s sphere could accommodate activities outside of the home if those activities fulfilled accepted female duties such as caring

²⁹⁸ Lola Van Wagenen, “In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise,” *Dialogue* 24 (Winter 1991): 31–43.

²⁹⁹ Van Wagenen, “Politicization of Mormon Women”; Lola Van Wagenen, “Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1994).

³⁰⁰ Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, & Women’s Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2, 176.

for the vulnerable.³⁰¹ Individual women had sometimes petitioned local and state governments demanding that they found orphanages, pick up garbage on city streets, and educate their daughters, but an effort to protest Indian removal marked their first collective foray into national politics. This step, as Alisse Portnoy observes, “marked and transgressed a boundary that, though symbolic, had material consequences.”³⁰² So even as female petitioners entered into politics, they emphasized their apolitical intent to protect others.

Beecher’s campaign against Indian removal led 1500 women to petition the federal government by 1831. It started when a minister and family friend asked Beecher to do something to convey women’s outrage over Indian removal. Seeking to “devise some method” of intervention, Beecher wrote a circular, “To Benevolent Women of the United States,” calling for petitions.³⁰³ Framing this action as an issue of benevolence, religion, and morality, she rhetorically kept it within the boundaries of gendered spheres, as an extension of women’s natural sympathies and accepted moral influence on friends and family. By pleading to government on behalf of others, Beecher and her fellow female petitioners adopted a voice that made their political participation “appear conservative, appropriate, and even natural despite its novelty.”³⁰⁴ This petitioning sounded more like prayer than like politics.

³⁰¹ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

³⁰² Alisse Theodore Portnoy, “‘Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard’: Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829–1831,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 575 (573–610).

³⁰³ Catharine Beecher, *Educational Reminiscences and Suggestions* (New York: J. B. Ford and Company, 1874), 62.

³⁰⁴ Portnoy, “Female Petitioners,” 577.

Petition as supplication held “radical potential,” providing a pathway for women to influence politics without the vote.³⁰⁵ Although Beecher’s campaign did not prevent Indian removal, it did help open the door for American women to engage in collective political action beyond their parlor doors.³⁰⁶ And women who petitioned for the welfare of others came to expect and demand that elected officials recognize their interests, paving the way to expand their own political rights.

When women began to sign anti-slavery petitions in the 1830s, they “asserted their existence as political individuals” by acting independently of their husbands and fathers in public life.³⁰⁷ Signing and circulating these petitions gave thousands of women practical experience in campaigning to influence public opinion, leveraging their social networks and honing their skills of persuasion.³⁰⁸ Additionally, the scope and scale of antislavery petitioning firmly established this form of political engagement as a vehicle for women to influence political affairs.³⁰⁹ Female

³⁰⁵ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 3.

³⁰⁶ Ironically, Catharine Beecher later attacked female abolitionists’ petitioning in an 1837 *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females*, which responded to Angelina Grimke’s *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*. Against Grimke’s call for women to lead in the abolition movement, Beecher argued that petitioning Congress was outside the “sphere of female duty,” and that entering the political sphere would corrupt women’s moral purity. See Portnoy, “Female Petitioners,” and Mary Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s,” *Journal of American History*, 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 15–40.

³⁰⁷ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 109.

³⁰⁸ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 109–10.

³⁰⁹ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 3.

petitioners began to see themselves as members of the body politic as they protested the removal of Native Americans, worked to end slavery, and later, fought for their own suffrage.³¹⁰

Similarly, Mormon women first collectively engaged in public politics by seeking to protect others—their religious leaders and their husbands, brothers, and sons—from harm. Their view of their place in politics also changed as they began to petition for themselves, protesting federal legislation that aimed to disenfranchise them and end polygamy. As the only substantial group of voting women in the United States, Mormons claimed citizenship rights through petitions to protect their suffrage and religious practice.

Mormon women's petitions defending polygamy and their right to vote illuminate several factors that shaped their collective activism, reflecting both the political context of the petitions' production as well as the realities Mormon women hoped to create through them. Their petitions have survived in the National Archives, Utah newspapers, and in the pamphlets Mormon women printed and distributed which were then archived in the LDS Church History Library. Many more have likely been lost to history; some may not have reached their final destinations and others may have been discarded or misplaced by record keepers.³¹¹

³¹⁰ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*. Of course, American women had never been completely absent from politics, but post-Revolutionary backlash prevented them from participating in formal politics as voters or officeholders anywhere in the United States by the time New Jersey restricted suffrage to white, taxpaying male citizens in 1807. Judith Apter Klinghoffer and Lois Elkis, "'The Petticoat Electors': Women's Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776–1807," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 159–93; Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

³¹¹ For example, only one suffrage petition to Utah's 1895 constitutional convention was preserved in the State Archives, although convention records and local newspapers show that more than twenty thousand Utahns signed hundreds of such petitions. For some reason, they were likely deemed unimportant by record keepers in the new state. There is a growing body of scholarship on archives as artifacts in themselves, highlighting the fact that archives are sources constructed by gatekeepers that reflect the power dynamics of the past. See for example Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Duke University Press, 2014).

Mormon women's petitions have scarcely figured in the scholarship on the "Mormon Question." Constructing a narrative of Mormon women's political expression places these overlooked sources in conversation with each other and connects Mormon women's experience with broader historical narratives about the women's rights movement. Looking at how Mormon women represented themselves to lawmakers highlights their shrewd, though ultimately unsuccessful, political strategy to maintain both polygamy and their voting rights. As they engaged in politics to protect others' interests, they developed a voice to speak for their own.

Claiming Citizenship Rights through Petitioning

Through the 1870s and 1880s, Mormon women developed a strategy of political engagement by mobilizing Relief Societies across Utah to hold indignation meetings and petition the federal government.³¹² It is unclear whether Mormon women sent their resolutions or any petition to Congress after their first wave of indignation meetings in 1870.³¹³ And although the women in the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society Hall who first called for the franchise and for indignation meetings had elected Eliza R. Snow and Sarah M. Kimball to represent them in Washington, Snow and Kimball did not do so.³¹⁴ However, the Relief Society's indignation meetings did contribute to the passage of Utah's woman suffrage law and spur men into action.

After the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Cullom bill in March 1870, thousands of Mormon men followed their wives' example by packing into the Tabernacle for an

³¹² There were approximately 100 local Relief Society organizations by 1869. "Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women's History* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2016).

³¹³ No memorial or petition produced in conjunction with these indignation meetings is noted in Utah papers or the Congressional Record, and none is preserved in the National Archives.

³¹⁴ "Minutes of a Ladies Mass Meeting," January 6, 1870, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 139–42; LR 2848 14, CHL.

indignation meeting of their own.³¹⁵ They decried the bill's intent to curtail their religious and civil liberties, declared their belief in polygamy, and voted to approve a remonstrance and resolutions. These resolutions and meeting proceedings were sent to Congress, identifying the all-male participants as "citizens of Salt Lake City."³¹⁶ In contrast, newspaper reports and a printed pamphlet of the women's January 13 indignation meeting proceedings had described those participants as the "Ladies of Salt Lake City."³¹⁷

This distinction between "citizens" and "ladies" highlights the gendered nature of citizenship. At the Great Indignation Meeting, before they had the right to vote, Mormon women had resolved to defend their male relatives as "daughters of American citizens," not citizens in their own right.³¹⁸ But their self-descriptions evolved over time as they gained suffrage and fought to keep it. The concept of citizenship was closely bound with obligations and duties from the early republic onward, and arguments for and against women's suffrage often rested on assertions about women's ability or inability to perform these civic functions.³¹⁹ As the first substantial population of voting women in the United States, Mormon women in Utah did not sit on juries or serve in the local militia, but they did break ground by showing that respectable

³¹⁵ "Mass Meeting," *Ogden Daily Herald*, April 2, 1870, p. 2.

³¹⁶ Memorial and Resolutions adopted by Citizens of Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, at a mass meeting held in said city March 31, 1870 remonstrating against the passage of the bill (HF 1089) "in aid of the execution of the laws in the Territory of Utah, and for other purposes," Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on Territories during the 41st Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1844–1946; Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789–2015, Record Group 46 (hereafter RG 46), National Archives Building, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as NAB).

³¹⁷ Proceedings in Mass Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest Against the Passage of Cullom's Bill, January 14, 1870 ([Salt Lake City]: [publisher not identified], 1870), 1, M243.91 P963 1870, CHL; "Great Indignation Meeting," *Deseret Evening News*, January 14, 1870, p. 2.

³¹⁸ Proceedings in Mass Meeting, January 14, 1870, 4.

³¹⁹ Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830–1934," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (December 1998): 1440–1474.

women could go to the polls on election day. And as they exercised political rights, their actions changed how they viewed their relationship to the American state.

As the conflict over their political participation intensified, Mormon women began to petition in defense of their own suffrage and religious practice, claiming that their citizenship protected both rights. They adopted this strategy at the same time as the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) encouraged women to attempt to register and vote by claiming that the Fourteenth Amendment confirmed their citizenship and therefore, their voting rights.³²⁰ Hundreds of suffragists across the nation attempted to vote in the 1872 presidential election, including Sojourner Truth and Susan B. Anthony.³²¹ Sara Spencer, who had sued to vote in Washington, D.C., wrote to Emmeline B. Wells that both Mormon women and their suffragist sisters across the country were “asking constitutional protection of [women’s] rights as citizens.”³²² Utah women citizens could legally vote, but as pressure increased for Congress to disenfranchise them, they made similar arguments to their suffragist sisters, maintaining that their citizenship should protect their right of franchise. But because their political rights were tightly intertwined with the conflict over polygamy, Mormon women’s pro-suffrage arguments contravened traditional norms of both womanhood and religion.

³²⁰ U.S. Constitution, Amendment XIV states: “all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside.” The NWSA argued that because the Amendment did not specify male persons, it applied to women as well. Of course, discriminatory laws meant that indigenous women and many women of color were ineligible for citizenship. A. G. Riddle, Francis Miller, Sara J. Spencer, Sarah E. Webster, James O. Clephane, Carrie Chapman Catt, District of Columbia, Supreme Court, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, and Joseph Meredith Toner Collection, *Suffrage Conferred by the Fourteenth Amendment: Woman's Suffrage in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, in General Term, October; Sara J. Spencer vs. The Board of Registration, and Sarah E. Webster vs. The Judges of Election: Argument of the Counsel for the Plaintiffs: With the Opinions of the Court* (Washington, D.C.: Judd & Detweiler, Printers and Publishers, 1871), LOC, <https://loc.gov/item/39023154>.

³²¹ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Suffrage: Women’s Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 98–105.

³²² “R.S. Reports,” *The Woman’s Exponent* 6, no. 20 (March 15, 1878): 154.

In order to do this, Mormon women needed a clear message. The *Woman's Exponent* was established in 1872 as the semi-official mouthpiece of the Relief Society, and it played a crucial role in developing and coordinating Mormon women's political strategy. The twice-monthly publication was Mormon women's attempt to wrest control of the popular narrative that they were oppressed and degraded. In the first issue, editor Louisa Greene wrote: "The women of Utah to-day occupy a position which attracts the attention of intelligent thinking men and women everywhere... They have been grossly misrepresented by the press, by active enemies... Who are so well able to speak for the women of Utah as the women of Utah themselves? "It is better to represent ourselves than to be misrepresented by others."³²³

The *Exponent* was one of the longest-running women's papers in the country, lasting until 1914. It shared Relief Society news and Mormon history, and also informed readers of national and international advances for women's rights in education, business, and politics. The paper did not pull punches; the first issue published an article (under a pseudonym) about the need for women's equal education, employment, and pay.³²⁴ As Carol Cornwall Madsen observes, "With Church support and a medium to express their views, LDS women were ready to join the growing movement for woman's rights."³²⁵ Especially after Emmeline B. Wells took over as editor in 1877, the *Exponent* also often reprinted articles from suffrage papers like the *Ballot Box* or *The Woman's Journal*. The paper coordinated petition campaigns, encouraged political participation, and helped lead Utahns into suffrage activism.

³²³ "Woman's Exponent, a Utah Ladies' Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 1, no. 1 (June 1, 1872): 8.

³²⁴ E., "Woman's Rights and Wrongs," *Woman's Exponent* 1, no. 1 (June 1, 1872): 5.

³²⁵ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "The "New Woman" and the *Woman's Exponent*," *BYU Studies* 59, no. 3 (2020): 82.

The first petitions supporting Mormon women’s suffrage rights actually came from outside Utah. In 1873, New Jersey Senator Frederick T. Frelinghuysen introduced a bill that would repeal Utah’s woman suffrage law, enact fines for women who tried to vote, and prohibit the Utah legislature from restoring women’s voting rights, among other anti-polygamy measures. The Woman Suffrage Association of the State of Pennsylvania and the Toledo (Ohio) Woman Suffrage Association were the first to petition Congress to reject the bill.³²⁶ Both petitions may have been prompted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s resolutions adopted at the recent NWSA convention, which had denounced the bill and its amendments as “an entering wedge to the disfranchisement of all voters” and “insults to the women of the Union and a disgrace to the Forty-third Congress.”³²⁷

Both petitions ignored polygamy and focused strictly on protecting Utah women’s right to vote. Through its agent Matilda Hindman, the Woman Suffrage Association of the State of Pennsylvania maintained that Senator Frelinghuysen’s bill would “do great injury to a large

³²⁶ Petition of Matilda Hindman in relation to a bill to aid in the Execution of the Laws of the Territory of Utah and for other Purposes, February 26, 1874; Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary during the 43rd Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; Petitions, Judiciary Various Subjects; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–2015, Record Group 233 (hereafter RG 233); NAB; Memorial of Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Barker of the Ohio Woman’s Suffrage Association in favor of Woman Suffrage in the Territories of the United States, March 9, 1874, Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary during the 43rd Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; Petitions, Judiciary Various Subjects; RG 233; NAB.

³²⁷ “Woman Suffragist’s Resolves,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 12, 1874, p. 2. Stanton’s Utah-related resolutions stated in full: “Resolved, That as the right of suffrage was vested in the women of Utah by years of legalized usage, as its exercise affords the surest guarantee of the peaceful extinction of polygamy, we denounce the proposition now pending in Congress to disenfranchise the women of Utah as an assault on vested rights, a trick in the interest of a ring, an entering wedge to the disfranchisement of all voters,” and “Resolved, That the bill of Senator Frelinghuysen, which is designed to rob the women of the Territories of jury trial, and the bill of Senator Logan, to restore the action of common law in the Territories, are insults to the women of the Union and a disgrace to the Forty-third Congress.” After the convention, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton submitted a petition for equal suffrage to the House of Representatives on NWSA’s behalf, and the NWSA would soon be asking suffragists across the country to gather signatures for a similar petition for a Sixteenth Amendment prohibiting sex discrimination in voting.

number of the citizens of [Utah] Territory.”³²⁸ It explained that disenfranchising Utah women would be undemocratic because it would subject women to laws in which they had no say, tax them without representation, and make them vulnerable before juries that did not consist of their peers. This was already the legal situation of women everywhere in the United States except Wyoming Territory, and these Pennsylvania suffragists were likely making similar arguments to convince their state legislature to enfranchise them.

Ohio suffragists argued in their petition that taking rights away from Utah women was antithetical to American progress, and that “all principles of true civilization indicate that legislation should not move backward.”³²⁹ They continued: “[T]he duty of government is to extend its protecting care over the right of all its citizens, and see that such rights once conferred and honorably exercised should not be curtailed to the detriment of any particular class.” The petitioners warned against “establishing a tyrannical precedent by which the rightful liberties of the citizens of all the Territories may be infringed upon” by disenfranchising and “strik[ing] a blow at the liberties of one-half of the voters of Utah.”³³⁰ Noting that Utah women had not been charged with any crime, Ohio suffragists protested against placing them in the category of disenfranchised felons and traitors.

Both Pennsylvania and Ohio suffragists’ petitions reflected the NWSA’s New Departure strategy that claimed suffrage rights flowed from native-born and naturalized women’s citizenship. But after 1875, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Minor v. Happersett* that

³²⁸ Petition of Matilda Hindman.

³²⁹ Memorial of Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Barker.

³³⁰ Memorial of Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Barker.

suffrage was a privilege rather than a right of citizenship, the NWSA had to abandon that tactic. It continued to focus its efforts on securing an amendment to the federal constitution.³³¹

Utah women were likely unaware of other suffragists' petitions in their behalf, since they were not reported in the *Woman's Exponent* or other Utah newspapers.³³² The Frelinghuysen bill did not pass, but it did set a precedent. Future anti-polygamy legislation proposed in Congress always included revoking women's voting rights as one measure to help end the practice of plural marriage.

Mormon Women's Political Strategy

Mormon women soon started to petition federal lawmakers on their own behalf to protect their votes and their marriages. Indignation meeting reports and petition signatures show that while Mormonism's leading ladies in Salt Lake City were key mobilizers, many of the women who joined them in political action were not only those usually most likely to enter into politics—the wealthy, mothers whose children were grown, and single women with no family obligations. Instead, most of the women who participated came from the ranks of Relief Societies across Utah Territory. Relief Society women formed the backbone of the petitioning process by holding indignation meetings in their local communities, copying and circulating

³³¹ “Right to Vote,” *Deseret News*, April 7, 1875, p. 8. The NWSA had pursued a federal woman suffrage amendment since its founding in 1870, but Madsen notes that increasing efforts to strip the vote from Utah women may have been another reason the national organization doubled down on this focus in the mid-1870s in *Advocate for Women*, 155.

³³² The *Exponent* did republish Oregon suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway's *New Northwest* article from January 1874, in which Duniway printed a letter from an anonymous “legal gentleman of Salt Lake City” in favor of the Frelinghuysen bill but declared herself unconvinced “that the Bill is what it ought to be.” “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” *Woman's Exponent* 2, no. 19 (March 1, 1874): 148. The New York Woman Suffrage Society also sent a petition to Congress against the Frelinghuysen bill. The petition was not preserved in the National Archives but was donated to the Church History Library in 1994. See Memorial of the New York Woman Suffrage Society Protesting Against the Sixth Section of the Bill Regarding Utah ([Washington, D.C.?]: [The House of Representatives], 1873), M243.9 M533 1873, CHL.

petitions, and mailing them to Salt Lake City to be sent on to Washington. They also often sent reports of their mass meetings for publication in the *Woman's Exponent*.³³³

Preparing petitions for Washington was a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, dependent on widespread participation. Women circulated petitions to friends, family, and fellow Relief Society sisters in their towns, pasting together strips of paper with the signatures they gathered. The signature at the top of each piece of paper was likely that of the woman who had gone out to collect the others. When petitions amassed a very large number of signatures, women rolled them up like a scroll. Metal archival containers at the National Archives have slightly squished some of these scrolls, which are often difficult to unroll due to the glue that pastes the signature sheets together. But many petitions appear as they must have looked when Mormon women sent them off to Washington, with red cloth ribbons still holding them in tight rolls.³³⁴

Many of the women who signed these petitions were naturalized immigrants from England or Scandinavia, often living in small farming communities across Utah Territory. A few signed their names with an x because they were likely illiterate. Women's signatures often appear clustered in family groups along with their mothers, daughters, or sister-wives, suggesting that women circulated petitions in each other's homes or at Relief Society meetings.³³⁵

³³³ One example with reports from Fairview, UT and Alma, WY is found in "Women's Mass Meeting," *The Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 16 (15 January 1879): 12; cf. Paula E. Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," *American Jewish History* 70, no. 1 (September 1980): 91–105.

³³⁴ For example, the Memorial of Women of Utah Against Passage of the Christiancy or Luttrell Bill, Which Would Disenfranchise Them, February 2, 1878 (received March 4, 1878); Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Territories during the 45th Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; RG 233, NAB. This petition is one of several in pristine condition in the National Archives that has not yet been incorporated into the history of Mormon women's political participation. It was recently featured in the National Archives' 2019–2020 exhibition titled "Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote."

³³⁵ Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

Elizabeth Jefford Drake (Ballam Davis) Roundy's experience shows how the emerging strategy of petitioning was not only the brainchild of Relief Society leaders in Salt Lake City.³³⁶ Her own early political engagement, her enthusiasm, and her political savvy would help shape Mormon women's tactics. While living in Washington, D.C. during and after the Civil War, Roundy began petition campaigns of her own, first to increase soldiers' pay, then to protest the anti-polygamy Cullom Bill. Roundy's political engagement illustrates how Mormon women learned as they went and drew on precedents to raise their voices in local and national politics.

Unlike most women who led the Relief Society into politics, Roundy was not a native-born U.S. citizen, but her political activism makes it clear that she was well aware of the political tools at her disposal. Born in Devonshire in 1830, Roundy worked in the Queen's millinery house in London as a young adult. After attending meetings held by Mormon missionaries, she was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³³⁷ She eventually emigrated to the United States and married non-Mormon Daniel Davis. She was appointed to a clerkship in the office of the U.S. Treasurer while her husband fought for the Union in the Civil War.

Decades later, Roundy wrote that she had "seen a great deal of suffering with the soldiers families," so she determined to "memorialize Congress in their behalf" to increase soldiers'

³³⁶ Elizabeth Jefford Drake Roundy was married three times. Born Elizabeth Jefford Drake, she married Mormon missionary Henry Ballam in 1852 in London. Ballam died in 1858 and she emigrated to Utah around this time, where she married non-Mormon Daniel Davis in 1860. After living in Washington, D.C. for several years, she left or divorced Davis and returned to Utah in the 1870s. She became the third wife of Jared C. Roundy in 1879 and went by Elizabeth Jefford Drake Roundy after this marriage. I use this name for her because it is on most of the sources by or about her in the CHL, as well as her gravestone and death certificate. However, during the time she instigated petition campaigns in the 1860s and 1870s, she went by Elizabeth Davis, or Elizabeth J. Davis. See "Roundy, Elizabeth Jefford Drake," in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, comp. Andrew Jensen, (Salt Lake: Andrew Jensen History Company, 1901), 1:809–11; "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK9-SF9S> : 20 May 2020), Elizabeth Jefford Drake Roundy, 1916.

³³⁷ "Salt Lake Woman Who Made Bonnets for the Queen," *Salt Lake Herald*, January 27, 1901, p. 7.

pay.³³⁸ Within the space of just three weeks, she gathered 1300 signatures from women who wanted to help the “wives, mothers, and other female relatives dependent on the soldiers.” Roundy’s petition addressed Congress “with the deepest feeling of mortification, and the most profound regret” that it was necessary to ask for relief, reminding legislators that while men in the armed forces faced death, their wives, mothers, and children were starving at home.³³⁹ She also wrote similar letters to the chairmen of the House and Senate’s Committees on Military Affairs.

That petition must have given Roundy some sense of political power, because she launched another one years later, against the anti-polygamy Cullom bill. Determined to prevent the bill’s passage, she carefully crafted a petition that avoided supporting polygamy in order to convince more than fifty of her non-Mormon neighbors in Washington, D.C. to sign.³⁴⁰ Instead, Roundy opened with an appeal for Mormon women, who “have the right to whorship [sic] God, according to the dictates of their own conscience.”³⁴¹

Roundy strategically petitioned on behalf of Mormon women rather than Mormon men, the actual targets of the bill, because polygamous men were likely indefensible in the eyes of her neighbors. After recounting Mormons’ previous persecutions, her petition asked that “your Honorable body the Lawgivers of the greatest Nation on the face of the Globe, will never subject, or permit them as a people, again to be molested in the enjoyment of their religious

³³⁸ Elizabeth J. Roundy Statement, 1912 August, 1, MS 4719 1, CHL.

³³⁹ Elizabeth Davis [Elizabeth Jefford Drake Roundy], Memorial, 1864, MS 15323, CHL.

³⁴⁰ Elizabeth Davis [Elizabeth Jefford Drake Roundy], Memorial of Resident Citizens of the District of Columbia, 1870, MS 15324, CHL. Family stories also maintain that Roundy had persuaded Senator Charles Sumner to speak against an earlier Cragin bill. See Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 810.

³⁴¹ Davis, Memorial, 1870.

rights, guaranteed to all, by our glorious Constitution.”³⁴² This language marked the humble tone of supplication that characterized her 1864 petition as well as many early women’s petitions.

After Roundy moved to Utah in 1870, she continued to engage in politics when she hoped her voice could make a difference. When Brigham Young faced legal accusations in 1872, she later recalled, “I felt so troubled at the danger threatening us, that after praying over the matter I was prompted to write [a] Letter” to George C. Bates, the U.S. Prosecuting Attorney for Utah Territory.³⁴³ She repeated back to Bates his pledge of “equal and exact justice” as he took office, asked him to discharge the “packed” (non-Mormon) jury assembled for Young’s trial, and prayed that “by Gods [sic] blessing you will prove a true Gentleman in your Official dealings with this people.”³⁴⁴ Years later, Roundy was “induced” to write personally to First Lady Lucy Hayes to counter a letter that the Ladies’ Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah sent Hayes as it instigated a petition campaign in late 1878.³⁴⁵ This time, she devoted over a page to defending plural marriage, writing on behalf of “myself and my sisters and appealing to Hayes’ “sympathetic nature toward those of your sex.”³⁴⁶ Elizabeth Roundy had now picked up her pen in her own defense.

Family tradition holds that Roundy spurred Mormon women’s first collective petition on their own behalf, an 1876 memorial calling for Utah statehood and to repeal the 1862 Morrill

³⁴² Davis, Memorial, 1870.

³⁴³ Elizabeth J. Roundy statement, 1912 October 30, MS 4719 2, CHL. A copy of the letter Davis (later Roundy) sent to Bates was donated to the CHL in 1912 along with her statement.

³⁴⁴ Elizabeth Davis, letter to George C. Bates, January 8, 1872, in Elizabeth J. Roundy statement, 1912 October 30, MS 4719 2, CHL.

³⁴⁵ Elizabeth J. Roundy statement, 1912 October 30, MS 4719 3, CHL.

³⁴⁶ The letter was dated a little over a month before Roundy entered into her own plural marriage. Elizabeth Davis, letter to Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes, December 9, 1878, in Elizabeth J. Roundy statement, 1912 October 30, MS 4719 3, CHL.

Anti-Bigamy Act. Roundy had become close to general Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow, and according to family records, she suggested the idea of petitioning to Snow, then traveled with her to fifty-four Relief Societies to gather signatures.³⁴⁷ This first petition laid the groundwork for many others that would follow to protest proposals for their disenfranchisement.

Roundy remained politically engaged all her life. After Utah became a state, she entered Democratic politics, serving as president of the Women’s Democratic Club of Utah in 1904 and 1905 and vice president for Utah for the Women’s Democratic League until her death in 1916.³⁴⁸ Her increasing political engagement—first petitioning on others’ behalf, then speaking for her own interests—reflects the path many Mormon women followed as their Relief Society networks and growing political experience took them into the public square again and again throughout the 1870s and 80s.

Collective political action shaped Mormon women’s evolving understanding of their place in American society. As Mormon women faced down their critics over the next two decades, they employed and adapted established patterns of political protest, through petitions and indignation meetings, that buttressed their claims to credibility and respectability. At a time

³⁴⁷ “History of Elizabeth Jefford Drake,” compiled by Laura Rockwood Stephens, a granddaughter, FamilySearch. There is no mention of this petition’s circulation in the *Exponent* or other Utah papers, but *Exponent* articles do show that Roundy visited dozens of Relief Society meetings in late 1875 along with Snow, and that she encouraged sisters to help represent Utah well at the upcoming U.S. Centennial. “R.S. Reports,” *Woman’s Exponent* 4, no. 15 (January 1, 1876): 114. The statehood petition could have also been a subject at these meetings. Also, Elizabeth Davis’ signature was second after Eliza R. Snow’s on an 1876 petition asking Utah Governor S. B. Axtell to release Brigham Young from his imprisonment for contempt of court. This indicates that she was likely instrumental in drafting and circulating this petition as well. See Petition from the Ladies of Utah, 1876 March 11, MS 4956, CHL.

³⁴⁸ “Death Closes the Career of Mrs. Elizabeth Roundy,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 31, 1916, p. 10. Roundy wrote to President Woodrow Wilson after his 1912 election and 1913 inauguration, as corresponding secretary of the Woman’s Democratic Club, to invite him to visit Utah (she did not mention the suffrage march preceding his inauguration in her 1913 letter). See Draft of letter from E. J. D. Roundy, November 10, 1912, to Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President Elect of the United States, and Draft of letter from E. J. D. Roundy, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 5, 1913, to His Excellency and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, both in Elizabeth J. Drake Roundy papers, 1860–1913, MS16981, CHL.

when very few American women could legally cast ballots, Mormon women pointed to the social and political liberties they enjoyed in Utah as a way to underscore the “high-handed oppression” of far-off federal lawmakers.³⁴⁹

In their first years as voters, Mormon women realized that Utah statehood promised the best chance to protect both their marriages and their voting rights. So, in January 1876, California Senator Sargent and Utah territorial delegate George Q. Cannon introduced a petition to both houses of Congress from over 26,000 Utah women asking for Utah’s admission as a state and the repeal of anti-polygamy legislation.³⁵⁰ Thanks to the large number of signatures and the petition’s bulk—the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that it was 351 feet long—they attracted considerable attention in the press.³⁵¹ Moved by “consideration of those equal rights so long the proud boast of American citizens,” the petitioners asked for relief from laws and federally-appointed officials that they claimed unjustly interfered with their religious practice. They also asked for married women to have homestead rights.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Memorial of the Mormon Women, 2.

³⁵⁰ This was Mormons’ fourth attempt for statehood in Utah, following efforts in 1849–50, 1856, and 1862. Senator Sargent was a suffragist—he would introduce a resolution to the Senate in January 1878 that eventually became the Nineteenth Amendment. Emmeline B. Wells had copied these memorials for women to circulate in November 1875. Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 12 November 1875, *The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells*, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 3 February 2021, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/1870s/1875/1875-11>.

³⁵¹ “Washington: That Polygamous Petition,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 16, 1876, p. 4.

³⁵² “The Petition of the Women of Utah,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 18, 1876, p. 2. Also “A Petition of 22,626 Women of Utah: Asking for the Repeal of Certain Laws, the Enactment of Others, and the Admission of the Territory of Utah As a State,” January 13, 1876, (Washington: G.P.O.: United States Congress, House, Committee on the Judiciary, 1876), F826 U656 1876, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Backlash

Opponents reacted quickly as the House and Senate Committees on Territories received the petitions. Women from Utah's Liberal Party submitted a counter petition to Congress, and a delegation of Utah anti-polygamists met with President Ulysses S. Grant just weeks later to lobby against polygamy and argue the dangers of woman suffrage in the territory.³⁵³ The *Salt Lake Tribune* disparaged Mormon women's petition by drawing upon the now customary accusations opponents leveled at their political activity. Like anti-polygamists and anti-suffragists in Utah and throughout the nation, the paper argued that Mormon women's political activism was deceitful, unladylike, and controlled by Mormon men.

The *Tribune* reported Utah anti-polygamists' claims that "The petition for the admission of Utah...is a fraud," and "the purpose of the petition is known only to Brigham Young and his slaves."³⁵⁴ The paper also charged that "female roosters" (women trying to be men) had circulated their petition for statehood in one town under the pretense that it was for reduced railroad fare to the U.S. centennial celebration in Philadelphia. The paper claimed that "fifteen or twenty" women had been "induced to sign the dirty thing on this false representation," and that it would soon publish affidavits exposing the women who had "perpetrat[ed] this nefarious swindle upon their sisters."³⁵⁵ None were printed.

It is impossible to know if Mormon women made false claims while circulating petitions, but when the *Tribune* derided female petitioners as Brigham Young's "slaves" and "female roosters," its language characterized the attacks nineteenth (and twentieth and twenty-first)-

³⁵³ "Utah Gentiles Interview the President on the Polygamy Question," *Eureka Daily Sentinel* (Eureka, NV), January 30, 1876, p. 2; "Woman Suffrage in Utah," *Woman's Exponent* 4, no. 13 (February 15, 1876): 139.

³⁵⁴ "Branding the Petition," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 9, 1876, p. 4.

³⁵⁵ "The Female Roosters," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 15, 1876, p. 4.

century American women faced when they stepped onto the political stage. Unable or unwilling to conceive of women as legitimate political actors, detractors labeled politically active women in one of two ways. Either they were the pawns of men incapable of thinking on their own, or they were dangerous women transgressing the natural order of things by daring to behave like men.³⁵⁶

Mormon women had anticipated these charges and appended a statement to their petition: “Not one of the 22,626 signatures to this memorial has been obtained either by enticement or coercion, and none under twelve years of age have been permitted to sign.”³⁵⁷ Perhaps this actually provided fodder for assertions that children had signed the petition, but it showed Mormon women’s political antennae at work. They knew the critique their actions would provoke and responded to it in advance.

Discussing the petition, opponents voiced another charge against voting Mormon women that had been raised since 1870: They were neither U.S. citizens nor fit for American citizenship.³⁵⁸ The *Tribune* noted: “We may perhaps congratulate ourselves that these [petitioners] are not American women; we must excuse them when we reflect that these females have been gathered from the ignorant masses of Europe.”³⁵⁹ One article claimed that the petition

³⁵⁶ “That Fraudulent Petition,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 13, 1876, p. 4; “That Women’s Memorial,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 26, 1876, p. 2 (reprint from the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*).

³⁵⁷ “Local News,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 21, 1876, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ The Liberal Party commonly charged that foreign-born aliens swelled the ranks of Mormon voters, but Utah’s 1870 suffrage law declared that widows, wives, and daughters of native or naturalized U.S. citizens could vote. This meant that most foreign-born polygamous wives of U.S. citizens could vote, as their marriages were recognized by Utah law. Chapters in Spencer W. McBride, Brent M. Rogers, and Keith A. Erekson, eds., *Contingent Citizens: Shifting Perceptions of Latter-day Saints in American Political Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020) show how the U.S. government considered nineteenth-century Mormons as not true citizens but capable of becoming such. But none of the authors explores perceptions of Mormon women in particular.

³⁵⁹ “Mormon Women,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 16, 1896, p. 3.

had been signed by “Mormon women, children and unwashed Indians.” Another described petitioners as “ignorant and deluded women who drudge within the harem confines of the Mormon outlaws.”³⁶⁰ Such descriptions built on existing tropes of Mormons as foreigners and lumped Mormon women together with other undesirable categories.³⁶¹ With these claims levied against them, it is no surprise that Mormon women’s petitions always emphasized that a majority of them were native-born citizens.

Criticisms of politically active Mormon women as ignorant, unladylike, dupes of male church leaders, and foreigners foreshadowed the contours suffrage debates would follow over the next half century. Disagreements over the Fifteenth Amendment’s extension of the franchise to black men had recently split the suffrage movement and dredged up discussions of the “educated” vote. NWSA arguments against extending suffrage to black men before white women were unapologetically racist and from 1870 onward, NWSA leaders argued that (white) women’s intelligent votes could cancel out the improper votes of Black men and immigrants. But some anti-suffragists adopted the opposite line of reasoning: that women would not vote for themselves, but as their husbands directed. This echoed arguments first levied against voting Mormon women. In the 1870s and 1880s, lawmakers, reformers, and political opponents blasted

³⁶⁰ “That Polygamy Petition,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 18, 1876, p. 2. Paul Reeve’s work on the racialization of Mormons and their subsequent struggle for whiteness explains some of the ways Americans “othered” Mormons. He writes that “Mormons were conflated with nearly every other “problem” group in the nineteenth century—blacks, Indians, immigrants, and Chinese—as a way to color them less white by association... Outsiders were convinced that Mormonism represented a racial—not merely religious—departure from the mainstream.” See Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 3–4.

³⁶¹ See Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, and Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852–1890* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

voting Mormon women as uneducated, unlawful, and controlled by their husbands. Many of these arguments would later be deployed against woman suffrage on a broader scale.³⁶²

In July 1877, the new *Woman's Exponent* editor Emmeline B. Wells wrote to *The Ballot Box*, the newspaper of the Toledo Woman Suffrage Association, who had petitioned in defense of Utah suffrage a few years earlier. Wells was a Massachusetts-born writer and women's advocate who converted to Mormonism at fourteen, gathered with the Saints in Nauvoo, and crossed the plains to Utah while pregnant. She was now in her third marriage as the sixth wife of Daniel Wells, an Apostle and former mayor of Salt Lake City. Wells declared Utah women's "ardent" desire "to be one with the women of America in this grand movement," and volunteered their help to petition for a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage.³⁶³ By the end of the year, Utahns were circulating the NWSA-sponsored petition for a Sixteenth Amendment in the territory.³⁶⁴

This petition effort marked Mormon suffragists' first public foray into the broader national movement for voting rights. Salt Lake City Relief Society leaders met in the *Exponent* office to make plans for canvassing the entire territory, and the campaign was an unqualified success.³⁶⁵ Utah sent in almost seven thousand signatures, more than anywhere else in the

³⁶² Suffragists themselves would use these arguments against foreign and uneducated male voters all the way through 1920. In the wake of rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the 1890s and early twentieth century, suffragists from both the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman's Party tried to argue (with varying degrees of success) that expanding woman suffrage would mitigate the damage done by uneducated, foreign-born men at the ballot box. Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920* (New York: Norton, 1965).

³⁶³ Emmeline B. Wells, "Convention Letters," *The Ballot Box* 2, no. 4 (July 1877): 1. Wells' letter to the paper may indicate that Mormon women were aware of Toledo suffragists' previous support for their voting rights.

³⁶⁴ "Female Suffrage," *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, December 15, 1877, p. 3; "Petition for Woman Suffrage," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, December 19, 1877, p. 3.

³⁶⁵ "Woman Suffrage and the Coming Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 14 (December 15, 1877): 108.

nation.³⁶⁶ Working for a federal suffrage amendment was one way to protect Utah women's voting rights as they came under attack, but it also helped build bridges to national women's rights leaders, who were impressed by Utahns' zeal. The NWSA appointed Wells to its Advisory Committee, beginning a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Mormon suffragists.³⁶⁷

Wells instigated the petition campaign and coordinated efforts from the *Exponent* office, but the Relief Society organization made it possible. In a regional Relief Society meeting in Salt Lake, Eliza R. Snow urged women to gather signatures on the NWSA's petition and spoke of the "heroism of the ladies engaged in this movement in the East, and the sisterly feeling they had manifested" toward Utah women.³⁶⁸ Utahns' efforts proved a success: their petitions contained more signatures than any other territory or state, and Wells was appointed to the NWSA advisory board.³⁶⁹ Spencer wrote Wells to thank her for this support and "expressed sincere friendship for [her] and for [her] people."³⁷⁰

Centerpiece of the Suffrage Debate

These budding relationships with national suffrage leaders would prove crucial, as Utah was "the centerpiece of the woman's rights campaign and the debate over woman suffrage" for nearly two decades.³⁷¹ After their successful national debut, Mormon women dived almost

³⁶⁶ "Petitions," *Ballot Box* 2 (March 1878): 3; "Sixteenth Amendment Workers," *Ballot Box* 3 (April 1878): 2.

³⁶⁷ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 156.

³⁶⁸ "R.S. Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 15 (January 1, 1878): 115. Snow made similar remarks at other meetings, such as one reported in "Home Affairs," *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 15 (January 1, 1878): 117.

³⁶⁹ "Petitions," *Ballot Box* 2 (March 1878): 3; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 156.

³⁷⁰ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 15 February 1878.

³⁷¹ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 134.

immediately into another petition campaign for a matter hitting closer to home. Even as Eliza R. Snow spoke in support of Sixteenth Amendment petitions in Relief Society meetings, she also warned against yet another anti-polygamy bill in Congress that proposed the repeal of woman suffrage in Utah.³⁷² With Snow's encouragement, Wells found herself getting up a petition against this legislation..³⁷³ She spent much of the next month copying out petitions for "people from the country" and callers who wanted to circulate them, as well as preparing the pages that came back full of signatures ("some of them are fearfully dirty and written on both sides.")³⁷⁴ In February, she carefully rolled them up and sent them express to Utah's territorial delegate George Q. Cannon in Washington, D.C., along with a request to present the petition in the House of Representatives.³⁷⁵ Cannon did so the next month.³⁷⁶

Protesting the Christiancy-Luttrell bill, thousands of memorialists from across the Utah Territory reminded Congress that they cherished the principles of equal rights, justice, and liberty that their ancestors had fought for in the Revolution. As "descendants of these patriotic men" and "daughters of our noble Sires," they countered opponents' claims that politically active Mormon women were poor, ignorant immigrants who did not understand American values and

³⁷² "R.S. Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 15 (January 1, 1878): 115.

³⁷³ Blanche Beechwood (pseudonym for Emmeline B. Wells), *Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 15 (January 1, 1878): 113.

³⁷⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 9, 23 January 1878. Also see 2, 7, 18, 24, 26 January 1878.

³⁷⁵ Wells, *Diary*, 4 February 1878. It does not appear that women coordinated this campaign with Mormon church or political leaders, since Wells wondered in her diary "how Br. Cannon will receive [the petitions]."

³⁷⁶ The bill did not end up passing either house of Congress.

had no place in politics.³⁷⁷ Instead, they defended their right to the franchise based on their positive record.

Petitioners opened with their “imperative duty to plead in self-defense” against the bill’s proposal to disenfranchise them. They refuted the argument that they were simply surrogates for male Mormon leaders, declaring: “[W]e have exercised the ballot with our own free will and choice, having fully demonstrated that honorable women command as much respect at the polls, as in the drawing-room, the parlor, and the Church; and also, that the presence of woman there, as elsewhere, has a moral and elevating influence.”³⁷⁸ Mormon women were responsible and independent political actors, they argued, rather than blindly voting as church leaders bid them. Contrary to anti-polygamists’ claims, voting did not degrade women, but rather uplifted their society. Mormon women’s appeal was calculated to highlight their piety, purity, and domesticity—most of the qualities of “true womanhood,” as identified by Barbara Welter.³⁷⁹ But they contravened the fourth element, submission, by insisting that they voted independently of their husbands. Even as they claimed respectability, they still transgressed social boundaries.

In their petition, Mormon women also requested that Congress fulfill its duty to “protect the rights and liberties of the law-abiding citizens of these United States and Territories.”³⁸⁰ They now included themselves under that term, signifying a crucial shift in their political identity.

When Mormon women had published their indignation meeting proceedings in January 1870,

³⁷⁷ Memorial of Women of Utah Against Passage of the Christiancy or Luttrell Bill, Which Would Disenfranchise Them, February 2, 1878 (received March 4, 1878); Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Territories during the 45th Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; RG 233, NAB.

³⁷⁸ Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

³⁷⁹ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151–74.

³⁸⁰ Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

they called themselves the “Ladies of Salt Lake City,” and the “daughters of American citizens.”³⁸¹ Now, less than a decade later, they described themselves as citizens in their own right. Although Mormon women did not yet have equal political rights—they could not hold public office, for example—their voting, protesting, and petitioning over the past eight years was helping them to envision political equality. Responding to the threat of disenfranchisement, they asserted that their political liberties as citizens were inviolable.

Focusing solely on suffrage in this petition, Mormon women shifted away from the moralizing and appeals for religious liberty that they often used to defend polygamy. Instead, they called for legal justice and equal political rights to protect their right to vote. Petitioners appealed to the forward march of expanding rights and urged lawmakers not to disenfranchise forty thousand legal voters in a backward step in the nation’s progress.³⁸² Finally, appealing to their own contributions to the nation, petitioners asked Congress to recognize that women who had “encountered every conceivable hardship and privation in opening up an oasis in the American Desert” alongside their husbands, sons, and fathers deserved the same political privileges as their men.³⁸³ Thousands of women signed this petition, their names appearing next to sister-wives, mothers, and sisters-in-law in long columns underneath the signature of Eliza R. Snow.

³⁸¹ Proceedings in Mass Meeting, January 14, 1870.

³⁸² Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

³⁸³ Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah

The petition against the Christiancy bill was impressive, but the most widespread, and arguably most successful, petition campaign involving Mormon women was the one waged against them by the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah. In November 1878, about two hundred women met at Salt Lake City's Congregational Church in Independence Hall to defend Caroline Owens. She had immigrated from England to marry a Mormon missionary, but discovered that he was engaged to two other women as well and fled her hours-old marriage. In the midst of this scandal, prominent non-Mormon women called for a mass meeting "to consider the means of extirpating the sin and shame of polygamy."³⁸⁴

The meeting was led by Sarah Cooke and Jennie Froiseth, both prominent anti-polygamists who had petitioned Congress against admitting Utah as a state in 1872 because they believed federal oversight would be necessary to end polygamy.³⁸⁵ Cooke and Froiseth read several documents they had prepared—a letter to First Lady Lucy Hayes, a petition asking Congress to "enact such legislation as will make effective the anti-polygamy law of 1862," and a circular letter to U.S. clergy.³⁸⁶ They announced plans to circulate the petition to "every minister in the United States," and attendees nominated a committee of thirteen women to oversee its distribution. Then they formally organized a society.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ "The Owen-Miles Case," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 5, 1878, p. 2; "A Romance Spoiled," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 5, 1878, p. 2; "The Women Aroused," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 6, 1878, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ Petition of residents of Utah Territory, praying that the protection of the general government may not be withdrawn from them by the admission of that territory as a state, 1872; Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Territories during the 42nd Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1844–1946; RG 46, NAB.

³⁸⁶ "Anti-Polygamy Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 12 (November 15, 1878): 93.

³⁸⁷ "Anti-Polygamy," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 8, 1878, p. 3; "Anti-Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 8, 1878, p. 4.

The Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah represented perhaps the biggest threat to Mormon women's plural marriages. Approximately 30,000 copies of the Society's letter to the clergy were distributed throughout the nation, garnering 250,000 women's support.³⁸⁸ Their petitions began flooding into Congress from towns and cities in every corner of America, from Oregon to Ohio and California to Maine.³⁸⁹ Each petition had the same text, as circulated by the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society. They read: "To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled: We, the undersigned, women of _____, pray your Honorable Body to enact such legislation as will make effective the anti-polygamy law of 1862." Christian women were eager to sign; many petitions had signatures covering both sides of the page and extra pieces of paper pasted to the bottom. This deluge of anti-polygamy petitions surely influenced lawmakers' sense that the nation's reformers and public sentiment called for decisive action against polygamy.

Although the Anti-Polygamy Society did not originally call for Utah women's disfranchisement, its vice president, Jennie A. Froiseth, soon became the most vocal opponent of woman suffrage in Utah. Froiseth had come to Utah in 1870 with her brother and stayed when

³⁸⁸ Kathryn L. MacKay, "Women in Politics," in *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher, eds., (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 373.

³⁸⁹ Congress was not prepared for the deluge of petitions on the issue; because no House of Representatives committee had asserted jurisdiction, petitions were referred to both its Committee on the Judiciary and Committee on Territories. In the Senate, petitions were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. Enactment of Legislation to Enforce the Anti-Polygamy Law of 1862; Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Territories during the 45th Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1825–1946; RG 233; NAB; Enforcement of the Anti-Polygamy Law of 1862; Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary during the 45th Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; RG 233, NAB; Enforcement of Anti-Polygamy Law of 1862; Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary during the 45th Congress; Committee Papers, 1816–2011; RG 46; NAB. Petitions on the subject continued to be referred to the House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary when the 46th Congress began on March 4, 1879. See Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary during the 46th Congress; Petitions and Memorials, 1813–1968; RG 233; NAB.

she married a respected surveyor and Civil War veteran. A well-educated woman who had traveled in Europe and counted Julia Ward Howe as a friend, Froiseth started an exclusive literary club called the Blue Tea in 1875 to create social opportunities for non-Mormon women.³⁹⁰ Although herself an ardent suffragist and member of the National Woman Suffrage Association, Froiseth was even more committed to ending polygamy, and she believed that Mormon women's votes only propped up the system.³⁹¹

In April 1880, Froiseth began publishing the *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, a monthly newspaper with I Corinthians 7:2 as its motto—"Let every Man have his own Wife, and Let every Woman have her own Husband." In the first issue, she explained that the paper would further the mission of the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society to "fight to the death that system which so enslaves and degrades our sex."³⁹² The *Standard* often commented on the matter of woman suffrage in Utah during its three-year run. In June 1880, it countered Emmeline B. Wells' letter in the *National Citizen and Ballot Box* on the positive effect of Utah women's suffrage. Instead, Froiseth argued:

The only effect that the franchise has had in this Territory, has been to increase the spread of polygamy and the consequent degradation of woman, to make them, if possible, greater slaves than before... Suffrage, as it exists in Utah, is an entirely different matter from what the suffragists in the East are working for... There it represents a principle, here it was established to place greater power in the hands of the men.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Patricia Lyn Scott, "Jennie Anderson Froiseth and the Blue Tea," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 20–35.

³⁹¹ Froiseth attended the NWSA annual convention in Washington, D.C. in 1884 and held the position of Vice-President for Utah from at least 1884 until 1888. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, eds., National Woman Suffrage Association, *Report of the Sixteenth Annual Washington Convention, March 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th, 1884: With Reports of the Forty-Eighth Congress* (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1884), 141, LOC.

³⁹² "Salutatory," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, p. 4.

³⁹³ "Polygamy and Woman Suffrage," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, p. 4.

Froiseth continued to oppose statehood out of concern that greater local self-government would allow polygamy to flourish. She supported congressional legislation to shrink the franchise in Utah and even spoke out against NSWA-affiliated suffragists who seemed sympathetic to Mormon women.³⁹⁴

The Anti-Polygamy Society published an “Open Letter to Suffragists” in early 1882, seeking to deflect NWSA criticism for its opposition to suffrage in Utah. The Society claimed that while the ballot might elevate women elsewhere, it meant something else “in the hands of unlettered foreigners who have never known or never will know the value of political and religious liberty, and whose only claim to citizenship rests on being third or fourth wife of a Mormon Elder.”³⁹⁵ Echoing the frequent claims of the *Salt Lake Tribune* and Utah’s Liberal Party, the *Standard* cast aspersions on Mormon women as ignorant foreigners controlled by their husbands. Froiseth continued to appeal to these nativist and racist arguments, and to voice her conviction that suffrage in the hands of oppressed Mormon women only aided their oppressors.

Leading Mormon women were concerned when the Anti-Polygamy Society formed in 1878, and they called for an indignation meeting of their own in the Salt Lake Theatre to oppose this new threat.³⁹⁶ Following the successful pattern of their 1870 meetings, the only men admitted to the theatre were reporters.³⁹⁷ Eliza R. Snow opened the meeting, where speakers

³⁹⁴ “Polygamy and Woman Suffrage.”

³⁹⁵ “Open Letter to the Suffragists of the United States,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, March 1882, p. 1, M209.05 A633 v. 1–3 1880–1883; CHL.

³⁹⁶ “Home Affairs,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 12 (November 15, 1878): 92; “A Mass Meeting,” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, November 14, 1878, p. 3. The call came not from Relief Society president Eliza R. Snow, but from Zina D. H. Young, who would succeed Snow, seasoned leader Mary Isabella Horne, and Emmeline B. Wells. Relief Societies in other locations held their own mass meetings as well that drew large crowds; 26 women addressed the gathering in American Fork. “Ladies Mass Meeting at American Fork,” *Deseret News*, December 18, 1878, p. 13; “Home Affairs,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 13 (December 1, 1878): 100.

³⁹⁷ “Woman’s Mass Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 13 (December 1, 1878): 97.

continued their by-now familiar pattern of recounting the suffering they had endured for their faith, their efforts to build up a prosperous society in the desert, and their rights as citizens. They decried the Anti-Polygamy Society's misrepresentation of their feelings and condition and reaffirmed their belief in polygamy.

The meeting's resolutions, read by Wells' daughter Annie Wells Cannon claimed the right to practice their religion, pledged their efforts to support of a federal suffrage amendment, thanked the NWSA for bravely defending Utah women's voting rights, and promised to petition Congress to correct the Anti-Polygamy Society's falsehoods.³⁹⁸ Since the Anti-Polygamy Society had not yet made any effort to curtail suffrage in Utah, it is not surprising that Mormon speakers did not dwell on the topic at the meeting. But the emphasis on suffrage in their resolutions showed how inextricably linked the topics of polygamy and the franchise were in the minds of leading Mormon women. They did not think they could defend one without the other.

But Mormon women's political goals soon received another blow. In January 1879, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Reynolds v. United States* that the practice of polygamy was not protected by the First Amendment. This ruling upheld the constitutionality of the 1862 Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act and paved the way for further anti-polygamy legislation.³⁹⁹ In the next issue of the *Woman's Exponent*, Emmeline B. Wells wrote that the decision "occasioned considerable surprise in this community" and asked what Mormons would do about it. "What we have ever done," she answered herself, "trust in Almighty God, who rules the destinies of nations and

³⁹⁸ "Woman's Mass Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 13 (December 1, 1878): 102. Anti-polygamists charged that everyone in attendance at the indignation meeting had been forced to sign the memorial, perpetuating the narrative that Mormon women's political action was based on force and fraud rather than conviction. "Bulldozing Women," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 13, 1878, p. 1.

³⁹⁹ *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1879).

protects all who love and serve Him...we now appeal from earth to heaven, from man to man's Creator."⁴⁰⁰

“First to Represent Our Women”

The court decision came as Wells was on already her way to Washington, D. C. to lobby federal lawmakers and speak at the NWSA convention. Her invitation came from Sara Spencer, who had been appointed to “watch over the rights of the women of Utah” in 1876 and had been impressed by Utahns’ large petitions for the Sixteenth Amendment.⁴⁰¹ Spencer wrote that she hoped Utah suffragists would send representatives to Washington so others could learn from the “business ability, courage, and patriotism” of “these heroic women.”⁴⁰² Church President John Taylor and Relief Society President Zina D. H. Young decided to send Wells and Zina Young Williams, a faculty member at Brigham Young Academy and Brigham Young’s daughter.⁴⁰³

Wells and Williams received a warm welcome from NWSA leaders in Washington, D.C. Anthony and Stanton had visited Utah in 1871 but did not form lasting relationships with Mormon women at that time, as they were primarily the guests of the dissident “New Movement.”⁴⁰⁴ In the past eight years, Mormon women had proven their commitment to suffrage, even if they had disappointed Anthony and Stanton’s expectations that they would use the vote to end polygamy. Still, NWSA leaders were fiercely committed to defending the

⁴⁰⁰ *Woman’s Exponent*, 7, No. 16 (Jan. 15, 1879): 121.

⁴⁰¹ “The Suffrage Movement,” *National Republican*, January 29, 1876, p. 1.

⁴⁰² “Our Relief Societies,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 10 (October 15, 1878): 76.

⁴⁰³ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 1 January 1879.

⁴⁰⁴ “The Lecture To-Morrow Night,” *Deseret Evening News*, June 28, 1871, p. 3; “Woman Suffrage,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 1, p. 3; Susan B. Anthony, *Diary*, June 28–July 7, 1871; Susan B. Anthony Papers: Daybook and Diaries, 1856–1906; Diaries; 1871; LOC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss11049005/>.

principle of women's right to vote; they were willing to accept Mormon women's support and protest in their behalf despite personally opposing polygamy.

Honored as voting women, the Utahns were invited to join NWSA committees, ride with leaders to the opening convention session, and sit on the platform.⁴⁰⁵ They also addressed the convention, describing congressional attempts to disenfranchise them as “unjust as well as impolitic,” and appealing to fellow suffragists to help them retain the vote.⁴⁰⁶ Their unapologetic stance attracted attention, curiosity, and some jeers, but the NWSA did include a resolution protesting federal attempts to disenfranchise Utah women.⁴⁰⁷ After the convention ended, Wells and Williams joined Sara Spencer and Matilda Joslyn Gage in waiting on President Rutherford B. Hayes and the First Lady at the White House, where they presented the NWSA resolutions and the Utahns pled with him not to break up polygamous families by enforcing the Morrill Act.⁴⁰⁸ President Hayes asked them to put their request in writing, which they did.⁴⁰⁹

Wells and Williams remained in the capital for nearly a month making the same case to federal lawmakers. Sara Spencer helped facilitate meetings with Senators and Representatives,

⁴⁰⁵ “The Washington Convention,” *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 19 (March 1, 1879): 202.

⁴⁰⁶ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 9–10 January 1879; “The Utah Ladies in Washington,” *Deseret News*, January 22, 1879, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁷ “Resolutions,” *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 18 (February 15, 1879): 197; “Washington,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 18, 1879, p. 4. The *Tribune* followed its usual patterns of ridiculing Mormon women who presented their case in public. “Trotting the Utah Roosters Along,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 18, 1879, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Wells, Diary, 12–13 January 1879; Miss Grundy, “Mormon Ladies Calling at the White House,” *Philadelphia Times*, January 19, 1879, reprinted in *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 20 (March 15, 1879): 212. Gage and Spencer made sure to clarify that the NWSA supported Utah women's voting rights but not polygamy.

⁴⁰⁹ Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Williams to Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States, February 1879; Letters Received Concerning Polygamy, January 27, 1879–December 17, 1897; Interior Department Territorial Papers: Utah, 1850–1902 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M428, roll 4, Frame 0044); Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

and the Utahns testified with NWSA leaders before the House Judiciary Committee.⁴¹⁰ Wells wrote in her diary, “I felt as if we were accomplishing something.”⁴¹¹ The Utahns conferred with George Q. Cannon, built connections with other women’s advocates, and even visited with Seraph Young (now Ford), Williams’ cousin and Utah’s first voter who now lived nearby with her family.⁴¹² Through these discussions, Wells and Williams must have known they were fighting a losing battle as they prepared a petition for Congress.⁴¹³

With the constitutionality of anti-polygamy laws now established by the Supreme Court, Wells and Williams focused their petition on the harsh effects anti-polygamy laws would have on families, appealing for legislation to protect existing polygamous families from separation and illegitimacy.⁴¹⁴ Because they invited federal intervention in this case rather than opposing it, Wells and Williams rhetorically situated Mormon women squarely within the bounds of female domesticity, as defenseless women whom government was obligated to protect. In their letter to President Hayes, they adopted a similar tone of humble supplication, asking him to “extend a father’s care over an oppressed people.”⁴¹⁵

Wells and Williams’ petition reminded Congressmen that Mormons had fled to the Rocky Mountains to practice their religion unmolested and emphasized that their homes were happy, peaceful, and prosperous. They urged lawmakers not to leave women and children

⁴¹⁰ Wells, Diary, 16–21 January 1879.

⁴¹¹ Wells, Diary, 21 January 1879.

⁴¹² Wells, Diary, 16, 19 January 1879. Young’s husband, Seth Ford, was a Union army veteran who by this time had gone blind due to wartime injuries.

⁴¹³ Wells, Diary, 16–29 January 1879.

⁴¹⁴ Memorial of Emmeline B. Wells and Zina Young Williams, of Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled (Washington: [publisher not identified], 1879), M243.91 W453m 1879, CHL.

⁴¹⁵ Wells and Williams to Rutherford B. Hayes, February 1879.

unprotected by jailing their husbands and fathers. As in Mormon women's earlier petitions, Wells and Williams emphasized their loyalty to the United States and the fact that most of them were native-born citizens. They hoped Congress would "consider the rights, the hearts, and the consciences of the women to be affected" by any legislation and preserve their existing families.⁴¹⁶

Wells thanked God she "was the first to represent our women in the Halls of Congress," but hers and Williams' attendance at the NWSA and lobbying in the nation's capital exacerbated tensions between the two rival suffrage organizations.⁴¹⁷ The AWSA believed Mormon women's participation in the suffrage movement would damage its respectability. Its newspaper, *The Woman's Journal*, criticized the NWSA for "any appearance of affiliation" with polygamists.⁴¹⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton responded: "I should think Mormon women might sit on our platform without making us responsible for their religious faith...When the women of a whole territory are threatened with disfranchisement where should they go...but to the platform of the National Suffrage Association?"⁴¹⁹ The NWSA was willing to work with anyone who supported women's right to vote, and the organization continued to defend Mormon women's voting rights over the next decade. But as the anti-polygamy crusade grew stronger, leaders like Anthony tried to strike

⁴¹⁶ Memorial of Wells and Williams, 4.

⁴¹⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 20 February 1879.

⁴¹⁸ Amanda E. Dickinson, "Polygamy Degrades Womanhood," *Woman's Journal* 10, no. 13 (March 29, 1879): 97.

⁴¹⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Brand of the Slave," *National Citizen and Ballot Box*, May 1879.

a careful balance to avoid any appearance of defending polygamy.⁴²⁰ Mormons' participation in national suffrage organizations would remain controversial for decades to come.

After Wells returned to Utah, she focused on trying to expand women's political rights at home. She and Sarah M. Kimball lobbied territorial Governor George Emery to support a bill allowing women to hold public office, as Wyoming did, but he was unmoved.⁴²¹ The next year, Wells tried again, leading women in petitioning the Utah legislature for the first time. She asked Mormon Apostle and legislator Charles W. Penrose to introduce a petition from her, Kimball, Snow, and others. The petitioners wrote that Utah women had voted for nine years and were "somewhat familiar with the needs and operations of government," so they asked the legislature to remove this last obstacle to their political freedom.⁴²² In contrast to earlier petitions to federal lawmakers, where Mormon women confidently asserted the inviolable rights they already had under local law, this petition was more deferential, framed in a spirit of cooperation and gratitude.

The issue was controversial among Utahns, but Wells was optimistic, editorializing that "Agitation is Educational."⁴²³ When the legislature did pass a bill allowing women to hold public office, however, Utah's new governor refused to sign it into law. The defeat was disappointing,

⁴²⁰ Joan Smyth Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in the U.S. Women's Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland Press, 1997); Iversen, "The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship: Personal and Political Quandaries," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (1990): 8–16.

⁴²¹ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 186. Wells had been nominated for county treasurer by the (Mormon) People's Party in 1878 but was unable to accept because territorial law did not allow her to hold public office.

⁴²² "The Legislature," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 16 (January 15, 1880): 125. 14 other Salt Lake City women signed Wells' petition and 383 women from Beaver County sent a separate petition to the legislature. "Petition of Citizens of Beaver and Other Places," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 17 (February 1, 1880): 130.

⁴²³ "Agitation is Educational," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 17 (March 1, 1880): 147. Some politicians opposed the bill on its merits, and others feared that passing it might give Congress even more reason to repeal Utah's woman suffrage law. Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 187–9.

but it did not prevent Wells and others from continuing their active role in local politics. Wells, Sarah M. Kimball, and Elizabeth Howard served as delegates to Utah's fifth constitutional convention in 1882.⁴²⁴ Additionally, women participated in primary elections as they had since enfranchisement, serving on committees to select city and county candidates.⁴²⁵

“The Outrages of Which They Complain—The Justice They Demand”

But opponents continued to challenge suffrage in Utah. In the fall of 1880, the Liberal Party sought to remove all women from the voter rolls in Ogden and Salt Lake City.⁴²⁶ The lawsuits claimed that because the qualifications for women voters differed from those for men, the 1870 suffrage law was invalid. Utah suffragists were outraged, writing indignant letters to the *Exponent* and packing into the courtroom for the hearings.⁴²⁷ Although the case was dismissed, suffrage papers across the country pointed to it as yet another example of the need to secure a federal suffrage amendment.⁴²⁸ Legislatively-granted suffrage was fragile, especially in a territory, and suffragists nationwide learned from the backlash that Wyoming, Utah, and later, Washington territories, faced after passing suffrage laws.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ “Constitutional Convention,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 13, 1882, p. 16. Women had also served as precinct delegates in at least Beaver County to choose delegates to the convention. “People’s Caucus,” *Southern Utonian*, March 25, 1882, p. 3.

⁴²⁵ “Primary Election Meeting,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 4, 1872, p. 2.

⁴²⁶ “Female Franchise,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 2, 1880, p. 3; “Local News,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 2, 1880, p. 2; “The Decision,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 2, 1880, p. 2.

⁴²⁷ “Woman’s Right to Vote in Utah Contested,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9, (October 1, 188): 68–9; M. Isabella Horne, “Pertinent Question,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (October 1, 1889): 69.

⁴²⁸ “Attack Upon Vested Rights,” *National Citizen and Ballot Box* 5 (October 1880): 2; “The Coming Election,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (November 1, 1880): 84.

⁴²⁹ Wyoming’s legislature attempted to repeal woman suffrage just one year after passing its law in 1869. Washington Territory passed woman suffrage in 1883, but the territory’s Supreme Court overturned the law on a technicality in 1887. DuBois, *Suffrage*, 123–4.

Momentum grew in Congress for further anti-polygamy legislation. The Anti-Polygamy Society kept pressure up and Republican Senator George Edmunds of Vermont introduced a bill to reinforce the 1862 Anti-Bigamy Act by making “unlawful cohabitation” illegal and preventing polygamists from voting, holding office, or serving on juries. It would also compel polygamous wives to testify against their husbands. Mormon women sensed imminent danger and sent three prominent and articulate women—Drs. Ellen Ferguson and Romania Pratt, and Relief Society leader Zina D. H. Young—to attend state suffrage conventions in the East and debunk accusations of antipolygamy lecturers. The trip did not go as they hoped, and the emissaries were denied a platform at some of the conventions.⁴³⁰

It seemed that public sentiment had never been so firmly against the Mormons; Utah congressional delegate George Q. Cannon counted three anti-polygamy bills in the U.S. Senate and nine in the House of Representatives in December 1881.⁴³¹ But, as Emmeline B. Wells reminded *Exponent* readers, “There is one right which cannot be denied, even to Mormons, the right to petition Congress.”⁴³² As residents of a territory and members of a widely detested faith, Mormon women had little real power in the United States. They could not vote for President or a voting member of Congress, and their cause was highly unpopular, picking a fight against the anti-polygamy Christian coalition. But Mormons could still petition, and that’s what Wells wanted them to do.

⁴³⁰ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 193–6; “Woman’s Suffrage Convention: State of New York,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10, no. (February 15, 1882): 143; “Woman’s Suffrage Convention: State of New York,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10, no. (March 1, 1882): 146.

⁴³¹ George Q. Cannon, Journal, 20 December 1881, The Journal of George Q. Cannon, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 29 January 2021, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1881/12-1881>.

⁴³² “A Plea for Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10, no. 13 (December 1, 1881): 100.

Unlike their efforts to protest previous bills, Wells and Relief Society leaders did not hold an indignation meeting against the Edmunds bill, but instead planned a petition in close coordination with male church leaders and politicians. This difference may have stemmed from the urgency and nature of this threat. Anti-polygamy legislation was all but sure to pass, and it proposed disenfranchising *all* polygamists to undercut Mormons' political power and sidestep criticisms that anti-polygamy laws unfairly targeted women.

When she and Relief Society president Eliza R. Snow visited Church president John Taylor at the end of December, Wells “found him very anxious to have a memorial to Congress from the women of Utah.”⁴³³ They telegraphed congressional delegate Cannon to ask if he thought Zina Young and Dr. Ferguson should extend their tour to attend the NWSA convention in D.C., but neither Cannon nor the sympathetic suffragists he asked felt this would be advisable. “If they came they would be muzzled and slighted,” Cannon heard from one of Wells’ friends in the capital.⁴³⁴

In further consultation with Taylor and several Apostles, Wells wrote two petitions circulated for signatures among the church, one for women and one for young ladies.⁴³⁵ She printed the text of both in the *Exponent*.⁴³⁶ The women’s petition followed the usual pattern, recounting their hardships in settling Utah and warning that anti-polygamy legislation would destroy their peace and prosperity. They testified that they had happy marriages and “enjoy[ed]

⁴³³ Wells, Diary, 30 December 1881.

⁴³⁴ George Q. Cannon, Journal, 31 December 1881, The Journal of George Q. Cannon, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 29 January 2021, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1881/12-1881>.

⁴³⁵ Wells, Diary, 18–21 February 1882.

⁴³⁶ “Memorials to Congress,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10, no. 19 (March 1, 1882): 149. This petition was not preserved in the National Archives, but Mormon women printed it themselves in Salt Lake City. Memorial to Congress: to the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled ([Salt Lake City]: [publisher not identified], 1882), M243.3 M5335 1882?, CHL.

more rights and freedom than women elsewhere in the nation.”⁴³⁷ That was standard, but what followed was not: memorialists charged that advocates of anti-polygamy legislation were “sectarian priests and political demagogues, and...women who are the tools of wicked and designing men.”⁴³⁸ By levying these accusations, Wells and her fellow petitioners turned the arguments often used against them onto their opponents, ironically reinforcing the common claims that politically active women were simply men’s dupes.

The young ladies’ petition took a different tone. Reminiscent of Wells and Williams’ 1879 letter to President Hayes, it focused on the family upheaval that would ensue from further anti-polygamy legislation. This petition protested Congress’ plan to strip polygamists of citizenship rights and, like the other, urged Congress to send a commission to investigate Utah in person.⁴³⁹ Together, the two petitions garnered nearly 26,000 signatures, with about 15,000 from women and almost 11,000 from young ladies. George Q. Cannon had the petitions introduced to the House of Representatives, along with similar petitions from Mormon men and young men, but there were many more petitions on the opposite side and the Edmunds Act passed handily.⁴⁴⁰

This new law dealt a heavy blow to Mormons’ way of life and political power in Utah. It ushered in an era of prosecution for polygamous men, disenfranchised polygamous women and men, and established a five-man Utah Commission to oversee elections in the Territory. The Commission instituted a registration oath for the 1882 elections, requiring both female and male

⁴³⁷ Wyoming was still the only place outside of Utah where women had full suffrage rights. “Memorials to Congress,” 149.

⁴³⁸ “Memorials to Congress,” 149.

⁴³⁹ Memorials to Congress,” 149.

⁴⁴⁰ George Q. Cannon, Journal, 9 March 1882, *The Journal of George Q. Cannon*, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 29 January 2021, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1882/03-1882>. Cannon could not actually introduce the petitions himself because there was currently a dispute in the House over his election and credentials, with many members opposed to seating him as a polygamist.

voters to swear that they had never been in a polygamous relationship.⁴⁴¹ Utahns complained that this oath went beyond the Edmunds law by disenfranchising past polygamists as well as current ones.⁴⁴²

Even as federal marshals raided homes to capture and try polygamous husbands, Mormons did not back away from polygamy.⁴⁴³ New plural marriages were still performed in secret, like that of doctor and suffragist Martha Hughes and Angus Cannon in 1884. After their marriage, Angus was imprisoned and Dr. Cannon traveled to England to avoid testifying against him and against clients whose babies she had delivered.⁴⁴⁴ One woman, Belle Harris, famously was sentenced to three and a half months in the Salt Lake County penitentiary for refusing to reveal the name of her polygamous husband in court.⁴⁴⁵ Wells visited the jail to encourage Harris, who served the sentence with her baby in her cell.⁴⁴⁶

Reformers intensified their efforts, arguing that the only way to break the church's political power and force a change was to remove all women from Utah's voter rolls. Angelina F. Newman of the Methodist Episcopal Woman's home Mission Society petitioned Congress to disenfranchise Utah women, objecting to "unnaturalized, non-taxpaying, minor females using the ballot" and repeating the claim that "Woman suffrage in Utah only means woman's suffering."⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴¹ "Registration Rules," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 25, 1882, p. 8.

⁴⁴² "Disfranchisements," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 13, p. 4.

⁴⁴³ Kimberly Jensen James, "'Between Two Fires': Women on the 'Underground' of Mormon Polygamy," *Journal of Mormon History* 8 (1981): 49–61.

⁴⁴⁴ Constance L. Lieber and John Sillitoe, eds., *Letters from Exile: The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon, 1886–1888* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

⁴⁴⁵ Daniel Tyler, "Belle Harris," *Woman's Exponent* 12, no. 1 (1 June 1883): 5.

⁴⁴⁶ Wells, Diary, 18 May 1883.

⁴⁴⁷ Angelina French Thurston Newman, *Woman Suffrage in Utah* ([Washington]: Govt. Printing Office, [1886]), 324.3 N551w, CHL.

The NWSA continued to protest such efforts, but its increasing alliance with anti-polygamy reformers in the WCTU meant Mormon women felt less welcome at conventions.⁴⁴⁸ Emmeline B. Wells was omitted from the NWSA officers' list in 1884, which listed only non-Mormon Utahns like Jennie Froiseth.⁴⁴⁹

Through it all, the first woman lawyer admitted to practice before the Supreme Court and future presidential candidate Belva Lockwood proved to be Mormon women's best and most loyal advocate.⁴⁵⁰ Lockwood had been a staunch defender of their suffrage ever since 1876, when the NWSA passed her resolution protesting attacks on Utah women's suffrage and establishing a committee to defend their voting rights.⁴⁵¹ After aiding Mormons' unsuccessful attempts to forestall the Edmunds Act, she continued to speak in defense of both Mormon women's suffrage and their right to practice polygamy. Lockwood accused Senator Edmunds of seeking to disenfranchise all Utah women in order to cut off Democratic votes and indulge his "narrow prejudice against the...Woman's Rights movement."⁴⁵² She also argued that the Utah Commission acted without authority in applying the Edmunds Act retroactively in its voter oath. Lockwood's full-throated defense of Mormons' rights could be too much even for the NWSA; after she gave a passionate speech against anti-polygamy legislation at the 1884 convention,

⁴⁴⁸ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 199–201; Iversen, *Antipolygamy Controversy*, 164.

⁴⁴⁹ National Woman Suffrage Association, *Sixteenth Annual Washington Convention*, 140–142.

⁴⁵⁰ Melinda Evans, "Belva Lockwood: The "Nerviest Woman in the United States," Who Became the Latter-day Saints' Irrepressible Advocate and Friend," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 123–49.

⁴⁵¹ "The Suffrage Movement," *National Republican*, January 29, 1876, p. 1.

⁴⁵² "The Disfranchisement of the Women of Utah," *Ogden Daily Herald*, June 9, 1883, p. 1.

Anthony reminded the audience (to applause) that the NWSA only opposed aspects of those laws that disenfranchised women.⁴⁵³

Polygamous suffragists like Emmeline B. Wells, who had already lost their voting rights, continued to fight proposals to revoke all Utah women's suffrage. Their own history had convinced them that "honorable women" had a right to a place at the polls just as they did in the home and the church.⁴⁵⁴ As Wells wrote in the *Exponent*, "[A] woman who goes to the polls and deposits a ballot, feels her political independence and that she is virtually part and parcel of the great body politic, not through her father or husband, but in her own vested right."⁴⁵⁵

Wells continued to build friendships with older, more radical NWSA suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony, May Wright Sewall, and others through correspondence, and she always sent reports and letters to be read at NWSA conventions even when she did not attend.⁴⁵⁶ She also got advice from veteran suffragist J. K. Hamilton Willcox, who had argued in favor of suffrage for Utah in the 1860s.⁴⁵⁷ Wells' relationships paid off as the NWSA rallied against efforts to repeal suffrage in Utah.⁴⁵⁸ Suffrage papers urged readers to write their Congressmen and shared the story of Indiana suffragist Zerelda Wallace writing a personal letter to each member of the House of Representatives asking them to protect Utah women's right to vote.⁴⁵⁹ The NWSA drafted

⁴⁵³ "Seeking Freedom," *The National Republican* (Washington, D.C.), March 6, 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁴ Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

⁴⁵⁵ Emmeline B. Wells, "Sweet is Liberty," *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 19 (Mar. 1, 1883): 148.

⁴⁵⁶ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 201.

⁴⁵⁷ Wells, Diary, 28 January 1886.

⁴⁵⁸ "Resolutions of the NWSA," January 27, 1887, in Ann D. Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, vol. 4 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 549.

⁴⁵⁹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, eds. Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, vol. 4, 1883–1900 (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1902), 71.

resolutions condemning Senator Edmunds' bill and Willcox asked the AWSA's *Woman's Journal* to urge suffragists to write their Representatives in the Committee on Territories against Utah women's disenfranchisement.⁴⁶⁰ But the measure continued to gain ground in Congress.

In 1886, Mormon women once again called an indignation meeting to uphold their rights as citizens and protest proposed legislation. The situation was dire. Senator Edmunds had introduced a new bill to disincorporate the LDS church, seize its property, change Utah's inheritance laws, and repeal its woman suffrage law. Thousands of women packed into the Salt Lake Theatre, where, as was the usual practice, they unanimously adopted resolutions and a memorial to the U.S. President and Congress. The committee selected to draft this petition included leading Salt Lake City women who had organized previous indignation meetings and petitions, but this time it also included others from farther-flung settlements across Utah— from Provo, Payson, and Nephi to the south and Ogden and Logan to the north.⁴⁶¹ Each woman on the committee was active in her local Relief Society, reflecting the continued strength of Relief Society networks in mobilizing and sustaining women's protests.⁴⁶²

The committee's memorial, which filled nine pages of a pamphlet published afterward, focused on due process and presented Mormon women's suffrage as a self-evident right that required federal protection from overzealous opponents who disagreed with their politics.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ "Report of Executive Sessions of the National Convention," *Woman's Tribune* 3 (April 1886): 2; Willcox's letter was reprinted in "Amend the Utah Bill," *Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 19 (March 1, 1886): 150.

⁴⁶¹ Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah to the President and the Congress of the United States: The Outrages of Which They Complain—The Justice They Demand, (Washington: [publisher not identified], April 6, 1886), p. 3, M243.3 U887m 1886 CHL.

⁴⁶² The women on the committee were Sarah M. Kimball, Elmina S. Taylor, Dr. Romania B. Pratt, and Mary Isabella Horne from Salt Lake City, Mary John of Provo, Ida Coombs of Payson, Mary Pitchforth of Nephi, "Mrs. H. C. Brown" of Ogden, and Ida I. Cook of Logan.

⁴⁶³ Memorial of the Mormon Women.

Petitioners explained that their votes were not compelled, but that they naturally chose to support their friends instead of their enemies at the polls. They complained of the indignities Mormon women suffered under the enforcement of the Edmunds Act, including fines or imprisonment when they refused to answer questions about their sexual relationships. The petition also included statements from a few women about federal marshals' invasive searches of their homes and beds, protesting against "these desecrations of our homes and invasions of our rights."⁴⁶⁴

After detailing their mistreatment at the hands of federal officials, Mormon women expressed concern that measures were underway to "further harass and distress us," including a repeal of Utah's woman suffrage law. Echoing the arguments of sympathetic Ohio suffragists in 1873, Mormon women objected to "being treated like felons" through a systematic disenfranchisement when "our only crime is that we have not voted as our persecutors dictate."⁴⁶⁵ They argued that "the suffrage originally conferred upon us as a political privilege, has become a vested right by possession and usage for fifteen years, and...we protest against being deprived of that right without process of law, and for no other reason than that we do not vote to suit our political opponents."⁴⁶⁶ Mormon women focused here on citizens' right of due process to protest against being stripped of rights for voting their consciences.

This petition was a natural culmination of Mormon women's political experience over the past sixteen years, through which they had adopted a discourse of loyal citizenship and claimed the rights of citizens as well. In their years of voting, they had come to believe in their own political power. From petitioning and protesting on behalf of others, Mormon women had gained

⁴⁶⁴ Memorial of the Mormon Women, 10.

⁴⁶⁵ Memorial of the Mormon Women, 11.

⁴⁶⁶ Memorial of the Mormon Women, 1.

the political experience and the confidence to speak publicly in their own defense. As Emmeline B. Wells wrote in a letter to be read at the 1886 indignation meeting, “it is the duty of every citizen of the United States to stand boldly forth in defense of freedom, justice, and the rights of conscience.”⁴⁶⁷ Women at the meeting that day believed they were doing exactly that.

A few weeks later, Emmeline B. Wells, Dr. Ellen B. Ferguson, Emily S. Richards, and Josephine R. West delivered a petition from this meeting in Washington, D.C. The Utahns secured an audience with President Grover Cleveland and found sympathetic suffragists to present their petitions to the House and Senate.⁴⁶⁸ In an interview with the *National Republican*, the women declared their intention to correct misinformation about the state of affairs in Utah and the maladministration of the Edmunds law. They claimed that anti-polygamists in Utah sought to disenfranchise monogamous women not to punish polygamy, but to gain control of local elected offices for themselves.⁴⁶⁹ Lawmakers heard them out but were not convinced; in fact, these petitioners were further proof of Mormon women’s dangerous political power.

Their fight against the Edmunds-Tucker Act would ultimately prove unsuccessful, but Mormon women’s political participation over the past decade and a half had made a difference. Addressing the mass meeting in 1870 when Mormon women voted to “demand the right of franchise,” Eliza R. Snow had declared, “we are not inferior to the Ladies of the World and we

⁴⁶⁷ “Letter to the Sisters at Home,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 1, 1886, 164. The NWSA continued to stand with Utahns on the matter of suffrage and reprinted the indignation meeting resolutions in its newspaper. “Mormon Women Protest,” *Woman’s Tribune* 3 (May 1886): 2.

⁴⁶⁸ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 223–4; “‘The Rotunda’—Kirtland—the Memorial,” *Woman’s Exponent* 14 (April 15, 1886): 169.

⁴⁶⁹ “‘Mormon’ Women in Washington,” *National Republican*, reprinted in *Deseret News*, May 19, 1886, p. 2. Republicans Representative John Davis Long of Massachusetts, and New Hampshire Senator Henry W. Blair, who had voted against the Edmunds Act in 1882, presented the petitions in Congress.

do not want to appear so.”⁴⁷⁰ As Mormon women engaged with their opponents on a national stage, the Relief Society had mobilized thousands in grassroots political protest. They employed established patterns of dissent through petitions and indignation meetings to enhance their claims to respectability and political rights.

Neither dupes nor foes of the patriarchy, nineteenth-century Mormon women employed a shrewd political strategy to defend their own civil rights. Petitioning was a crucible for learning and exercising their political power. They petitioned first as the “daughters of American citizens,” then as “law-abiding citizens,” and later still as Americans whose suffrage was a “vested right.”⁴⁷¹ By first acting politically to protect others, Mormon women had gained the experience, the confidence, and the authority to speak politically for themselves.

As the only substantial population of voting women in the United States, Mormon women were the first to counter anti-suffrage arguments with their own experience. Their years of voting in Utah showed that “honorable women [could] command...respect at the polls.”⁴⁷² At a time when other suffragists were arguing unsuccessfully that their citizenship should give them the right to vote, Mormon women argued the reverse—that their citizenship should protect the suffrage they already enjoyed. They could not ultimately prevent their own disenfranchisement, but they still exerted real political power.

Mormon women broke ground for women’s rights in the United States even as they engaged in two practices—polygamy and woman suffrage—that most Americans considered

⁴⁷⁰ “Minutes of a Ladies Mass Meeting,” January 6, 1870, Fifteenth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868–1968; Volume 1, 1868–1873, p. 140; LR 2848 14, CHL.

⁴⁷¹ “Proceedings in Mass Meeting, January 14, 1870; Memorial Against Christiancy Bill; Memorial of the Mormon Women, 1886, 1.

⁴⁷² Memorial Against Christiancy Bill.

laughable at best and dangerous at worst. Their experience with the vote shaped the attacks and counter-attacks that women would continue to face in the political arena. When Mormon women copied out petitions, circulated them in their local communities, and sent sheets of signatures to Salt Lake City, they entered the suffrage movement in full force. They had deepened their commitment to the equal franchise by pressuring federal lawmakers to protect their rights. Now, they would direct their powers of persuasion toward their local communities as they mobilized to regain the vote when Utah became a state.

CHAPTER 4

“THE GOSPEL OF EQUAL RIGHTS”

Utah’s municipal election season rolled around in early 1887 as the Edmunds-Tucker bill made its way through Congress. Many Utah towns held elections on February 14, shortly before the bill passed, and both women and men continued to add their names to the voter rolls.⁴⁷³ There was much excitement in the railroad town of Ogden forty miles north of Salt Lake City, where Liberals hoped to elect the first Gentile (non-Mormon) mayor. A brass band played in the streets and votes rolled in “thick and fast,” keeping election judges and challengers busy.⁴⁷⁴ The *Ogden Herald* reported that “one lady in particular who was challenged on the ground of non citizenship flabbergasted the fellow who attempted to floor her proffered vote, by producing her citizenship papers. She left in high dudgeon exclaiming that she was “not quite so big a fool as she looked to be.”⁴⁷⁵ This anecdote surely pleased Emmeline B. Wells, who had been urging immigrant women to take out their own naturalization papers for years in the pages of the *Woman’s Exponent*.⁴⁷⁶ But any sense of triumph was short lived.

A few weeks later, President Cleveland allowed the Edmunds-Tucker Act to become law without his signature. Its measures included disincorporating the LDS church, changing marriage and inheritance laws to illegitimate the children of polygamous marriages, and requiring an anti-

⁴⁷³ “New Voters,” *Ogden Herald*, January 19, 1887, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ “Mayor’s Proclamation,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 12, 1887, p. 3; “Election Day,” *Ogden Herald*, February 14, 1887, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁵ “Election Day,” *Ogden Herald*, February 14, 1887, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁶ See “Made a Citizen,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3, no. 3 (July 1, 1874): 21; “Editorial Notes,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6, no. 23 (May 1, 1878): 181; “Home Affairs,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 6 (August 15, 1878): 44; “Home Affairs,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9, no. 8. (September 15, 1880): 61; “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10, no. 6 (August 15, 1881): 44.

polygamy oath of prospective jurors, voters, and officials. It also stated: “It shall not be lawful for any female to vote at any election hereafter held in the Territory of Utah.”⁴⁷⁷

The next Utah election came at the Brigham City on March 7, and Emmeline B. Wells traveled fifty miles by train from her home in Salt Lake City to be there. She had noted in her diary, “it is the opinion generally that [Mormon men] will take the [anti-polygamy] oath [to vote]” and was pleased to see this seemed to be the case.⁴⁷⁸ She “suggested the propriety of some woman offering to vote in order to make a test case and Miss Parinthia Snow went and offered to vote.”⁴⁷⁹ Another woman joined her, but nothing would come of it.

Still, Wells could not let women’s disenfranchisement happen without protest. In the next issue of the *Woman’s Exponent*, she editorialized:

The women of Utah who have exercised the privilege of the elective franchise for seventeen years are...excluded from the polls, and without any excuse whatever, simply because they are women, not for any *real* reason...except that the *liberals* have said they voted as they were told, and voted with their husbands, and this they call a misuse of the ballot...To deprive women who have been voters of the ballot is just as wrong as it would be to deprive men...and to submit to the indignity without protesting and defending the position would not be consistent with the courage and independence manifested by the women of Utah in the past.⁴⁸⁰

Wells echoed the arguments she and other Mormon suffragists had been making for years in speeches, petitions, and newspaper articles. As it had become increasingly apparent that

⁴⁷⁷ United States Congress, The Edmunds-Tucker Law, as agreed by Conference Committee, and adopted by the Senate and House of Representatives, and which became a Law by lapse of time after being referred to the President: an act to amend an act entitled "An Act to amend Section 5352 of the Revised Statues of the United States, in reference to bigamy, and for other purposes," approved March 22, 1882 ([Washington?]: [publisher not identified], [1887?]), M243.91 U575et 1887?, CHL.

⁴⁷⁸ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 4 March 1887, The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells, Church Historian’s Press, <https://churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells>.

⁴⁷⁹ Wells, Diary, 7 March 1889.

⁴⁸⁰ “Comments,” *Woman’s Exponent* 15, no. 20 (March 15, 1887): 156.

Congress would revoke suffrage first for polygamists and then for all women, she and others had focused on citizens' rights of due process to highlight the injustice of such federal action.

But as residents of a U.S. territory and defenders of a religious practice that the Supreme Court had deemed unprotected by the First Amendment, Wells and her colleagues were essentially powerless. Utahns were the only women in U.S. history to be directly removed from the electorate by Congress, but women in Washington Territory would also lose the franchise that same year and again in 1888, as the Territory's Supreme Court twice overturned the legislature's woman suffrage laws on a technicality.⁴⁸¹ These losses highlighted the weakness of territorial suffrage laws and the need to embed equal suffrage clauses in state (and national) constitutions in order to make them last.

Mormon suffragists redirected their efforts after their disenfranchisement. Over the previous decade and a half, they had focused their rhetoric and action on an external audience, justifying their political participation to federal lawmakers through petitions and indignation meetings. Their efforts reflected an evolution in the way Mormon women described themselves as political actors, from the "daughters of American citizens" in 1870 to citizens with a "vested right" to vote in 1886.⁴⁸²

After 1887, Mormon women's suffrage efforts took new shape under a formal suffrage organization for the first time. Setting their sights on the eventual opportunity to regain the franchise with statehood, they developed a widespread network of suffrage activity within Utah

⁴⁸¹ T.A. Larson, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Washington," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 1976): 54–55.

⁴⁸² Proceedings in Mass Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest Against the Passage of Cullom's Bill, January 14, 1870 ([Salt Lake City]: [publisher not identified], 1870), 4; M243.91 P963 1870, CHL; Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah to the President and the Congress of the United States: The Outrages of Which They Complain—The Justice They Demand, (Washington: [publisher not identified], April 6, 1886), p. 1, M243.3 U887m 1886 CHL.

to promote women's political equality. Now their audience was local: friends, family, neighbors, business owners, church leaders, and elected officials whose faces and life stories they knew well. Through meetings, speeches, social events, newspaper articles, and petitions, suffragists worked to anchor the "gospel of equal rights" firmly into their local political culture.⁴⁸³ Mormon suffragists secured Utah politicians' support for their cause by emphasizing politics and civic life as a cooperative venture between women and men, expounding the theological underpinnings for woman suffrage, appealing for equality under the law, and expressing confidence in the new, progressive era women and men would usher in together.

Utah statehood was once again denied in 1887 as Mormon women and men continued to defend polygamy and the church did not collapse in the wake of the Edmunds-Tucker Act.⁴⁸⁴ Wells had predicted, "hindering women from voting will not help to abolish the principle [of polygamy], for they will have no promise to make and no oath to take [disavowing polygamy in order to vote], and consequently can talk all they like, and there will be no restraint."⁴⁸⁵ The Senate Committee on Territories produced yet another unfavorable report on Utah statehood in the spring of 1888.

This report came just as Emily S. Richards arrived in Washington, D.C. for a convention to establish the National Council of Women (NCW).⁴⁸⁶ Richards had previously acted as an unofficial representative of Mormonism and Mormon women in the nation's capital, where her

⁴⁸³ Alvira Lucy Cox, "Equal Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (Oct. 15, 1893): 50.

⁴⁸⁴ Utahns submitted yet another proposed state constitution in 1887 which outlawed polygamy and continued male-only suffrage. But Congress was not willing to budge unless Mormon leaders would commit themselves against polygamy. See George Q. Cannon, Journal, 15 June 1887, *The Journal of George Q. Cannon*, Church Historian's Press, accessed 29 January, 2021, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1887/06-1887>.

⁴⁸⁵ "Comments," *Woman's Exponent* 15, no. 20 (March 15, 1887): 156.

⁴⁸⁶ "Correspondence," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 22 (April 15, 1888): 169.

family had lived for a time while her husband Franklin lobbied Congress to accept Utah's 1882 statehood attempt. She had also gained leadership and public speaking experience in the Relief Society and would later serve as the hostess of the Utah building at the 1893 World's Fair.⁴⁸⁷ Richards was part of a new generation of monogamous Mormon women rising in visibility and leadership within Utah.⁴⁸⁸

The NCW convention came at a crucial juncture for the fractured women's rights movement, at the 40th anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention that the NWSA claimed as the beginning of the movement to justify its leadership.⁴⁸⁹ The AWSA had recently proposed a merger and negotiations were underway, championed especially by Harriot Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter who wished to heal the rift and unite suffragists in a common cause. But Lucy Stone's opposition to accepting Mormon women as members of a merged association was one of the sticking points in the negotiations.⁴⁹⁰

This made Richards' task at the NCW as a delegate for the Latter-Day Saints' Women's Associations all the more important. A report to the *Woman's Exponent* reflected how she and other leading Mormon women sought to represent themselves on the national stage: "Had Emily Richards been a strong-lunged, defiant and brazen-throated woman orator, she might have created a sensation, but this effect would have been valueless as compared with the sweet-

⁴⁸⁷ Speaking at a general Relief Society conference in 1901, Richards recalled, "the first time Aunt Eliza [R. Snow] asked me to speak in meeting, I could not, and she said, 'Never mind, but when you are asked to speak again, try and have something to say,' and I did have something to speak about." See "General Conference Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 30, no. 7 (December 1, 1901): 54.

⁴⁸⁸ Lisa Olsen Tait, "The 'Young Woman's Journal': Gender and Generations in a Mormon Women's Magazine," *American Periodicals* 22, no. 1 (2012): 51–71.

⁴⁸⁹ Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

⁴⁹⁰ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 244–5.

minded, talented, lady-like woman coming as the fruit and representation of a system against which no accusation or denunciation is considered unmerited.”⁴⁹¹ The correspondent wrote that delegates had received an “object lesson” in the “person and demeanor of [Emily Richards],” with the lesson being that Mormon women were educated, ladylike, and respectable.

Mormon women had sought to represent themselves as respectable and refined ladies at national conventions ever since 1879, but even Richards, an able organizer, monogamous wife, and seasoned veteran of D.C. social circles, still faced obstacles. The fact that the presiding officer at the NCW convention initially neglected to list her among the delegates who would be speaking was no trivial omission. As Joan Smyth Iversen notes, “Clearly there was a struggle going on behind the scenes.”⁴⁹²

That struggle broke out into the open at the NWSA convention directly following the NCW. Anti-polygamists had long opposed Mormon women’s membership in the NWSA, and their objections increased in volume as plans for a merger with the AWSA were discussed.⁴⁹³ In the end, a Massachusetts delegate put forward a successful resolution stating that the NWSA “knows no North, no South, no East, no West but is cosmopolitan and welcomes to its membership women of all classes, all races and all religions.”⁴⁹⁴ This cleared the way for the NWSA to add Emily Richards and non-Mormon Isabel Cameron Brown as new Utah

⁴⁹¹ “Correspondence,” *Woman’s Exponent* 16, no. 22 (April 15, 1888): 169.

⁴⁹² Joan Smyth Iversen, “The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship: Personal and Political Quandaries,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 11, no. 2/3 (1990): 12.

⁴⁹³ Emmeline B. Wells commented in the *Exponent* that “whenever “Mormons” are to be admitted, a question arises as to the feasibility of the matter.” “Editorial Thoughts,” *Woman’s Exponent* 16, no. 22 (May 1, 1888): 172.

⁴⁹⁴ “Editorial Thoughts.”

representatives in addition to Jennie Froiseth, who was currently vice president for Utah. The convention also authorized Utahns to organize a territorial suffrage association.⁴⁹⁵

Richards and Brown did not organize a Utah association immediately due to the tenuous position of Mormon women in the NWSA and the larger movement. Influential AWSA leader Julia Ward Howe visited Utah that June as the guest of her friend Jennie Froiseth and the Grand Army of the Republic. She pointedly ignored Emmeline B. Wells' requests for a meeting until the last minute and "continued her public crusade" against Mormon women following her visit.⁴⁹⁶ But fall brought more sympathetic visitors in southern suffrage leader Elizabeth Lyle Saxon and Clara Bewick Colby, editor of the independent *Woman's Tribune*. The two women spoke in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square and shared the pulpit with Relief Society Central President Zina D.H. Young, signaling their support for Mormon women's suffrage efforts.⁴⁹⁷ This visit cemented support among NWSA leaders for a territorial association in Utah.

Still, Richards and Brown deferred to the Relief Society, which had been the engine of suffrage activism in Utah, to lay the groundwork for a Utah association.⁴⁹⁸ Relief Society President Young "took the lead in securing ecclesiastical support before finalizing official national affiliation" by proposing a plan for a Utah suffrage association to Mormon President Wilford Woodruff and other male church leaders.⁴⁹⁹ She brought two generations of suffragists,

⁴⁹⁵ "N.W.S.A. Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 23 (April 15, 1888): 180; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 244.

⁴⁹⁶ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 245.

⁴⁹⁷ "At Assembly Hall," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 26, 1888, 5; "Comments," *Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 10 (October 15, 1888): 76.

⁴⁹⁸ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 247–9.

⁴⁹⁹ Rebekah Ryan Clark, "A Harmony of Voices: Negotiating Latter-day Saint Unity on Women's Suffrage," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2020): 56.

including Sarah M. Kimball, Emmeline B. Wells, and Emily S. Richards, to a meeting with church leadership where those present voted to “organize a political organization to importune this nation for justice.”⁵⁰⁰ Young’s careful and collaborative approach reflected a lesson that she and other leading Mormon women had learned over the past two decades: “the women cannot accomplish much unless they have the hand of encouragement reached out to them by the brethren.”⁵⁰¹ She and the others knew that approval from the Church was critical to elicit widespread membership in a suffrage association.

Next, Richards and Brown solicited Wells’ assistance to invite Jennie Froiseth to participate.⁵⁰² Froiseth had recently joined the AWSA to protest the NWSA’s decision to include polygamous women. She had given a paper at the AWSA titled “Reasons Why Utah Should not be Admitted as a State at Present,” and was made its vice president for Utah.⁵⁰³ Richards, Brown, and Wells certainly did not expect Froiseth to work with a territorial NWSA chapter, especially since she had played a key role in Utah women’s disenfranchisement. But she was still officially NWSA vice president for Utah, so they requested her assistance as a formality.⁵⁰⁴

As the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported, no doubt informed by Froiseth herself, she stated she “did not believe in [woman suffrage] for Utah, because of the anomalous condition of affairs

⁵⁰⁰ Zina D. H. Young diaries, 1844–1845, 1886 and 1889; January 2, 1889; MS 6240, CHL. Interestingly, Young framed the association as something directed outward, at convincing the nation, when Mormon suffragists all knew their only path lay in persuading Utahns to include equal suffrage in a new state constitution. She may have been thinking that women could help advance the cause of statehood by breaking down prejudice through their attendance at national women’s conventions as Wells and Richards had done.

⁵⁰¹ Sarah M. Kimball, quoted in A.S. Rogers, “Letter to the Editor,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6, no. 4 (July 15, 1877): 29.

⁵⁰² Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 3 January 1889.

⁵⁰³ “A.A.W.—The Woman’s Congress,” *The Woman’s Journal* 19, no. 47 (November 24, 1888): 378.

⁵⁰⁴ Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Emmeline B. Wells: An Intimate History*, 291–2; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 248, quoting Wells, Diary, 2–3 January 1889.

here” and could not work “in any cause with women who believed in the rightfulness and propriety of polygamy.”⁵⁰⁵ Froiseth further objected to a Utah suffrage association because she thought Mormon women were disloyal to the U.S. government and blindly obedient to church leaders. She accused them of seeking increased political power for their church rather than “the advancement of women.”⁵⁰⁶

Froiseth also drew on the racist and xenophobic arguments often leveled by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other NWSA leaders against black and immigrant male voters. She claimed Mormon women were just as ignorant and that “It mattered not whether it was Mrs. Richards or Mrs. Wells or the Scandinavian woman that had come in the last immigration and who knew no more of the significance of the act of voting...than does a Piute of geometry.”⁵⁰⁷ She concluded with another barb, warning NWSA leaders through the *Tribune* that no Mormon “can possibly believe in a Republican Government.”⁵⁰⁸ Froiseth knew that a Utah suffrage association would go forward without her, but given her national reputation among social reformers, she could not be seen as encouraging Mormon women’s political organizing.

Froiseth’s opposition, reflecting the sentiments of anti-polygamists in the rest of the country, did shape Utah suffragists’ structure and approach. Carol Cornwall Madsen notes that “a conscious effort to minimize polygamy and maximize cooperation with Gentiles determined

⁵⁰⁵ “The Gulf Between Them,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 11, 1889, 2.

⁵⁰⁶ “The Gulf Between Them.” The *Tribune* played up the longstanding religious cleavage among women’s advocates in Utah by eliding the presence of non-Mormon Isabel Cameron Brown at the meeting.

⁵⁰⁷ “The Gulf Between Them.”

⁵⁰⁸ “The Gulf Between Them,.”

the politics that developed” in Utahns’ suffrage organization.⁵⁰⁹ As it was taking shape, Emily S. Richards determined that only monogamous women would hold leadership positions.

This decision was strategically necessary for the Utah association to be accepted as a NWSA affiliate, but it rankled polygamous suffragists who had been at the forefront of suffrage activism in Utah for nearly two decades. Emmeline B. Wells wrote, “I am besieged on all hands to assist in organizing a woman suffrage Association and yet none who have ever been in plural marriage can have any position in it. We have had one meeting last evening and one today and it seems almost impossible to get at it in the right shape.”⁵¹⁰ However slighted Wells felt about being publicly sidelined at this juncture, she still drafted documents for the organization ahead of its first meeting.⁵¹¹

The Woman Suffrage Association (WSA) of Utah was officially established on January 10, with women in attendance at the Assembly Hall on Temple Square from many parts of the Territory. Calls for an organizational meeting in Utah newspapers had made it clear that this was a joint effort between Utah suffragists and Mormon women’s leadership, if any distinction could even be made. Richards was the first signatory in her official capacity as an NWSA representative for Utah, and her name was followed by several members of the Relief Society Central Board, the Primary Association, and other prominent Mormon members of the NWSA, all identified as such.⁵¹² After an opening prayer and hymn (“Know this, that every soul is free”),

⁵⁰⁹ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 248.

⁵¹⁰ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 8 January 1889.

⁵¹¹ Wells, *Diary*, 10 January 1889. Wells was in her second plural marriage at the time, which lasted until her husband Daniel H. Wells died in 1891.

⁵¹² “Notice,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 5, 1889, p. 1; “Female Suffrage for Utah,” *Utah Enquirer*, January 8, 1889, p. 1; “Notice,” *Utah Journal*, January 9, 1889, p. 3; “Woman Suffrage Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 16 (January 15, 1889): 121.

Relief Society General President Zina D. H. Young opened the meeting, leaving no question that this move was sanctioned by Church leaders.⁵¹³

Officers elected for the WSA of Utah were largely veteran Relief Society leaders, first- and second-generation Utahns. Margaret Caine, an English immigrant and monogamous wife of Utah's delegate to Congress, was unanimously elected President. Lydia Alder, Nellie Webber, Priscilla Jennings Riter, Cornelia Clayton, Charlotte Godbe Kirby, and Margie Dwyer, the elected vice presidents and other officers, were also leading Mormon women from Salt Lake City.⁵¹⁴

After reading and adopting the NWSA constitution, Richards appointed a committee on by-laws to work while Charlotte Godbe Kirby and Zina D. H. Young spoke. Apparently one of them could not resist making a jab at Jennie Froiseth: "Reference was made to the enjoyment of the right of suffrage by the women of Utah, and the unjust and tyrannical manner in which they had been deprived of it—sanctioned, too, by women of Utah who say they are believers in the doctrine—outside of Utah."⁵¹⁵ But the by-laws declared that "The object of the Association shall be to work for the enfranchisement of all women, without regard to party, sect, or creed, and to take such steps from time to time as shall seem to be wise and expedient for the political

⁵¹³ "On Woman Suffrage," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* January 11, 1889, p. 9.

⁵¹⁴ Charlotte Cobb Godbe Kirby was the daughter of Augusta Adams Cobb, who left a previous husband in Boston in order to join the Latter-day Saints and became a plural wife of Brigham Young in 1843. Charlotte herself became a plural wife in 1869, but her husband William Godbe was excommunicated from the Church shortly thereafter. They later divorced and she disavowed plural marriage, but she was never fully accepted by any wing of the suffrage movement as leading women either saw her as suspiciously Mormon or not Mormon enough. She maintained a relationship with Mormon church leaders but does not appear to have been a member of the Relief Society. See Beverly Beeton, "A Feminist among the Mormons: Charlotte Ives Cobb Godbe Kirby," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1991): 22–31.

⁵¹⁵ "On Woman Suffrage," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* January 11, 1889, p. 9.

advancement of the women of this Territory.”⁵¹⁶ Despite Mormon organizers’ stated desire to work with anyone, the fact remained that no prominent non-Mormon women would join the WSA of Utah until after the issue of polygamy had been settled.

The Woman Suffrage Association of Utah enrolled one hundred members by the end of the first meeting, and others interested in joining were urged to mail or visit the *Exponent* office to pay the twenty-five cent membership fee.⁵¹⁷ As Emmeline B. Wells and Dr. Romania Pratt prepared the credentials for Utah’s NWSA convention delegates, they also gathered 60 yards of suffrage supporters’ signatures—8,393 names—in just three days.⁵¹⁸ Emily Richards told the NWSA convention that 3,000 of the signers were men and reporting that the WSA of Utah already claimed 200 members. “The women of Utah do not regard their own franchise as being forever lost,” Richards said. “We hope and expect to see this great struggle terminate speedily and triumphantly for the cause of woman, and to see political liberty enjoyed without regard to sex.”⁵¹⁹ She expressed solidarity with other suffragists, noting that she and other Utah women were now “on the same political plane as you, my sisters.”⁵²⁰

Richards also took the opportunity to again defend Mormon women’s voting record, emphasizing that they had not sold their votes or been improperly influenced. “I think I may safely challenge any male voter of the United States to show a better use of the rights of American citizenship,” she declared. Speaking of citizenship, Richards emphasized that she was

⁵¹⁶ “Woman Suffrage Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 16 (January 15, 1889): 122.

⁵¹⁷ “Woman Suffragists,” *Utah Enquirer*, January 15, 1889, p. 1.

⁵¹⁸ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 12 January 1889.

⁵¹⁹ “Utah’s Lady Delegate,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 18 (February 15, 1889): 138; “Suffrage at Washington,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, January 26, 1889, p. 2.

⁵²⁰ “Utah’s Lady Delegate,” 137.

“a native born citizen of the United States” and protested “the wresting from [Utah women], by the right of might, of that franchise which we had never abused, and which was our vested right.”⁵²¹ Here she echoed the sentiments of Mormon women’s petitions and memorials against anti-polygamy legislation, which had claimed suffrage as a “vested right” and protested the lack of due process in their disenfranchisement.⁵²²

Like those earlier petitions and memorials, Richards also argued that the very act of voting had made Utah women into true “citizens of the United States, armed with that all-potent yet peaceful weapon, the ballot.”⁵²³ To Richards, a citizen was someone who had a stake in society, who could express their political preferences at the ballot box, and who could expect government to respond to them. Now she expected, as a citizen, to be accorded a fair hearing, equality before the law, and representation in government—all of which the franchise would help provide.

Organizing for Suffrage

The WSA of Utah grew rapidly in its first months. Fourteen county branches of the WSA of Utah formed across the Territory that winter alone, reflecting widespread local enthusiasm for the cause.⁵²⁴ In addition to joining local WSAs, some suffragists also paid an additional membership fee to join the NWSA. Over the course of the year, Emmeline B. Wells sent national

⁵²¹ “Utah’s Lady Delegate,” 137.

⁵²² Memorial of the Mormon Women of Utah, 1886, p. 1.

⁵²³ “Utah’s Lady Delegate,” 137.

⁵²⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, “Utah,” in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:941.

enrollment slips to WSAs in Salt Lake, Weber, Utah, Juab, Cache, Davis, Washington, Sevier, Sanpete, Tooele, and Beaver counties.⁵²⁵

The WSA also benefitted from the organizational network and capacity of the Relief Society. Many of the officers elected in WSA branches were already well-known in their communities as leaders in the local Relief Society, Primary, or Young Ladies National Mutual Improvement Association.⁵²⁶ And some later WSA chapters would form directly out of local Relief Societies, such as those in Farmington (Davis County) and Summit County.⁵²⁷ WSAs sometimes met in local schoolhouses and Mormon meetinghouses, but the majority met in Relief Society halls, spaces financed, controlled, and cared for by women.

Over the next six years, the WSA of Utah grew to have branches in twenty-one counties (out of twenty-seven) and at least fifty towns.⁵²⁸ This meant women (and men) were moving the cause forward everywhere from the southwest and southeastern corners of the territory to the more densely populated Wasatch Front and northern mountain valleys. Political scientists have estimated that Utah boasted the highest average of nearly 41 members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association per 10,000 residents from 1892 to 1919, one third higher than the second state (Nevada, with 33) and four times that of the third (New Hampshire, with nearly

⁵²⁵ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 1889 (memoranda).

⁵²⁶ This of course was shaped by women's economic status and family situations. Many women in Church leadership positions were married to men who presided over local or regional congregations as bishops or stake presidents. In rural areas, WSA leaders were less uniformly members of prominent families. Many were immigrants and essentially small business owners, running family farms with their husbands and families.

⁵²⁷ Woman's Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, 1892–1895; April 13, 1892, p. 4; MS 2621, CHL. Zina D. H. Young diaries, May 30, 1889.

⁵²⁸ Tiffany H. Greene, "The Echo of Equal Suffrage: A Brief History of Utah's Rural Suffrage Movement, 1889–1896," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 280. Branches of the Woman Suffrage Association of Utah were established in Beaver, Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Emery, Grand, Iron, Juab, Millard, Morgan, Rich, Salt Lake, Sanpete, San Juan, Sevier, Summit, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Washington, and Weber counties.

10).⁵²⁹ Utah's actual WSA membership during the local fight for voting rights was likely several times higher than this estimated average, which stretches long past Utah statehood.⁵³⁰

Despite this incredibly widespread participation, records from only four WSAs in Utah Territory have been preserved in archives. These include the treasurer's record book from the Salt Lake County WSA, and minutes from the Beaver County WSA in southwest Utah, the Glenwood WSA in Sevier County in south central Utah, and the Farmington WSA in Davis County in northern Utah (175, 140, and 15 miles from Salt Lake City, respectively).⁵³¹ In addition to these WSA records, notices in Utah newspapers add up to form a rich picture of WSA organizations, meetings, and leadership in the years before statehood. The *Woman's Exponent* printed news from local associations in its suffrage column, providing the most complete picture of what Mormon suffragists were saying and doing across the territory at any given time.⁵³² Other papers printed notices of suffrage meetings and events, or sometimes full speeches sent in by the local WSA.⁵³³ Beaver suffragists were offered a weekly column in the *Southern Utonian*,

⁵²⁹ Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, "Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866–1919," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 1 (February 2001): 55–60.

⁵³⁰ Additionally, this estimate likely undercounts the number of Utahns who considered themselves suffragists, as the additional NAWSA membership fee was out of reach for many who had to scrape together local WSA dues.

⁵³¹ Woman Suffrage Association of Utah (Salt Lake County) treasurer's record, 1890–1896; MS 32816, CHL; Beaver County Woman's Suffrage Association papers, MSS SC 48, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU); Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, 1890–1891, 1894–1895; Glenwood Ward, Sevier Stake; LR 3227 25, CHL; Woman's Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes.

⁵³² Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The New Northwest and Woman's Exponent: Early Voices for Suffrage," *Journalism Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1977): 286–292; Sherilyn Cox Bennion, "The 'Woman's Exponent': Forty-two Years of Speaking for Women." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1976): 222–239.

⁵³³ "Right to Vote," *County Register* (Ephraim, UT), March 3, 1891, p. 4.

and the WSAs of Beaver, Box Elder, Cache, and Sevier counties advertised regularly in their local papers.⁵³⁴

The extant WSA records reveal much about Mormon women's suffrage work in the years leading up to Utah statehood. Reflecting the overlapping relationship between the Relief Society and suffrage associations, the Glenwood WSA record book contains minutes of twentieth-century Relief Society meetings and Mother's classes on the pages after the suffrage meetings, indicating that roughly the same group of women was meeting for Relief Society classes as had gathered for suffrage work. The record was eventually transferred to the LDS Church Historical Department as the property and creation of an ecclesiastical unit, the Glenwood ward. It is likely that many other Mormon women in rural areas made little distinction between their Relief Society work and suffrage efforts, since Relief Societies had always been engines of Utah women's political participation.⁵³⁵

The treasurer's record from the Salt Lake County WSA shows that the religious networks of wards and Relief Societies directly fed into local suffrage activity in Salt Lake City as well. The organization appointed suffrage agents for sixteen of Salt Lake City's twenty-three wards [religious congregations].⁵³⁶ These financial records also indicate day-to-day business in Salt Lake that was likely conducted by all WSAs throughout the territory. The WSA raised funds through social events to pay for delegates' travel to national suffrage conventions. Other

⁵³⁴ Beaver County Woman's Suffrage Association minute book, 1892–1895; March 16, 1894, MSS SC 48, item 4, folder 2; BYU; Greene, "Echo of Equal Suffrage," 281.

⁵³⁵ Suffrage was often brought up in Relief Society meetings from general conferences down to ward meetings. For example, Josie E. Childs wrote to the *Exponent* in 1890 of her travels to visit and re-organize Relief Societies in rural Emery County during the winter. "In visiting among the sisters, we improved the opportunity of agitating the suffrage cause, and insisting upon all to become acquainted with its great aim." See "An Interesting Visit," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 21 (April 1, 1890): 165.

⁵³⁶ Woman Suffrage Association of Utah (Salt Lake County) treasurer's record, front matter.

expenditures included supplies such as a roll book, minute book, and stationery, as well as pay for janitors of the ward meeting halls the WSA used.⁵³⁷

In their first wave of WSA organizing, Mormon women continued to articulate themes that had characterized their previous political participation. But they also began developing new pro-suffrage arguments that they would hone over the next seven years to convince their family members, friends, and neighbors to support their cause. These arguments soon took the place of Mormon suffragists' claims to citizenship and appeals for due process as they laid the groundwork to regain the franchise with statehood. Addressing Utahns, WSA meetings and messaging emphasized women and men's partnership in civic affairs and expressed a belief that the women's rights movement was furthering God's unfolding restoration of the gospel. They also developed a rhetoric of equal rights that tied back to Revolutionary themes in calls for justice and liberty for all.⁵³⁸

WSA leaders and members built on a pattern from Mormon women's earliest political engagement by emphasizing that they wanted to work together *with* men rather than *against* them in politics and public life. Beaver residents formed a WSA 175 miles southwest of Salt Lake City in February 1889. The Beaver County WSA made its presence known in this town of 1,700 with monthly meetings in the Relief Society hall, the visible center of women's cooperative power in the community.⁵³⁹ This WSA extended "honorary membership" to men and

⁵³⁷ Woman Suffrage Association of Utah (Salt Lake County) treasurer's record, p. 5–7.

⁵³⁸ Polygamy largely did not appear as a topic of conversation at WSA meetings before or after the Manifesto.

⁵³⁹ "Beaver County Woman's Suffrage Association," *Southern Utonian*, April 25, 1889, p. 2; "Womans Suffrage," *Southern Utonian*, September 12, 1889, p. 3.

some later served on the executive board.⁵⁴⁰ Both men and women attended meetings and participated by lecturing, reading essays, or performing poetic recitations or musical numbers from organ solos to original suffrage songs.⁵⁴¹

Rebekah Clark notes that “widespread cooperation between men and women... made the suffrage experience of Utah women unique.”⁵⁴² As discussed in chapter 2, Mormon women’s suffrage activism had originally developed from and furthered their efforts to defend their families and their religious practice alongside Mormon men in the public square. In the 1870s, the Utah legislature’s enfranchisement of women indicated “a trust in the joint partnership of men and women to improve society.”⁵⁴³ In the late 1880s, many still saw politics as a cooperative venture.

When Mormon suffragists emphasized a cooperative model of civic engagement, their expressions also showed that they placed suffrage activism within the framework of what they had already been doing for decades through the Relief Society: working for the good of the community as a whole. In her first address as president of the Beaver County WSA in 1889, Julia P.M. Farnsworth stated: “I am a friend of humanity, which comprises men and women; they are inseparable; the one is dependent on the other; neither alone can form a perfect home, community or nation; we do not wish to take any of the rights or laurels of men in this

⁵⁴⁰ Men were not accepted as members of the NWSA. “Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association,” *Southern Utonian*, April 25, 1889, p. 2; Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association minute book, May 16, 1892.

⁵⁴¹ Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association papers; Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association songs, MSS SC 48, item 1, BYU; W. B. Bickley, “Woman’s Freedom,” Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association papers, MSS SC 48, item 2, folder 2, BYU.

⁵⁴² Clark, “A Harmony of Voices,” 47.

⁵⁴³ Clark, “A Harmony of Voices,” 48.

undertaking.”⁵⁴⁴ A few months later, Emily S. Richards assured suffrage meeting attendees that the cause did not detract from “woman’s true sphere in life, nor make her usurp man’s prerogatives,” but that “woman’s rights are human rights.”⁵⁴⁵

Suffragists continued to explain that when women were able to fully contribute to society, everyone would be better off. Mary A. White, Farnsworth’s successor in Beaver County, declared, “we cannot elevate woman without elevating man.”⁵⁴⁶ Farmington WSA President Elizabeth Coombs would later say, “we want to be what God intended we should be, a helpmate to our brethren.”⁵⁴⁷ Later, a speaker in a Parowan meeting would argue that “woman in her sphere can understand...the science of government...as well as man...and is just as capable of reaching a helping hand to the fallen, and to have a voice in organizing society as he.”⁵⁴⁸ The implication was clear: until women had political equality with men, they were prevented from acting as full coworkers with men to improve their communities. President Ellen Jakeman of the Sanpete County WSA “maintained that “the greatest good to the greatest number is attained by joint effort, and...man and woman must rise and fall together.”⁵⁴⁹

After her election as President of the WSA of Utah in 1890, Sarah M. Kimball did not temper her strong-minded advocacy for women’s equality or her expansive belief in women’s abilities. As she wrote to Manti WSA President Alvira Lucy Cox, “our cause is humanities cause

⁵⁴⁴ “Woman Suffrage Association,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 19 (March 1, 1889): 150.

⁵⁴⁵ “Woman Suffrage Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 24 (May 15, 1889): 190–91.

⁵⁴⁶ Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association minute book, Sept. 18, 1892.

⁵⁴⁷ Woman’s Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, April 13, 1892, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁸ L. D. Watson, “Address Read at Parowan W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 12 (December 15, 1894): 223.

⁵⁴⁹ “First Annual Convention,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 6.

and it is to bless our Brethren as well as our sister woman that we aspire.”⁵⁵⁰ Kimball had never calculated her approach to assuage or reassure those who were fearful of women gaining political power. In fact, Emmeline B. Wells confided in her diary that “[Kimball] has very peculiar notions concerning the conditions of women— rather revolutionary, more so than mine.”⁵⁵¹ Still, Kimball believed whole-heartedly that expanding opportunities for women would benefit everyone and she emphasized that message often.

In her first message as Utah WSA president, Kimball boldly opened with the declaration that “education and agitation are our best weapons of warfare.”⁵⁵² But she made it clear that suffragists were battling ignorance and error rather than men, and that their weapons should be aimed at the community at large through civics classes, meetings, and events in which men should be invited to participate. After all, she reminded her co-laborers that “the best results follow the deliberations of men and women” together.⁵⁵³

Suffragists in Juab County also emphasized cooperation with men in their work. Gathered in the Nephi Tabernacle 75 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, they unanimously elected unmarried twenty-nine-year-old Elizabeth Schofield, a daughter of English Mormon immigrants, as their first president in early 1889. She wanted to make one point clear: “Many do not understand the true meaning of Woman Suffrage. Some think woman is trying to usurp man’s rights. Not so! She only desires to stand side by side with him, and share those privileges he values as inestimable.”⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ Sarah M. Kimball letter to A. L. Cox, November 24, 1891, MSS SC 1263, BYU.

⁵⁵¹ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 25 September 1890.

⁵⁵² Sarah M. Kimball, “Greeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 18, no. 18 (February 15, 1890): 139.

⁵⁵³ Kimball, “Greeting.”

⁵⁵⁴ “W.S.A. in Juab County,” *Woman’s Exponent* 18, no. 1 (June 1, 1889): 6.

Schofield also appealed to Mormon theology to emphasize women's natural equality with man, quipping that "Woman was not taken from man's head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled upon by him, but from his side to be equal with him."⁵⁵⁵ Such appeals would be common in coming years. As Rebekah Ryan Clark observed, "In nineteenth-century Utah, a community saturated with religiosity, activism on behalf of women became imbued with a powerful spiritual dimension. Latter-day Saint doctrines of individual agency, female divinity, and eternal progression fostered theological support for the principle of women's equal rights."⁵⁵⁶ As believers in a fortunate Fall, Mormon suffragists did not see women's subordinate social status as their rightful punishment from God for Eve's transgression.

Instead, Mormon suffragists wanted to restore women to their divinely appointed place as men's equals, connected with their belief in the ongoing restoration of Christ's gospel through Joseph Smith and his successors. One suffragist in St. George wrote, "I contend that the movement for Woman's Suffrage presages her release from the curse placed upon her in Eden."⁵⁵⁷ Speakers in other WSAs also pointed to the movement as rectifying women's subordination to men in the conditions of a fallen world.⁵⁵⁸ Sarah M. Kimball expressed a widespread sentiment when she reflected that "the sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid on the 17th of March 1842," the day the Relief Society was first organized in Nauvoo.⁵⁵⁹ She and others directly connected Joseph Smith's statement that he was

⁵⁵⁵ "W.S.A. in Juab County," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 1 (June 1, 1889): 6.

⁵⁵⁶ Rebekah Ryan Clark, "A Harmony of Voices: Negotiating Latter-day Saint Unity on Women's Suffrage," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 48.

⁵⁵⁷ "Cactus Papers No. 1," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 11 (December 1, 1894): 210.

⁵⁵⁸ Charles Stewart in Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, Glenwood, May 2, 1890, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Sarah M. Kimball, "Reply to 'A Man's Advice about Woman Suffrage,'" *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 10 (December 1, 1891): 81.

“turn[ing] the key to” that Relief Society with the beginning of advances for women’s rights in the United States.⁵⁶⁰

So it was not surprising that Mormon suffragists “saw their work as part of the unfolding restoration of the gospel.”⁵⁶¹ Manti WSA president Alvira Lucy Cox reminded a territorial WSA convention that “we who have accepted the new gospel of equal rights must labor with untiring zeal for the redemption of the masses.”⁵⁶² She and many others saw their efforts as part of the unfolding of God’s purposes on the Earth in a “conjunction of sacred and civic commitments.”⁵⁶³ Bolstered by top Church leaders’ support for their cause, they framed suffrage work as an almost religious duty.

Early WSA meetings also highlighted another theme that would become more prominent in Mormon women’s suffrage rhetoric as statehood neared: that of justice and equality under the law. Fifteen women were elected to leadership positions at the inaugural WSA meeting in the small mountain valley town of Morgan, twenty miles northeast of Salt Lake City, population near 300.⁵⁶⁴ President Hulda Cornelia Smith had been born in Iowa on the Mormon Trail in 1846

⁵⁶⁰ Nauvoo Relief Society, “A Book of Records, Containing the proceedings of The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” Minute Book, March 17, 1842–March 16, 1844; April 28, 1842; MS 3424, CHL; M.A.P.H., “A Remembrance of Joseph the Prophet,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 8 (October 1, 1890): 61.

⁵⁶¹ Katherine Kitterman, “Editor’s Introduction,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 11. Amy Geis writes that Mormon suffragists’ use of their religious doctrine to promote suffrage in the 1890s was one of the biggest factors that differentiated them from other “reform-driven calls for the franchise during that time.” See Amy L. Geis, ““The Key to All Reform”: Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887–1920,” (MA thesis, University of Toledo, 2015), xiii.

⁵⁶² “Equal Suffrage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 7 (October 15, 1893): 49–50.

⁵⁶³ Rebekah Ryan Clark, “A Harmony of Voices: Negotiating Latter-day Saint Unity on Women’s Suffrage,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 66.

⁵⁶⁴ The population of Morgan the next year was 333, as reported in the 1890 Census. Eleventh Census – Volume 1 (Part I & Part II), Report on Population of the United States, U.S. Census, 1890. Minor Civil Divisions, Table 5.—Population of States and Territories by Minor Civil Divisions: 1880 and 1890—Continued, p. 342.

and later became the first teacher in Morgan at the age of 17.⁵⁶⁵ Smith was the first of her husband's five wives and the mother of 10 living children, the youngest of whom was eight months old at the time of her election. She told the Morgan County WSA that she "was enlisted in the Woman's cause, [and] never could see why women should be subject to laws she had no hand in making, nor ruled over by those not of her choice."⁵⁶⁶ Mormon suffragists had not often used this line of argument previously, but they would increasingly employ it through the 1890s as a reason why they deserved to vote.

A NAWSA statement shortly after Wyoming's admission to the Union as a suffrage state used similar rhetoric. It remarked on the injustice that women living on the wrong side of state lines were a "subject class, taxed without representation and governed without consent, and this in a nation which by its Constitution guarantees...equal protection to all the citizens."⁵⁶⁷ Still, national suffrage leaders would not emphasize equal rights and justice in most of their propaganda in the 1890s; instead, their public messaging embraced traditional gender norms. As the anti-suffrage movement gained steam, NAWSA began to publicize arguments about women's inherent morality and mothers' need for the vote to protect the interests of their children.⁵⁶⁸ So Mormon suffragists' emphasis on justice, equality, and fairness in the 1890s differed from the propaganda and publicity of the broader national movement at that time.

⁵⁶⁵ Sharon Alice Miller McMullin, "Hulda Cordelia Thurston Smith," 2010, Morgan County Historical Society, T204838; "A Sketch of the Life of Hulda Cordelia Thurston Smith, Written by her Daughter, Alberta Smith Porter," Morgan County Historical Society.

⁵⁶⁶ "Morgan County W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 3 (July 1, 1889): 21.

⁵⁶⁷ "National American Woman Suffrage Association," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 13 (December 15, 1890): 104.

⁵⁶⁸ Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

The 1890s also saw the rise of another similar theme in Utahns' pro-suffrage rhetoric: that women citizens deserved the vote because taxation without representation was tyranny. This appeal to a Revolutionary argument was not new, and it was an attempt to bolster women's claim to the vote by linking their struggle with early Americans' efforts to break free from an unjust form of government.⁵⁶⁹ At the Sanpete County WSA convention in May 1890, President Ellen Jakeman "expressed her faith in the justice of woman's claim that she has a right to protest against taxation without representation, against bearing all the burdens and penalties of citizenship without any of its privileges and honors."⁵⁷⁰

Taxation without representation became a common theme in WSA meetings across Utah as Mormon suffragists turned to more legalistic arguments over the course of the 1890s. In the first meeting of the Farmington WSA, newly-elected President Elizabeth Coombs stated "Women should not be taxed without having a voice."⁵⁷¹ Taxation without representation was a national theme, and Emmeline B. Wells often spoke about the injustice of taxing women without allowing them to vote when she visited local suffrage associations or spoke at territorial meetings.⁵⁷² And plural marriage meant that an unusually high number of women were heads of household and therefore taxpayers in Utah.

⁵⁶⁹ For example, the Woman's Declaration of 1876 presented by the NWSA at the U.S. Centennial celebrations in Philadelphia, included a demand for no taxation without representation. See Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 163–164; *History of Woman Suffrage*, eds. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, vol. 3, 1876–1885 (Rochester, NY: Anthony, 1887), 31–34.

⁵⁷⁰ "First Annual Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1890): 6.

⁵⁷¹ Woman's Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, April 13, 1892, p. 6.

⁵⁷² "A Grand Woman Suffrage Rally," *Woman's Exponent* 21, no. 4 (August 15, 1892): 28.

Remonstrating against taxation without representation afforded Emmeline B. Wells a way to take specific action to protest her disenfranchisement. In April 1891, Wells drafted a petition “to have the water tax remitted,” which she and Dr. Romania Pratt signed and took to Salt Lake’s City Hall.⁵⁷³ Coming from two female heads of household energetically engaged in suffrage work, this was likely a protest against being levied city taxes without enjoying the privilege of voting in city elections. Wells did not note the result of that petition, but years later she recorded her feelings about going to the courthouse to pay taxes: “I felt very much like protesting against Taxation without Representation but in view of so soon having Statehood and perhaps Woman Suffrage I am willing to bide the time.”⁵⁷⁴

Grassroots WSA leaders spoke often of Utah women’s need to educate themselves so they could be informed voters and participants in the political process when that opportunity was again open to them. They also emphasized the need to reach out and educate their local communities. At least in Beaver and Farmington, the only two associations with surviving membership rolls, “the cause of suffrage appears to have been supported by a group of social, political, and economic elites” who made great efforts to get their message out into the local community.⁵⁷⁵ In Beaver, where the average attendance at WSA meetings was nine, members advertised in the *Southern Utonian* and created their own newsletter, the “Equal Rights Banner,” to explain the principles of equal suffrage.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 21 April 1891.

⁵⁷⁴ Wells, Diary, 5 September 1894.

⁵⁷⁵ Lisa Bryner Bohman, “A Fresh Perspective: The Woman Suffrage Associations of Beaver and Farmington, Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 16.

⁵⁷⁶ Bohman, “A Fresh Perspective,” 7; “Equal Rights Banner” newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, July 16, 1893; Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association papers, MSS SC 48, item 6, BYU. The *Equal Rights Banner* was produced periodically at least through September 16, 1894.

Anyone who attended a WSA meeting anywhere in Utah would hear lectures on political issues of the day, lessons in civil government or women in biblical history, and readings of articles from national suffrage papers. Anyone who attended more than once would likely be invited to address the gathering themselves. Emmeline B. Wells' report at the 1894 NAWSA convention particularly praised the work of local WSAs in emphasizing voter education, and the movement certainly did help women to become more politically aware.⁵⁷⁷

As suffrage associations sprang up across Utah Territory, two events in 1890 cleared the largest obstacles in Utah women's path toward regaining the franchise. That February, the NWSA and AWSA officially merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). NAWSA accepted the WSA of Utah's membership despite continued internal disagreements over whether to formally include Mormon women. At the convention, President Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared, "Wherever and whatever any class of women suffer...a voice in their behalf should be heard in our conventions.... Colored women, Indian women, Mormon women...have been heard in these Washington Conventions & I trust they always will be."⁵⁷⁸

That fall, another event had an even larger bearing on Utah's path toward statehood and equal suffrage. The Edmunds-Tucker Act had put increasing pressure on church operations and Mormons' lives through prosecutions, seizure of church property, and loss of voting rights for all women and polygamous men. By 1890, Mormons' course of civil disobedience had become

⁵⁷⁷ "Utah," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 12 (December 15, 1894): 221; Bohman, "A Fresh Perspective," 21.

⁵⁷⁸ The irony of course was that at that time Stanton was employing increasingly racist and nativist arguments in favor of extending the franchise to women, urging lawmakers to extend the vote to white women in order to counteract the negative effects of ignorant immigrant and black men's ballots. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Change is the Law of Progress," February 12, 1890, Stanton Papers, quoted in Iversen, "The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship," 11. Stanton essentially ended her active leadership in the suffrage cause at this point although she remained the nominal head of NAWSA until 1892 while Susan B. Anthony actually ran the organization.

unsustainable, and church President Wilford Woodruff issued a manifesto in the fall that officially discontinued the practice of plural marriage.⁵⁷⁹ The manifesto was formally accepted by the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ at general conference on October 6.⁵⁸⁰ This development devastated many women and men who had sacrificed so much for this religious principle and wondered what it meant for their families. But it also made Utah statehood feasible for the first time and opened the way for Mormon suffragists to build closer relationships with national women's rights leaders who had held them at arms' length for so long.⁵⁸¹

Suffrage Activity Across Utah

WSAs connected Utah women to each other and to the national women's rights movement. Local WSA leaders personally addressed the WSA of Utah at its territorial conventions or sent letters to be read aloud to their counterparts gathered in Salt Lake City.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ Although Woodruff's manifesto in essence told Mormons not to contract any new plural marriages, some Church leaders continued to perform some such marriages in secret, leading to the need for a second manifesto in 1908. Questions of whether the Mormons really had ended polygamy would continue for decades, including incidents when the U.S. House of Representatives refused to seat B. H. Roberts after his election in 1898, and Senate hearings over whether to seat Utah Senator-elect Reed Smoot in 1903. See Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852-1890* (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Iversen, *Antipolygamy Controversy*; Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁵⁸⁰ President Woodruff's manifesto, Proceedings at the semi-annual general conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Monday forenoon, October 6, 1890 ([Salt Lake City, UT]: [publisher not identified], [1890]); M234.71 W893p 1890?, CHL.

⁵⁸¹ In 1887, Church leaders had showed their willingness to abandon polygamy by supporting a proposed Utah constitution that outlawed the practice (and also codified male-only suffrage). This attempt to stave off the Edmunds-Tucker Act was a non-starter in Congress. See "Constitution State of Utah," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, July 10, 1887, p. 12.

⁵⁸² For example, women from Logan and Beaver spoke and prayed in the October 1893 territorial convention, and President Wells read a letter to the convention from Manti WSA president Alvira Lucy Cox. Attendees at the April 1894 convention heard from Salt Lake County WSA president E. J. Macfarlane as well as Lucy A. Clark (Davis County), Kate Hilliard (Weber), Mrs. Grover (Juab), and Louissa Weeden Jones (Beaver) about their local efforts to advance the cause. See "Equal Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (October 15, 1893): 49–50; "Utah W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (October 15, 1893): 50; Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 4 April 1894.

WSA secretaries also sent meeting reports and speeches to be printed in the *Woman's Exponent*. The *Exponent* kept readers apprised of suffrage activity within Utah as well as national conventions, suffrage campaigns in other states, and advancements for women in education and the professions. Although most Mormon women would never meet national suffrage leaders personally, they read about them in Emmeline B. Wells' reports from NAWSA conventions, and also in articles reprinted from the NWSA and later NAWSA newspapers *National Citizen and Ballot Box* and the *Woman's Journal*. They felt a strong sense of gratitude to national leaders who had protested their disenfranchisement, and they often presented these leaders' life sketches and speeches at local meetings.

Victorian Utah suffragists also took steps to make their connections to national leaders visible in their meetings. For example, the Beaver WSA raised funds to frame photographs of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton for the Relief Society Hall where they met.⁵⁸³ The American Fork WSA went even further by producing life-size photos of the two, as well as "the Susan B. Anthony of Utah, Sarah M. Kimball."⁵⁸⁴ And the territorial WSA sent Elizabeth Cady Stanton a ballot box made of silver and onyx in honor of her eightieth birthday in 1895.⁵⁸⁵ Later, in 1900, Utahns would mark Susan B. Anthony's eightieth birthday by sending a length of black silk produced entirely by Utah women. Anthony had it made into a dress and wrote to a friend that the value of the gift was increased in her estimation "because it was made by women politically equal with men."⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Beaver County Woman's Suffrage Association minute book, October 16 and December 18, 1893.

⁵⁸⁴ "American Fork W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 20 (May 1, 1892): 7.

⁵⁸⁵ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 11/12 (November 1 and 15, 1895): 4.

⁵⁸⁶ Quoted in Kathleen Barry, *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 342. The dress is on display in Anthony's bedroom at the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, New York.

In addition to connecting Utah suffragists with the larger movement, the territorial WSA focused efforts on maintaining and growing support for women's voting rights among prominent Utahns and politicians in Salt Lake City. It hosted large meetings on Temple Square and summer garden parties with songs and recitations from famous performers and speeches from male religious and political leaders as well as WSA officers, underscoring a sense that Utah's best and brightest supported suffrage.⁵⁸⁷

The *Utah Woman Suffrage Song Book* published by the *Exponent* office in 1891 also helped connect suffragists across the territory. This twenty-three-page booklet contained nineteen suffrage songs written by Utahns and set to music such as the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and Latter-day Saint hymn melodies.⁵⁸⁸ One favorite was "Woman, Arise," written by *Woman's Exponent* founding editor Louisa Lula Greene Richards. The chorus trumpeted "Woman, 'rise, thy penance o'er, Sit thou in the dust no more; Seize the scepter, hold the van, Equal with thy brother, man."⁵⁸⁹ From the time of the songbook's publication, suffragists opened and closed almost all of their meetings with one of the songs and a prayer. Singing together gave all attendees—women or men, WSA members or not—an opportunity to voice their belief in women's equality.

Weather, geography, and economic circumstances presented difficulties for many rural WSAs, especially as Utahns felt the effects of economic depression in the 1890s. The 25-cent membership fee presented an obstacle for many women in a cash-poor society. Some WSAs

⁵⁸⁷ "Woman's Suffrage Meeting," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 18 (February 15, 1889): 138; "The Ladies Speak," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 12, 1889, p. 2; "Lawn Fete," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 4 (July 15, 1890): 28; "W.S.A. Celebration," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 5 (August 15, 1890): 36.

⁵⁸⁸ *Utah Woman Suffrage Song Book* (Salt Lake City: Office of the "Woman's Exponent", [1891]), 784.68 U89, CHL.

⁵⁸⁹ "Van" is short for "vanguard" here. "Woman, Arise," *Utah Woman Suffrage Song Book*, 5.

paused meetings during the summer when women were busiest with farm work, but snow also made it difficult to gather during the winter months.⁵⁹⁰ In Glenwood, a small farming community with just under 500 residents, the local WSA fell out of existence in 1891, then reorganized in 1894 as statehood neared.⁵⁹¹ At that time, officers reduced the membership fee to 10 cents in an effort to recruit more members.⁵⁹²

Louisiana Heppler, twice elected President of the Glenwood WSA, had been born in Ontario, Canada. She and her German-born husband converted to Mormonism and immigrated to Utah in 1872. When the Glenwood WSA was first organized in 1890, Heppler was raising sixteen children, six of whom were adopted, and she would have her last baby in 1892. She taught classes on civil government and spoke in almost every meeting of the need for younger women to join the cause, often inviting them specifically to speak.⁵⁹³ Heppler's husband was among the men who attended and spoke at meetings as she tried to maintain their organization in the face of small numbers and financial hardship.⁵⁹⁴

Holding balls, socials, and other events enabled many WSAs to raise money and keep the topic of women's political rights in conversation. The WSA of Manti, a small town one hundred miles south of Salt Lake City, held special events such as a suffrage ball in the winter of 1892 and "Washington memorial exercises" with "patriotic songs, recitations, speeches, etc." in

⁵⁹⁰ "Manti W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 5 (September 1, 1894): 179.

⁵⁹¹ Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, Glenwood, April 21, 1891 and April 13, 1894, p. 18, 25.

⁵⁹² Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, Glenwood, April 13, 1894, p. 26.

⁵⁹³ Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, Glenwood. Heppler's second child, John, would go on to become the Speaker of the Utah State House of Representatives during the 1919 special session called to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. See "J.E. Heppler is Chosen Speaker," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 30, 1919, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁴ Woman's Suffrage Association minutes, Glenwood, November 26, 1890 and April 21, 1891, p. 14, 18.

1893.⁵⁹⁵ Some WSAs also increased their reach by holding events and benefits for other local organizations. In Nephi, suffragists gave a concert “for the benefit of the public library” in 1892.⁵⁹⁶

Utah suffragists advanced an emerging visual language of the national movement with the decorations at these events and their conventions. Ever since Susan B. Anthony had used the sunflower in her campaign for the 1867 woman suffrage referendum in Kansas, sunflowers, yellow flowers, and the color yellow had become emblematic of support for women’s voting rights. Utah suffrage leaders would have noticed this color scheme in the flags, delegate ribbons, and other decorations at national suffrage conventions.⁵⁹⁷ Back home, they incorporated yellow flowers and other yellow décor at their own events.

Fittingly, “the ladies wore the yellow ribbon and quite a number of gentlemen were adorned with sunflowers” at a large rally 30 miles south of Salt Lake City in August 1892. As one of the invited guests joining the American Fork WSA for a drive to Utah Lake, a meeting, and a banquet with a band, Emmeline B. Wells appreciatively noted the yellow badges, “beautiful flowers,” portraits of local and national suffrage leaders, and a “one golden star hung in a conspicuous place” representing Wyoming as the lone suffrage state.⁵⁹⁸ A special suffrage

⁵⁹⁵ “Manti,” *Manti Home Sentinel*, February 6, 1892, p. 3; “Local Briefs,” *Manti Reporter*, February 10, 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁶ “Nephi,” *Manti Home Sentinel*, April 9, 1892, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁷ For example, this report in the *Woman’s Exponent* on the 1892 NAWSA convention made special note of the yellow theme: “N.A.W.S.A. Convention,” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 15 (February 15, 1892): 114.

⁵⁹⁸ “A Grand Woman Suffrage Rally,” *Woman’s Exponent* 21, no. 4 (August 15, 1892): 28–29; “Woman Suffrage Rally,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 30, 1891, p. 2.

reception in nearby Springville also featured “a small bouquet [sic] of yellow flowers, the emblem of suffrage,” for each guest.⁵⁹⁹

This visual language of suffrage extended well beyond Utah’s more densely populated Wasatch Front. Women wore yellow ribbons at the Beaver County WSA convention in September 1894, where the meeting hall was decorated with yellow flowers and large photographs of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Beaver suffragists had also hung a flag with two stars for Wyoming and Colorado, plus the faint outline of a third star optimistically heralding Utah’s impending statehood and re-enfranchisement of women.⁶⁰⁰ Further away, teacher Sarah J. Elliott wrote to the *Exponent* about an Arbor Day celebration in 1895 in Moab, nearly 250 miles southeast of Salt Lake City. Her students had planted trees in honor of important figures, and Elliott made sure that the trees for Susan B. Anthony and Emmeline B. Wells were adorned with yellow ribbons in honor of their suffrage work.⁶⁰¹

Utah’s suffrage movement gained steam as the prospect of statehood grew brighter. 1893 opened with a proclamation by President Benjamin Harrison granting amnesty to Mormons for the penalties imposed by previous legislation for bigamy, polygamy, and unlawful cohabitation.⁶⁰² This pardon restored polygamous men’s right to vote, hold public office, and serve on juries if they had obeyed U.S. anti-polygamy laws since the Manifesto in 1890. It helped open the door for statehood but made no mention of restoring Utah women’s political rights.

⁵⁹⁹ “Woman Suffragists,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, September 26, 1892, p. 4.

⁶⁰⁰ “Interesting Trip South,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 8 (October 15, 1894): 196.

⁶⁰¹ “Arbor Day,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 19 (May 1, 1895): 259.

⁶⁰² “Amnesty,” *Deseret Evening News*, January 5, 1893, p. 1.

Later that year, the Columbian Exposition at Chicago offered a unique opportunity for Mormon women to represent themselves on a national and international stage.⁶⁰³ This was the first World's Fair with a building featuring women's art and handicraft and the first to place women in administrative roles. Utah's Territorial Board of Lady Managers oversaw their exhibit for the women's building, designed the interior of the Utah Building, and appointed prominent women at the county and town level to help raise funds and collect items for display. Non-Mormon Margaret Salisbury represented Utah on the national board, and Emily S. Richards chaired a Utah committee comprised of Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics.

This was the first large-scale effort in which Mormon and non-Mormon women worked together in Utah, and it helped to bridge some of the religious divide created by the conflict over polygamy.⁶⁰⁴ Mormon women also hoped to use the Exposition to repair relationships and build bridges with other national advocates for women's rights, as well as continuing their public relations efforts to counter their portrayal in popular media as backward and deluded.⁶⁰⁵ Through their silk draperies, art, and ladylike presentation, they broadcast the message that they were equal in refinement and education to their counterparts in the east. Many suffragists clearly saw the importance of Utah's showing at the World's Fair for their cause; some WSAs such as the one in Farmington donated organizational funds to the exhibit.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ "Mormon Women, Suffrage, and Citizenship at the 1893 World's Fair," Andrea Radke-Moss, in *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, T.J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, eds., (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁶⁰⁴ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Decade of Detente: The Mormon-Gentile Female Relationship in Nineteenth-Century Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (1995): 298–319.

⁶⁰⁵ Reid L. Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁰⁶ Woman's Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, [July–November] 1892, p. 17.

Nearly twenty Utahns also participated in the World's Congress of Representative Women at Chicago. The Relief Society and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association each hosted their own meetings, and Emmeline B. Wells presided over a General Congress meeting on May 20. She noted it was "an honor never before accorded to a Mormon woman— if one of our brethren had such a distinguished honor conferred upon them it would have been heralded the country over."⁶⁰⁷ But the biggest win for Mormon suffragists came with Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon's speech to the Congress.

A Welsh-born Mormon convert, Dr. Cannon had immigrated to the United States with her family at the age of three. She earned four university degrees by the age of twenty-five: a degree in chemistry from the University of Deseret, a medical degree from the University of Michigan, a degree in elocution from the National School of Speech and Oratory, and a degree from the University of Pennsylvania Auxiliary School of Medicine. When she returned to Utah, she opened her own practice, ran a training school for nurses, and worked as a physician at the woman-owned Deseret Hospital.⁶⁰⁸ She married Angus Cannon as a plural wife in 1884 (the fourth of what would be six wives) and spent time 'in exile' in England to protect her husband from prosecution and avoid testifying about the paternity of babies she had delivered.⁶⁰⁹

Now back in the United States, Dr. Cannon was ready to make her mark on the stage. Her speech heralded Utah women's loyalty, sacrifice, and resourcefulness. She asked, "With all that

⁶⁰⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 20 May 1893. Mormon church leader and apologist B. H. Roberts would be denied the opportunity to represent the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the main stage in the World's Congress of Representative Religions at the Fair, which took place that September. See Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism*.

⁶⁰⁸ "A Training School for Nurses," *Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 15 (January 1, 1889): 117.

⁶⁰⁹ See Constance L. Lieber and John Sillito, *Letters from Exile: The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon, 1886–1888* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

wealth and civilization can give for the advancement of science, literature, and art, what may we not expect of the native born daughters of [Utah]?...“they...will rear a superstructure that the world will recognize.”⁶¹⁰ The *Chicago Record* lauded Dr. Cannon’s speech and declared her “one of the brightest exponents of the women’s cause in the United States.”⁶¹¹

On the heels of success at Chicago, Manti WSA President Alvira Lucy Cox wrote exuberantly that “this year of grace has been a revelation of the powers and possibilities of women.”⁶¹² That fall, Sarah M. Kimball stepped down as territorial WSA president and was made honorary president for life. Emmeline B. Wells was elected the new president despite having twice been a plural wife, perhaps signaling a belief that the issue of polygamy would no longer significantly factor into Utahns’ relationship with NAWSA.⁶¹³ The year closed with Colorado voters passing a referendum extending voting rights to women citizens.⁶¹⁴

The new year 1894 marked a new season of suffrage activity in Utah as Congress discussed Utah statehood once more. WSAs across the territory increased efforts to make their presence felt and ensure that the topic of suffrage was in the air. Wells reported to the February NAWSA convention in Washington, D.C. that “the interest taken by the women of the territory in the work of the present Legislature clearly proves that they are becoming conscious of the needs of the hour.” She repeated the by-now-common theme in Utah suffragists’ messaging by highlighting how some WSAs had adopted protest resolutions against bills or taxes of which they

⁶¹⁰ “Utah Women in Chicago,” *Woman’s Exponent* 21, no. 24 (June 15, 1893): 179.

⁶¹¹ “Woman’s Great Forum,” *Chicago Record*, May 15, 1893, p. 1.

⁶¹² “Equal Suffrage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 7 (October 15, 1893): 49.

⁶¹³ “Utah W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 7 (October 15, 1893): 50; “Woman Suffrage Association,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1893, p. 7.

⁶¹⁴ “A Happy New Year,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 10 (December 15, 1893 and January 1, 1894): 176.

disapproved. “This public expression of opinion,” she claimed, “shows that women are fully awakened to the injustice of being governed without their consent, and taxed without representation.”⁶¹⁵

Wells expressed her confidence in Utah suffragists’ connections with local press and politicians and illuminated her practical strategy.⁶¹⁶ She had advised the sixteen county WSAs “to ask permission to meet with the county boards of education and get practical ideas and knowledge of the methods of action, so as to become familiar with the rules and regulations of procedure in such work,” because she thought women would likely win election to school boards first once they regained the franchise.⁶¹⁷ Wells reminded national delegates that Utah could not change Congressional law and had to bide their time until the opportunity arose to write a constitution with statehood. The course of action she charted as WSA of Utah president was cautious, focusing on creating “a public sentiment favorable to wise action” without the appearance of direct lobbying.⁶¹⁸

When it came down to it, Wells trusted Utah lawmakers to support women’s political rights. Her strategy focusing the territorial WSA on social events, musical performances, and lectures reflected that trust and a desire to create a sense of consensus. For example, in February 1894, she sent special invitations to “prominent ladies soliciting their attendance” at one such evening in Salt Lake City which she declared a “success, crowded house—singing

⁶¹⁵ “Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 12 (December 15, 1894): 221.

⁶¹⁶ “Utah,” 221.

⁶¹⁷ Several states had extended partial suffrage to women in school board elections, acknowledging that mothers had a vested interest in local education. “Utah,” 221.

⁶¹⁸ “Utah,” 221.

enthusiastic.”⁶¹⁹ The objective: “to give to passive and indifferent people some sound and wholesome reasons for the faith and hope of the believers in woman suffrage.”⁶²⁰

Wells’ leadership reflected what one historian characterized as “a blend of caution, cooperation, faith, and outspoken advocacy” characteristic of nineteenth-century Mormon women’s political engagement.⁶²¹ Wells was no conservative when it came to women’s rights, but she certainly avoided situations that would appear to put public pressure on male political or religious leaders. Through her work as the editor of the *Exponent*, service in the central Relief Society organization, and involvement in social clubs and civic affairs, she knew Salt Lake City politicians well. And as Wells’ biographer Carol Cornwall Madsen observed, “After five years of careful groundwork in gaining support for woman suffrage, [Wells] was fearful that alternative and possibly more militant schemes would derail all their efforts.”⁶²² She was also aware that some Mormon leaders, including Relief Society Zina D. H. Young, were “very much afraid of any Gentile element” that might renew attacks on Mormon political participation if stirred up against suffrage agitation.⁶²³

Wells remained active in local politics during the legislative session of 1894, speaking to a legislative committee in favor of increasing the bounty for silk cocoons and attending the debates on the issue.⁶²⁴ She was disgusted when the legislature killed a bill that would have

⁶¹⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 1, 3 February 1894.

⁶²⁰ “Utah,” 221.

⁶²¹ Rebekah Ryan Clark, “A Harmony of Voices: Negotiating Latter-day Saint Unity on Women’s Suffrage,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 54.

⁶²² Madsen, *Intimate History*, 343.

⁶²³ Wells, Diary, 15 August 1894.

⁶²⁴ Wells, Diary, 7, 16, 24 February 1894.

allowed women to sit on boards of education and reforms. “The matter should be looked into and examined,” she wrote. “Women should know why they are debarred from public participation in important matters.”⁶²⁵ But still, Wells trusted Utah’s male politicians to do right by women when it came time to frame the state constitution.

Other suffrage leaders did not share Wells’ confidence and proposed more provocative plans of action. Throughout the year, leaders in the Utah County WSA south of Salt Lake encouraged Wells to put more public pressure on local politicians. When Sarah A. Boyer and Ellen Jakeman came to Salt Lake in February, Wells “listened to their representations and scarcely approved of their radicalism but one must be wise in directing such efforts...I could not consent to their measures.”⁶²⁶ She continued to rely on her personal relationships with Utah’s leading men, while others wondered those relationships and the legacy of Mormon cooperative politics from the 1870s and 1880s would be enough to carry the question through.⁶²⁷ Salt Lake County WSA President Dr. Ellen Ferguson attempted to displace Wells as territorial president in 1894, partly due to political differences and partly due to Ferguson’s desire for the WSA of Utah to employ more a more forceful strategy at this critical juncture before statehood.

As these debates took place behind the scenes, rural Utah suffragists increased their public presence by marching in local parades. The Sanpete County WSA marched proudly in Manti City’s Fourth of July parade, and the Beaver County WSA drove a “Suffrage carriage” decorated with “Equal Rights” and “Equal Suffrage” banners in the local Pioneer Day parade on

⁶²⁵ Wells, Diary, 24 February 1894.

⁶²⁶ Wells, Diary, 11 February 1894.

⁶²⁷ Ruth May Fox diary, 1894–1939; December 30, 1894; MS 5469, CHL; Madsen, *Intimate History*, 342–43.

July 24.⁶²⁸ Nobody who read the local newspapers in Manti, Beaver, or almost any other small Utah town could have been ignorant of the suffrage cause, but these women lost no opportunity just the same.

Congress finally passed an Enabling Act in July 1894 that invited Utah to apply for statehood once more. Utahns celebrated with American flags flying, hopeful that their seventh attempt at statehood would finally succeed.⁶²⁹ Susan B. Anthony wrote to the WSA of Utah with congratulations and what Rebecca Mead has termed her “standard warning”⁶³⁰:

Now, in the formative period of your Constitution, is the time to establish justice and equality to all the people. That adjective “male” once admitted into your organic law, will remain there. Don’t be cajoled into believing otherwise. Look how the women of New York have toiled and toiled over forty years to get “male” out of our Constitution...demand justice now. Once ignored in your Constitution you’ll be as powerless to secure recognition as are we in the older States.⁶³¹

Wells had Anthony’s letter published in the *Deseret Evening News* and the *Salt Lake Herald* as well as the *Woman’s Exponent* to stake a position early.⁶³² She believed “the Constitutional Convention should [adopt equal suffrage] whether we intercede with them or not, their own knowledge of the country’s needs and what women have done to help settle the Territory should inspire them.”⁶³³

⁶²⁸ “Programme,” *Manti Messenger*, June 29, 1894, p. 4; “Independence Day,” *Manti Messenger*, July 6, 1894, p. 4; Beaver County Woman’s Suffrage Association minute book, July 16 and August 16, 1894.

⁶²⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 17 July 1894.

⁶³⁰ Rebecca Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1869–1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 44.

⁶³¹ “Letter from Susan B.,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 27, 1894, p. 6; “Appeal for Woman Suffrage,” *Deseret Weekly*, August 4, 1894, p. 5; “Susan B. Anthony’s Letter,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 3/4 (August 1 and 15, 1894): 169.

⁶³² Wells, Diary, 25 July 1894; “Appeal for Woman Suffrage,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 26, 1894, p. 5; “From Susan B. Anthony,” *Salt Lake Herald*, July 27, 1894, p. 5; “Susan B. Anthony’s Letter,” 169.

⁶³³ Wells, Diary, 25 July 1894.

Still, this was a crucial time to take action. The next month, Utah County suffragists Sarah A. Boyer and Electa Bullock again traveled to meet with Wells, “anxious to know all about suffrage in the Constitution of the new State.”⁶³⁴ Wells read them her letters from national leaders and “had quite a caucus over the affair” with them and Sarah M. Kimball.⁶³⁵ Boyer and Bullock were possibly concerned that their local elected officials needed more persuasion; perhaps they had noticed an uptick in anti-suffrage arguments from local business owners or newspapers. They may also have been convinced by Colorado’s recent successful referendum that a more proactive approach was both possible and necessary to keep men on their side.

WSAs continued to hold public meetings leading up to the party conventions. Everyone expected the issue to be decided at the territorial conventions in September, but some suffragists were determined to force their neighbors to take a stand. Sarah A. Boyer was one of several women who attended the Republican primary in Springville, 45 miles south of Salt Lake City. After a motion passed that the “courtesies of the meeting be extended to the Republican ladies present,” she nominated a delegate and alternate delegate and proposed a motion urging the county convention to support women’s suffrage. That motion failed as others “did not believe this the time nor place to begin the work.”⁶³⁶

The *Provo Dispatch* published a man’s condescending letter about Boyer’s experience crowing, “when she has more experience in political matters, she will learn to take defeats with the coolness and calmness of a veteran.”⁶³⁷ This dismissive response played on old tropes of

⁶³⁴ Wells, Diary, 20 August 1894.

⁶³⁵ Wells, Diary, 20 August 1894. Wells had corresponded with Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Rachel Foster Avery that month. See Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, August 7, 12, 15, 1894. There were discussions that Catt might come to Utah, but her visit did not materialize at that time.

⁶³⁶ “The Other Side,” *Provo Dispatch*, September 11, 1894, p. 1.

⁶³⁷ “The Other Side,” *Provo Dispatch*, September 11, 1894, p. 1.

women as too emotional for politics. But Boyer, a forty-nine-year-old mother and hotel proprietor alongside her husband, would likely have voted in Springville for seventeen years. She was also president of the Springville WSA and member of the Utah County WSA executive board.⁶³⁸ To say she lacked political sensibilities or experience was a deliberate misstatement of the facts calculated to shut women out of the game.

In the end, both Republicans and Democrats adopted pro-suffrage planks in their platforms. At the Republican territorial convention, suffragists seated in the balcony of the Provo opera house “enthusiastically waved their handkerchiefs and gentlemen cheered and waved their hats” after the statement “we favor the granting of equal suffrage to women.”⁶³⁹ Suffragists did not speak at the convention, but their presence was a visible reminder of what they expected from the party.

Women were also largely spectators at the Democratic convention in the Salt Lake Theatre, where they filled the boxes and part of the balcony.⁶⁴⁰ The Democratic platform went well beyond its rival’s, declaring: “The Democrats of Utah are unequivocally in favor of woman suffrage, and the political rights and privileges of women equal with those of men including eligibility to office, and we demand that such guarantees shall be provided in the constitution of the state of Utah as will secure to the women of Utah these inestimable rights.”⁶⁴¹ As this was read, “the convention rose up en masse and cheered lustily.” Suffrage leaders (and outspoken

⁶³⁸ “Woman Suffragists,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, September 26, 1892, p. 4; “The Suffragists,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, December 17, 1894, p. 4.

⁶³⁹ M.A. Till, “Woman Suffrage Column,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 6/7 (September 15 and October 1, 1894): 190; “Republican Platform,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, Sept. 14, 1894, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁰ “Rawlins and Victory,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 16, 1894, p. 6.

⁶⁴¹ “Rawlins and Victory.”

Democrats) Emily S. Richards and Electa Bullock gave short expressions of gratitude and assured that women would not abuse their political privileges.⁶⁴²

Competition between the newly growing national parties in Utah advantaged suffragists.⁶⁴³ Neither party could safely reject women's enfranchisement in its platform for fear of alienating potential voters who could change the balance of power.⁶⁴⁴ Following NAWSA's lead, the WSA maintained political neutrality and commended both parties for their commitment to equal rights and their "liberality and justice." It also emphasized suffragists' "implicit confidence" in the "champions of liberty" who would soon frame an "enlightened and progressive" state constitution.⁶⁴⁵ These expressions of confidence and trust in Utah lawmakers' commitment to justice were hallmarks of Emmeline B. Wells' approach, steering men to do the right thing by praising them in advance and framing support for suffrage as a natural part of Utah's cultural heritage.

As Wells later reported to NAWSA, "Suffrage women in the several counties used their utmost influence and best powers of persuasion to diffuse the ideas of equal rights" ahead of elections for constitutional convention delegates, and many women were invited to speak in political meetings.⁶⁴⁶ Beaver County suffragists urged their friends and family members to "choose men who have the courage to labor for the cause of woman."⁶⁴⁷ Sarah Boyer told the

⁶⁴² "Rawlins and Victory."

⁶⁴³ Utahns had begun affiliating with the two national political parties in 1891 in preparation for statehood.

⁶⁴⁴ Emily S. Richards, "Woman Suffrage in Utah," *The Deseret Weekly* 52, no. 9 (February 15, 1896): 258.

⁶⁴⁵ "Utah W.S.A. Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 8 (October 15, 1894): 194.

⁶⁴⁶ "Woman Suffrage Column: Utah W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 233.

⁶⁴⁷ Beaver County Woman's Suffrage Association minute book, July 16, 1894.

Provo Dispatch that her coworkers employed “every effort in the cause of suffrage for women prior to the election” and Utah County WSA president Electa Bullock “made a thorough personal canvass of Utah County, visiting every precinct.”⁶⁴⁸ Suffragists exerted pressure on would-be delegates in Sevier County by expressing “in every social gathering...their delight over what has been done by the two political parties in favoring their enfranchisement.”⁶⁴⁹

On Election Day itself, suffragists made their political interest visible as male voters cast ballots for constitutional convention delegates in blue envelopes provided by the Utah Commission.⁶⁵⁰ Dozens of women led by Emily S. Richards served lunch to their respective party’s election workers in precincts across Salt Lake City.⁶⁵¹ When the results came in, Republicans had a small majority in the constitutional convention.

Emmeline B. Wells urged *Exponent* readers to continue working their powers of persuasion:

Women should not lose one advantage, but work tactfully and industriously, the cause is worthy of the best directed and most earnest endeavors. Lose no time in converting by the most sublime reasoning or persuasive eloquence all within your reach who will lend a listening ear. Make every strenuous effort possible to educate the general public, circulate suffrage literature among your neighbors and friends. Remember even after the Constitution is adopted by the Convention it has to be voted upon, and if you can convince one man, to vote right on this momentous question, the labor will not have been in vain.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁸ “The Woman Suffragists,” *Provo Dispatch*, September 8, 1894, p. 1; O.S., “Biography: Electa Wood Bullock,” *Woman’s Exponent* 36, no. 2 (July 1, 1907): 11.

⁶⁴⁹ “News from Nearby Cities and Towns,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 2, 1894, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁰ “In Utah Towns,” *Deseret Evening News*, November 6, 1894, p. 1.

⁶⁵¹ With election judges, challengers, and the party apparatus rounding up potential voters, there were many to be fed. “The Great Battle is Over,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, Nov. 7, 1894, p. 3; “Salt Lake,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 7, 1894, p. 1; “Bamberger and the Ladies,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 7, 1894, p. 3. This was a common way for women to participate in the political pageantry of election day, and they had done so in previous years in Utah. “The Battle Wages Hot,” *Salt Lake Times*, November 8, 1892, p. 1.

⁶⁵² “An Appeal to Women,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 9/10 (November 1 and 15, 1894): 204.

Despite both parties' public promises in favor of equal suffrage, Wells also reminded WSA members that "suffrage was by no means assured, that a number of prominent members of both parties were strongly opposed. Had Kansas lived up to her platform that would be a suffrage state now."⁶⁵³ So suffragists continued to publicly remind delegates that they were "practically pledg[ed]" to reinstate women's voting rights.⁶⁵⁴ But at this point in 1894, political battle lines no longer lined up neatly with support for Mormon politicians vis-à-vis local antagonists or the federal government. Delegates may have felt they had more room for personal preference and political calculations in deciding their stance.⁶⁵⁵

Salt Lake County WSA President Dr. Ellen Ferguson urged suffragists to take even more direct action to prevent delegates from wavering. Ferguson wanted "to interview the [delegates] elected to see if they intend to place women side by side with men in the constitution."⁶⁵⁶ "Many are inclined to hang back," she warned, "saying wait till we are a State then we will give to women Suffrage."⁶⁵⁷ She was not the only one concerned. Electa Bullock and the Utah County WSA leadership wrote to Wells in December "asking my advice," likely a hopeful nudge toward more coordinated territory-wide efforts to nail down the votes.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵³ "W.S.A.," *Provo Dispatch*, December 3, 1895, p. 1. Both New York and Kansas voters had defeated suffrage referenda in 1894.

⁶⁵⁴ "Woman Suffrage Column: Utah W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 233.

⁶⁵⁵ The Populist Party of Utah also adopted a pro-suffrage platform plank. See "Populists in the Field," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 30, 1894, p. 8.

⁶⁵⁶ "S.L. Co. Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 11 (December 1, 1894): 211.

⁶⁵⁷ "S.L. Co. Convention."

⁶⁵⁸ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 13 December 1894.

But Wells was “full of the [NAWSA] Convention [in Atlanta] and of the Council [NCW] in Washington,” both coming up early the next year.⁶⁵⁹ She had been attending suffrage conventions since 1879, developing strong relationships with NWSA leaders that had crucially sustained their defense of Utah women’s voting rights. It made sense that Wells wanted her territorial organization to send a substantial delegation to NAWSA and demonstrate Utahns’ resolve and commitment when attention would be focused on their situation. It also made sense that others felt their limited funds would go to better use locally. At the Utah County WSA convention, “many prominent members expressed the opinion that money and energy should all be used in the home campaign, and that the national should be called upon for help this year.”⁶⁶⁰ In the end, Wells traveled to Atlanta with just two other delegates, Marilla Daniels from Provo and Aurelia Rogers of Farmington, funded by WSA and Relief Society suppers and balls.⁶⁶¹

Utah did receive an extra dose of attention at the NAWSA convention, where Susan B. Anthony “manifested a deep interest in Utah and expressed the ardent hope that it would be the next state to come into the union with equal rights for all.”⁶⁶² The convention opened with several addresses about taxation without representation amid yellow flags and yellow badges

⁶⁵⁹ Wells, Diary, 12 December 1894.

⁶⁶⁰ “The Suffragists,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, December 17, 1894, p. 4. In fact, the committee on plan of work did recommend at the NAWSA convention to raise \$5,000 and focus on “and that special attention be given South Carolina, Utah and Tennessee, where constitutional conventions will probably soon be held, and Idaho and Michigan, where female suffrage amendments will be submitted to the people.” It is not clear whether any NAWSA funds were sent to Utah ahead of the constitutional convention. See “Attacked by Anna Shaw,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 2, 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁶¹ “Woman’s Suffrage Association,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 23, 1895, p. 8; “Local News,” *Provo Dispatch*, January 24, 1895, p. 4; “Kaysville Kinks,” *Davis County Clipper*, January 24, 1895, p. 1; “Social Amusements,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, January 26, 1895, p. 5.

⁶⁶² “Convention in Atlanta,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 236.

galore, highlighting the theme that Wells had also heavily emphasized in Utah.⁶⁶³ As usual, Utahns were appointed to various committees and Wells addressed the convention.

Wells' speech expressed her faith that Utah legislators would give "all persons born in America, or naturalized the same rights to citizenship."⁶⁶⁴ She explained that the territorial WSA had maintained political support by being "very conservative," politically neutral, and "determined" "not to be aggressive," instead "awaiting developments and holding itself in readiness to work with a purpose."⁶⁶⁵ Wells described a future time "when the womanly and moral element will be needed...to cooperate with men in the solution of the grave questions which agitate the country" and outlined a list of progressive reforms. Her speech echoed a conservative "public motherhood" message that had already emerged in suffrage imagery as early as 1890 and was now gaining traction in the national movement, emphasizing women's political participation as a natural extension of domestic duties.⁶⁶⁶ But Wells still used her favorite, unique-to-Utah practical arguments—Utah women had not previously abused the privilege of voting, and many of them were taxpayers.

Laying out her expectations for the upcoming constitutional convention, Wells hinted at some of Utah suffragists' behind-the-scenes planning. She indicated that a delegation of women would likely be selected to attend the convention, "watching carefully any and every measure calculated to infringe upon the full freedom and liberty of women." If that was not enough, Wells

⁶⁶³ "Woman Suffrage," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 1, 1895, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁴ "Woman Suffrage Column: Utah W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 233.

⁶⁶⁵ "Woman Suffrage Column," 233.

⁶⁶⁶ Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 134.

said, they would “present petitions...should emergencies unlooked for arise.”⁶⁶⁷ Since Mormon women had spent so much effort on petitioning in previous decades, it made sense that they would have discussed how, when, and whether to petition the constitutional convention. She closed with confidence, pronouncing Utah a “grand and promising rising star in the West which is now about to emerge from...obscurity...into the bright galaxy of states.”⁶⁶⁸

Wells’ speech brought the house down. The *Atlanta Evening Journal* reported, “President Anthony came forward and putting her arm around her gave her endorsement to the speaker. As she told of the work being done in Utah she kept her arms around the delegate and the audience was visibly affected at this exhibition of affection.”⁶⁶⁹ Wells recorded: “some of the ladies were moved to tears, it was a tribute of personal affection as well as a flattering compliment to the Territory.”⁶⁷⁰ This touching show of friendship and solidarity was incredibly meaningful to Wells, who had been in the trenches for decades but always occupied an uneasy place in the national movement.

Utah’s Constitutional Convention

Back in Utah, local WSAs were gearing up with their own plans ahead of the constitutional convention.⁶⁷¹ Some of the more active county WSAs prepared to make their sentiments known at the convention. In January, the Salt Lake County WSA discussed petitions

⁶⁶⁷ “Woman Suffrage Column,” 233.

⁶⁶⁸ “Woman Suffrage Column,” 234.

⁶⁶⁹ Quoted in “Convention in Atlanta,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 237.

⁶⁷⁰ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 2 February 1895.

⁶⁷¹ Woman’s Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, January 16, 1895, p. 37.

circulating in Weber and Davis Counties and “decided that we have a similar petition.”⁶⁷² And Salt Lake suffragists did interview as many delegates as they could in late February to determine where things stood.⁶⁷³

When the convention opened at Salt Lake’s new City and County Building on March 4, suffragists were optimistic that their work of the past six years would bear fruit. The 107 male delegates included fifty-nine Republicans and forty-eight Democrats, only twenty-nine of whom had been born in the Territory. Twenty-eight delegates were Gentiles, including Charles S. Varian, who had prosecuted polygamists as a district attorney, German-born commercial businessman and former Ogden mayor Frederick Kiesel, and *Salt Lake Tribune* editor C. C. Goodwin.⁶⁷⁴ Even the decidedly anti-suffrage *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that “a strong sentiment in favor of giving women the right to vote is manifested by the delegates.”⁶⁷⁵ Still, suffrage quickly became the convention’s most hotly debated topic.

Utah newspapers laid out the initial contours of the debate before the first speech was made, with both Republican and Democratic papers on both sides of the issue. “Equal suffrage for women as well as men...seems to be in favor in Utah...there should be little, if any, opposition to its being embodied in the constitution, or at least submitted as a separate article,” the Democratic-leaning *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* opined.⁶⁷⁶ In other towns, the *Box Elder*

⁶⁷² “Salt Lake Co. W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 15/16 (February 1 and 15, 1895): 234. Ruth May Fox noted that she “tried to vote down petition but failed” in a February 5 meeting. See Fox diary, February 9, 1895. The Salt Lake County WSA did end up submitting a petition to the constitutional convention on March 18. See Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Fifteenth Day: Monday, March 18, 1895, p. 484; Box 2, Folder 12, UA.

⁶⁷³ Fox diary, February 22 and 25, 1895.

⁶⁷⁴ Jean Bickmore White, “Woman’s Place is in the Constitution,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 344–69.

⁶⁷⁵ “Plans of the Delegates,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 4, 1895, p. 8.

⁶⁷⁶ “Referendum of Prohibition,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 8, 1895, p. 5.

Voice and *Ogden Daily Standard* supported the suffrage clause, but the *Provo Daily Enquirer* argued that women would have to show “not only that they are fit for the franchise, but that they want it as well.”⁶⁷⁷ *The Provo Dispatch* added that it opposed equal suffrage “for the reason that we think the ladies too good, too pure and too necessary at home to have the inclination, the time or the wish to enter the arena with men to struggle for political mastery, or even political equality.”⁶⁷⁸ But several papers also expressed a sense that “Utah must not be behind its progressive neighbors on this question;” an Idaho legislator had recently introduced a suffrage amendment to submit to voters at the next general election.⁶⁷⁹

The Committee on Elections and Suffrage first took up the issue on March 11, voting to adopt the clause from Wyoming’s state constitution extending equal voting and officeholding rights to women citizens.⁶⁸⁰ The decision was not binding because only eight of fifteen members were present due to conflicting committee assignments. Still, the expansive clause adopted, as well as delegate Kiesel’s strenuous opposition, foreshadowed future debate in the committee and the convention as a whole. When Emmeline B. Wells returned from the East, Emily S. Richards and other WSA leaders informed her that they feared some delegates’ commitment was waning.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁷ “General Items,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, February 12, 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁸ “The New Constitution,” *Provo Dispatch*, March 5, 1895, p. 2. The paper also argued that women would lose their purity and special influence if they sank to men’s level, that they could not shoulder the hardships of citizenship like military duty, and that including suffrage could defeat statehood at the hands of Congress or Utah voters. With this sentiment coming from the Utah County seat, it was hardly any wonder that suffragists there were concerned.

⁶⁷⁹ “General Items,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, January 25, 1895, p. 2; “Idaho’s Legislature,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 10, 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁰ “Among the Committees,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 12, 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁸¹ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 14 March 1895; Madsen, *Intimate Portrait*, 349.

Wells rallied her forces and called for a territorial convention as a public show of force.⁶⁸² Just two days later, nearly one hundred suffragists gathered from across the Territory in a sympathetic judge's chamber just down the hall from the constitutional convention.⁶⁸³ After drafting a petition, they filed into the convention chambers behind Emily S. Richards, who handed it to her delegate husband to introduce.⁶⁸⁴ Suffragists' presence as Franklin S. Richards read the six typewritten pages to the convention demonstrated, as their petition declared, that "the women of Utah are by no means indifferent spectators to the drama that is now being enacted."⁶⁸⁵

Aimed at local lawmakers rather than Congress, this petition differed sharply from memorials Mormon suffragists had signed in previous decades. It articulated arguments designed to appeal to their friends and neighbors within Utah, developed in territory-wide efforts over the past six years. Suffragists continued their pattern of reinforcing men's support by expressing women's assurance "that our brothers are dealing honestly and righteously with us."⁶⁸⁶ They also emphasized their desire to work *with* men instead of *against* them by stating, "we contemplate no rival sovereignty, no sphere peculiar and apart, no conflicting regime or antagonistic legislation, no hostile policy or divided counsels." Instead, the goals of their movement were "true human progress...higher and truer harmony...[and] more real cooperation."⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸² Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 15–16 March 1895.

⁶⁸³ "Woman Suffragists," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 19, 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁴ "God Bless the Ladies," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 19, 1895, p. 5; Mary Ann B. Freeze diaries, 1875–1899; March 18, 1895; MS 6154, CHL.

⁶⁸⁵ "Woman Suffragists," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 19, 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁶ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 487.

⁶⁸⁷ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 487.

Utah suffragists framed their petition in the language of progress and described the constitutional convention’s deliberations as part of a movement ushering in a new era of history with “far reaching consequences.”⁶⁸⁸ They also decried the “tyranny” of taxation without representation by quoting great American leaders like James Otis, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln.⁶⁸⁹ Women were part of ‘we, the people,’ suffragists maintained, and denying them the “equal rights and privileges of citizenship” endangered the natural rights of all Americans.⁶⁹⁰ They closed the petition with a plea for delegates to help America fulfill its destiny by “inaugurat[ing] a larger and truer civil life” with the adoption of a suffrage clause guaranteeing equal rights and privileges to women and men.⁶⁹¹ The petition’s signers claimed to represent thirty-four thousand women through six county WSAs, the territorial association, the National Woman’s Relief Society, and the Young Ladies’ National Mutual Improvement Association.⁶⁹² There were approximately 64,000 women of voting age in Utah in 1900, so this petition likely represented more than half of the women in Utah in 1895.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 490.

⁶⁸⁹ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 488.

⁶⁹⁰ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 486–89.

⁶⁹¹ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 491.

⁶⁹² Since Wells had only issued the call for a meeting two days previously, the county WSA representatives in attendance had likely already planned to be in Salt Lake City to watch the constitutional convention. The petition claimed to represent 34,000 Utah women through the WSA, the Relief Society, and the Young Ladies’ National Mutual Improvement Association. Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 491–92.

⁶⁹³ Eleventh Census – Volume 1 (Part I & Part II), Report on Population of the United States, U.S. Census, 1890. Minor Civil Divisions, Table 5.—Population of States and Territories by Minor Civil Divisions: 1880 and 1890—Continued, p. 342. The census did not count women of voting age in 1900, but assuming the same proportions of women and men were over the age of 21, there would have been about 64,019 women twenty-one and older in Utah in 1900. *Population by Sex, General Nativity, and Color, By Groups of States and Territories: 1900. Group 10. Tennessee, Texas, and Utah*, Twelfth Census of the United States, Census Bulletin, no. 95, September 24, 1901, p. 2; *School, Militia, and Voting Ages. Group 10. Tennessee, Texas, and Utah*, Twelfth Census of the United States, Census Bulletin, no. 97, September 24, 1901, p. 2.

Characteristically, the Utah County WSA had submitted its own petition to the convention a few days earlier. Its appeal similarly highlighted the injustice of denying women the privileges of citizenship and asked for equal suffrage in the constitution “because it is just and you have solemnly pledged yourselves to accomplish the result.”⁶⁹⁴ The petition was signed by “Mrs. Electa Bullock, Mrs. Sarah A. Boyer, and Mrs. Hannah S. Lapish,” WSA delegates who indicated their respectability by emphasizing their marital status.⁶⁹⁵ Their work inspired similar actions from other quarters of Utah.

On the day of the territorial suffrage gathering, the Salt Lake County WSA had delegate Orson F. Whitney introduce another petition that followed Utah County’s nearly word for word.⁶⁹⁶ Again, similar to the territorial petition, county WSA memorialists expressed appreciation for both parties’ pro-suffrage platforms and asked “that the pledges made to the women of Utah be kept and that the new State of Utah may have a constitution framed upon the basis of justice and privileges for all her citizens.”⁶⁹⁷ They also addressed the injustice of denying women the privileges of citizenship when they were subject to the same laws and taxes as men.⁶⁹⁸ Each of these petitions were calculated to protect the ground suffragists had previously won and cut off anti-suffrage delegates’ opposition with expressions of popular sentiment.

Wells finagled an invitation for the WSA to testify the next day before the Committee on Elections and Suffrage. Speakers spanned the generations of Utah women from Civil War nurse

⁶⁹⁴ Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Twelfth Day: Friday, March 15, 1895, p. 394; Box 2, Folder 10, UA.

⁶⁹⁵ Constitutional Convention, Transcript; March 15, 1895, p. 395.

⁶⁹⁶ “Suffragists Out in Force,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 19, 1895, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁷ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 485.

⁶⁹⁸ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 18, 1895, p. 484.

Joanna Melton, Utah's first female lawyer Georgiana Snow Carleton, long-time suffrage veteran Sarah M. Kimball, and younger leaders Emily S. Richards and Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon.⁶⁹⁹ Utah WSA treasurer Ruth May Fox thought the suffragists had been "very courteously treated. We all felt it a great day in the history of Utah."⁷⁰⁰ The women had made their voices heard, and now they had to watch and wait.

The Committee on Elections and Suffrage submitted its report at the end of the week after receiving files from eight delegates and "divers memorials and petitions presented by the ladies of Weber, Utah, Juab, Wasatch, Salt Lake, Davis Counties and the Woman's Suffragist Association of Utah Territory"⁷⁰¹ The report concurred with suffragists that "taxation without representation is not only unjust but contravenes and comes in conflict with the very genius of our political institutions."⁷⁰² It also said that the committee could not find a reason why women who were U.S. citizens should not have the privilege of voting or holding public office. It recommended that Utah adopt the suffrage clause from Wyoming, "in which State woman's suffrage after twenty-five years experience has been demonstrated to be a pronounced success."⁷⁰³ Of course the committee could have pointed to Utah's previous experience with woman suffrage, but it avoided what could be seen as a tainted example by appealing to an uncontroversial history by comparison, as well as the only language on woman suffrage that Congress had ever approved.

⁶⁹⁹ "Convention Chat," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 20, 1895, p. 3.

⁷⁰⁰ Fox diary, March 18, 1895.

⁷⁰¹ Committee on Elections and Suffrage, Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Committee Reports, 6–10, March 22–27, 1895; March 22, 1895, p. 5124; Box 6, Folder 8, UA.

⁷⁰² Constitutional Convention, Committee Reports, March 22, 1895, p. 5125.

⁷⁰³ Constitutional Convention, Committee Reports, March 22, 1895, p. 5125.

Eleven committee members signed the committee report, including S. R. Thurman who had introduced Utah County's pro-suffrage petition and Peter Lowe, a Cache Valley delegate who would later tell the convention that he had "cut out of the newspaper at the time—the two clauses referring to this question of equal suffrage to women, and placed them in [his] hat" as a reminder of his duty.⁷⁰⁴ But three committee members were equally committed in their fight against suffrage, and they soon filed their own minority report. They conceded that women could theoretically "vote as intelligently as men," but argued that they would be swayed by their finer feelings instead.⁷⁰⁵ The minority insinuated that Mormon women had been controlled by their church for too long to understand "the duties which pertain to citizenship," arguing "it is hard for a woman's nature to swiftly change when her sympathies and sense of duty have long controlled her in a particular channel."⁷⁰⁶

The minority report said that restoring woman suffrage would restore Mormon rule in Utah, warning of a "widespread fear" that if women regained the vote, the Church would play on "the generous impulses and religious instincts of women" to regain political power.⁷⁰⁷ This recycled the old arguments against Utah statehood and theocracy, placing Mormon women's votes yet again at the center of larger political battles. Finally, the three anti-suffrage delegates claimed that Utahns had changed their minds since adopting their party platforms the previous

⁷⁰⁴ James Lowe, in *Constitutional Convention (1895)*, Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Thirty-Third Day: Friday, April 5, 1895, p. 2304; Box 3, Folder 7, UA.

⁷⁰⁵ *Constitutional Convention (1895)*, Series 3212, Records, Committee Reports, 6–10, March 22–27, 1895; March 27, 1895, p. 5126; Box 6, Folder 8, UA.

⁷⁰⁶ *Constitutional Convention*, Committee Reports, March 27, 1895, p. 5126.

⁷⁰⁷ *Constitutional Convention*, Committee Reports, March 27, 1895, p. 5127.

fall.⁷⁰⁸ Since Utahns would elect a legislature soon after statehood, they argued, the question should be suspended now to allow that body to decide the matter in the future.⁷⁰⁹

The suffrage issue came before the full convention for the first time the next day, with delegate and Mormon Quorum of the Seventy member B. H. Roberts firing the first salvo. His personal opposition to suffrage was no surprise, but his commitment to delaying the question was. Roberts breathed new life into anti-suffrage arguments which had previously been shared largely only by non-Mormon delegates as he suggested that “the adoption of woman’s suffrage [was] dangerous” to the acquiring of statehood.⁷¹⁰ Roberts argued that an equal suffrage clause could jeopardize the fate of the proposed constitution at the hands of Utah voters or Congress, so it should be submitted to Utah voters after statehood. But over the next days, Roberts also claimed that women were too good to vote, that they were already represented in politics by their husbands, and that the peace of home and family life would be ruined if women gained the vote—all widespread anti-suffrage tropes in American discourse.⁷¹¹

Roberts kept the debate going for two weeks, but not without opposition. As he continued, his Davis County constituents attempted to recall him, and the leading quorum of Mormon leaders opposed his stance both on principle and because they feared it was stirring up

⁷⁰⁸ Constitutional Convention, Committee Reports, March 27, 1895, p. 5128.

⁷⁰⁹ Constitutional Convention, Committee Reports, March 27, 1895, p. 5128. The report said the new state legislature would be elected directly by the people, but so were the constitutional convention delegates.

⁷¹⁰ Brigham H. Roberts, in Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Twenty-Fifth Day: Thursday, March 28, 1895, p. 1222; Box 2, Folder 21, UA.

⁷¹¹ Constitutional Convention, Transcript, March 28, 1895, p. 1223–37; Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Thirtieth Day: Tuesday, April 2, 1895, p. 1953–75; Box 3, Folder 4, UA.

latent fears of Mormon political power.⁷¹² Their private discussion “brought several brethren to their feet, in which they expressed themselves very strongly in favor of woman suffrage,” with several saying that “an enemy could not have betrayed us more.”⁷¹³

Mormon delegates Orson F. Whitney and Franklin S. Richards led the charge against Roberts. They echoed Mormon suffragists’ arguments that their movement was part of an unfolding spiritual restoration, as Whitney said, “one of the great levers by which the Almighty is lifting up this fallen world, lifting it nearer to the throne of its Creator.”⁷¹⁴ But the men also went a step further than woman suffragists had in their meetings or petitions to dismantle benevolent sexism in anti-suffrage rhetoric. Richards declared, “I have never known a woman who felt complimented by the statement that she was too good to exercise the same rights and privileges as a man.”⁷¹⁵ Their arguments on the convention floor rallied many others who felt that Utah’s previous experiment with suffrage had not produced the disastrous results Roberts and others now predicted. Richards proclaimed, “If the price of Statehood is the disfranchisement of one-half of the people...it is not worth the price demanded.”⁷¹⁶

Hundreds of spectators crammed into the convention to hear the oratory as delegates voted to give Roberts extra time to make his argument.⁷¹⁷ Ruth May Fox, Treasurer for the WSA

⁷¹² “Roberts Asked to Resign,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 31, 1895, p. 1; George Q. Cannon, Journal, 4 April 1895, The Journal of George Q. Cannon, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 1 March 2019, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1890s/1895/04-1895>.

⁷¹³ Cannon, Journal, 4 April 1895.

⁷¹⁴ Orson F. Whitney, in Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Twenty-Seventh Day: Saturday, March 30, 1895, p. 1557; Box 3, Folder 2, UA.

⁷¹⁵ Franklin S. Richards, in Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Transcript of Proceedings, Twenty-Fifth Day: Thursday, March 28, 1895, p. 1269; Box 2, Folder 21, UA.

⁷¹⁶ Franklin S. Richards, Constitutional Convention Transcript, March 28, 1895, p. 1268.

⁷¹⁷ “Getting Red Hot,” *Deseret Evening News*, April 1, 1895, p. 1; Mary Ann B. Freeze diaries, April 1, 1895.

of Utah “stood up all the time with the exception of a little while that I sat on the table.” She thought it was “a shame [Roberts] does not use his eloquence in a better cause.”⁷¹⁸ As the central Relief Society gathered for its semi-annual conference on April 4, reports came in that suffrage “looked doubtful,” prompting President Zina D. H. Young to offer a prayer that the question might prevail.⁷¹⁹ Emily S. Richards asked all in favor of suffrage to stand, and “every woman in that large congregation was on her feet immediately.”⁷²⁰

On April 5, convention delegates voted 75 to 14 in favor of the equal suffrage clause, with 12 absent.⁷²¹ Ruth May Fox observed that the question was “expected to be brought up again, so I am afraid the fight is not over.”⁷²² Faced with growing assertions that Utahns would prefer to decide on suffrage as a separate issue after statehood, the WSA regrouped and decided to petition to show the strength of their support. Fox was among those who circulated petitions in Salt Lake City, where she “met with good success” but “did so dislike to visit the business block,” where opposition was strongest.⁷²³ Emmeline B. Wells’ office at the *Exponent* was the hub of the activity with “lists of names” coming in and women “counting up signatures.”⁷²⁴ Wells recorded sending 80 letters, likely asking suffrage leaders across the territory to circulate petitions in their own communities.⁷²⁵

⁷¹⁸ Fox diary, April 1, 1895.

⁷¹⁹ Freeze diaries, April 4, 1895; Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 4 April 1895.

⁷²⁰ “Relief Society Conference,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 19 (May 1, 1895): 262. Mormon Apostle Joseph F. Smith spoke forcefully in favor of suffrage and equal pay for women at the conference that evening.

⁷²¹ “Suffrage War is Finished,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 6, 1895, p. 1.

⁷²² Fox diary, April 5, 1895.

⁷²³ Fox diary, April 3–4, 10, 1895.

⁷²⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 7, 11, 18–19 April 1895.

⁷²⁵ Wells, Diary, 6 April 1895.

But opponents were doing the same, with prominent non-Mormon women like Jennie Froiseth and Cornelia Paddock leading mass meetings and joining businessmen in circulating petitions for separate submission.⁷²⁶ Even Charlotte Godbe Kirby, arguably Utah's earliest suffragist and a founding officer of the Utah WSA, penned a letter in the *Salt Lake Tribune* in support of separate submission. She still supported woman suffrage but wrote that "it would be suicidal" to include a suffrage plank in the proposed constitution and warned that enfranchising ignorant women would not help to undo the problems caused by the votes of ignorant men.⁷²⁷

Still, the WSA network pulled through and Utahns sent in pro-suffrage petitions from twenty-six of the twenty-seven counties in the territory.⁷²⁸ Unfortunately, the vast majority of petitions sent to the convention were not preserved along with the proceedings, committee reports, and other documents produced by the convention delegates. This makes it impossible to ascertain what the petitions said and who signed them, except in some instances when the name of the first signer was read into the minutes of the day's convention proceedings. These initial signers were likely those who had circulated the petition for signatures in their local community and then mailed it to Salt Lake City. Nine women from six counties were identified by name as petition signatories in the constitutional convention records, heading up petitions with hundreds of names.⁷²⁹

This effort reflected Utah suffragists' robust organization and deep personal commitment to the cause. As news of the separate submission crisis reached rural communities, local WSA

⁷²⁶ "Vox Populi," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 6, 1895, p. 5; "The Ladies' Resolutions," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 6, 1895, p. 4.

⁷²⁷ Charlotte Godbe Kirby, "A Woman's Answer," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 4, 1895, p. 7.

⁷²⁸ Greene, "Echo of Equal Suffrage," 283.

⁷²⁹ Greene, "Echo of Equal Suffrage," 283.

members would have taken hours out of their days in the busy spring season to respond. They would have carefully written out their own petitions before visiting nearby neighbors or riding into town to request signatures and mail the results to their delegates in Salt Lake City. The women and men who circulated pro-suffrage petitions had likely met with fellow suffragists dozens of times over the past years to pray and sing and publicly declare their commitment to equal rights and the advancement of women.

One suffragist from St. George wrote an anonymous, satirical letter to the *Exponent* describing her experience circulating petitions:

Some signed gladly, some were afraid, some did it because another did, some did not do it at all...I felt myself to have been half insulted, browbeaten, made fun of, and a great many other things, by people whom I had esteemed as ladies and gentlemen before, and my friends. There was some comfort, however, when I opened my paper and scanned over the forty-seven names of strong and influential men and women inscribed there.⁷³⁰

This letter likely contained an element of truth.

Many of the women who sent petitions from Sevier County, Morgan, Beaver, Sanpete County, Cache Valley, and elsewhere would have remembered signing memorials drawn up at mass meetings against federal anti-polygamy legislation. They had taken their first steps into the political arena to defend their religion, and they had continued to protest and petition in order to protect their own right to cast ballots. The Relief Society mobilized Mormon women for political action, and that action had changed how they saw themselves and their place in local and national politics. Now in the third decade of Mormon women's direct participation in politics, they felt they had long since settled questions of their citizenship and their rights. It was time for the men in their community to catch up.

⁷³⁰ "Cactus Papers No. 2," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 20 (May 15, 1895): 271.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* was characteristically dismissive of pro-suffrage petitioners as pawns being used by sinister interests opposed to statehood. At the same time, the paper claimed that suffragists in Sanpete County, for example, had threatened blacklisting, “political death, social ostracism and other dire calamities” against those who would not sign their petition.⁷³¹ These anti-suffrage arguments once again denigrated Mormon women’s political participation as either too naïve or too calculating, just as opponents had since the 1870s. But their political expression had real effect.

In the end, about sixteen percent of Utahns weighed in on the issue by signing petitions.⁷³² The convention received 24,801 signatures on petitions in favor of equal suffrage and 15,366 on petitions for separate submission.⁷³³ Pro-suffrage delegates had the numbers to cut off debate on April 18 and voted down a motion to reconsider the suffrage clause, securing equal suffrage in Utah’s proposed constitution.⁷³⁴ The constitution would go before Utah voters in the fall before it could be submitted to Congress. The war was not yet over, but the battle had been won.

For the past six years, Utah suffragists had worked through the WSA to educate each other, recruit supporters, raise funds, march in parades, lobby politicians, and attend conventions, all aimed at regaining the ballot once Utah could write its own constitution. When that moment finally came in 1895, it took the efforts of thousands of women and men to settle the question in ink that could not be blotted out. This grassroots involvement was made possible by decades of

⁷³¹ “San Pete Stirred Up,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 10, 1895, p. 5.

⁷³² Utah’s official population on the day it became a state in January 1896 was 247,324. See Richard D. Poll, “A State is Born,” *Beehive History* 21 (1995): 18.

⁷³³ “Settled It,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 19, 1895, p. 1.

⁷³⁴ “Victory Was Bloodless,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 19, 1895, p. 1.

Mormon women’s collective action through the Relief Society, the Columbian Exposition Board of Lady Managers, and the Woman Suffrage Association of Utah. They had anchored the “gospel of equal rights” firmly into Utah’s political culture.

Rebekah Clark writes that “it was arguably *because* [Mormon women] worked within their social, religious, and cultural structures that they were so effective in building the bridges with Latter-day Saint men that expanded their political influence.”⁷³⁵ While there certainly was not consensus among Utahns on the proper extent of women’s political rights, “Latter-day Saint religious connections ran deeper than political or strategic differences, and suffragists managed to make space for different voices and maintain support for the suffrage cause.”⁷³⁶

Mormon women’s rhetoric of suffrage was unique in several ways. During the 1890s, they had begun to employ a line of argument that would be championed by NAWSA over the next three decades—that women needed to vote to clean up politics and to “overthrow the social evils and temporal immoralities of man.”⁷³⁷ But their beliefs and their expression were infused with a local flavor.

In a territory where many plural wives had been legislated into heads of household by anti-polygamy laws, Utah suffragists continued to repeat the national theme of taxation without representation because it was personal to them. Where the national movement had largely abandoned rhetoric about suffrage as a right of citizenship after the 1875 Supreme Court ruling in *Minor v. Happersett* ended their New Departure strategy,⁷³⁸ Utahns continued to talk about the

⁷³⁵ Rebekah Ryan Clark, “A Harmony of Voices: Negotiating Latter-day Saint Unity on Women’s Suffrage,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2020): 70.

⁷³⁶ Clark, “Harmony of Voices,” 69.

⁷³⁷ Woman’s Suffrage Association (Farmington, Utah) minutes, January 16, 1895, p. 37.

⁷³⁸ Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 167–173.

injustice of denying [white] women citizens this right, because they had exercised it for over a decade. Utah leader Charles W. Penrose, a frequent speaker at Utah WSA events, often remarked that “the ladies are too apt to confuse citizenship and suffrage.”⁷³⁹ Whether or not he had paid attention to Mormon women’s political arguments in years past, their rhetoric was still clearly connecting suffrage with citizenship as it had in the 1880s.⁷⁴⁰ They had come to see themselves as citizens with political rights worth protecting.

Ultimately, Mormon suffragists spoke to their friends and neighbors, appealing to familiar faces. Because local (Mormon) men had been their erstwhile partners and political allies, suffragists’ appeals came from a different position in Utah than they did elsewhere in the country. Emmeline B. Wells was confident in eventual victory because, as she wrote, “I rather trust men than distrust them by far.”⁷⁴¹ And men like Penrose did support the cause.⁷⁴² Mormon suffragists secured men’s support as they expounded a “gospel of equal rights,” appealed for equality under the law, emphasized politics as a cooperative venture, and expressed confidence in the new, progressive era women and men would usher in together.

⁷³⁹ “The Ladies Speak,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, April 12, 1889, p. 2.

⁷⁴⁰ Penrose continued repeating this distinction as a speaker at large suffrage events across Utah, as though trying to ensure women would not feel *too* entitled to political privileges such as officeholding. See “A Grand Woman Suffrage Rally,” *Woman’s Exponent* 21, no. 4 (August 15, 1892): 29.

⁷⁴¹ Clark, “Harmony of Voices,” 60.

⁷⁴² Penrose wrote in his *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* that “the history of woman suffrage in Utah furnishes a sufficient answer to all objections against it so far as this community is concerned.” “Equal Rights to All!” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 16, 1894, p. 4.

CHAPTER 5

“THE BALLOT IN THE HANDS OF THE WOMEN OF UTAH SHOULD BE A POWER TO
BETTER THE HOME, THE STATE AND THE NATION”

In the fall of 1896, the “Women’s Silver Club” of Salt Lake City supported William Jennings Bryan’s presidential candidacy by registering women to vote. This was the first general election in a decade in which Utah women could cast ballots, and many of them were taking advantage of this regained opportunity to campaign for a cause—in this case, free silver—that they felt strongly about. At one silver club meeting, several members reported canvassing three city blocks with the following result: “eighty-one for Bryan, twelve for [William] McKinley, while four ladies told them to go home and cook their husbands’ dinners.”⁷⁴³

The experience as these canvassers related it was somewhat humorous, but it showed how much ground suffragists had yet to cover. Few American women had full access to the ballot box at this time, and not all Utah women embraced their regained political rights.⁷⁴⁴ Emily S. Richards told a NAWSA convention in her address that year that the principle of equal suffrage had been appropriated “by the masses of the people as a permanent feature of the civil and political life of Utah.”⁷⁴⁵ Although that may have been the sentiment of most leading Mormon women and men, women’s rightful place in political life was by no means settled. And

⁷⁴³ “Non-Partisan Silver Women,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 13, 1896, p. 8.

⁷⁴⁴ Women citizens had full voting rights in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah at this point in 1896, as well as some form of partial suffrage in 22 states. However, the additional voting restrictions in force in many states such as poll taxes and literacy tests would have prevented many women from exercising even partial suffrage rights.

⁷⁴⁵ Emily S. Richards, “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” *The Deseret Weekly* 52, no. 9 (February 15, 1896): 258.

equal suffrage did not quickly translate into women's equal representation, equal voice, or equal recognition in Utah.⁷⁴⁶

Many Mormon suffragists had now been political actors for decades, and they continued encouraging voter education and political participation to realize the promise of women's full citizenship. Leaders like Emmeline B. Wells and Emily S. Richards stood on opposite sides of political campaigns, but they shared a conviction that women's voices should be part of the democratic process. Over the next twenty years and more, they would pursue two shared goals: enmeshing women firmly into Utah's political culture and furthering the struggle for women's voting rights nationwide.

Alongside women citizens in Wyoming and Colorado, Utahns' political engagement helped to reshape the limiting gender-based boundary lines of citizenship by forging female roles in the world of formal politics.⁷⁴⁷ But "differentiation between male and female political realms was not dissolved by the mere presence of women in the electorate."⁷⁴⁸ Emmeline B. Wells believed the West had a great destiny in which women would play a crucial role to advance civilization and build up the American empire. She also believed that women had to make

⁷⁴⁶ This was not only true in Utah in 1896, but also in the rest of the United States in 1920. See Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder, *A Century of Votes for Women: American Elections Since Suffrage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, 1959, enlarged edition (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 318–21.

⁷⁴⁷ Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2. Of course, as this dissertation argues, women did not suddenly become political actors only when they were allowed to cast ballots in elections. From the beginning of the United States, many women shaped political discourse and outcomes by participating in election day pageantry, engaging in various forms of political persuasion, and appealing directly to elected officials by lobbying or petitioning. See Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷⁴⁸ Amy L. Geis, "The Key to All Reform": Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887–1920," (MA thesis, University of Toledo, 2015), 42.

themselves seen and heard in order to get a foot in the door and open it wider for the women who would follow.⁷⁴⁹

As Utah leaders urged women's inclusion in local politics and pressed Congress for a federal suffrage amendment, they held up their own unique experience as proof that anti-suffrage arguments and fears were unfounded. They continued to claim a moral high ground as mothers, clubwomen, reformers, and now political actors that entitled them to respect as well as political representation. This was for them the promise of full American citizenship.

Although national women's rights leaders could not immediately translate early western successes "into a widespread political movement," they were eventually able to face down a growing anti-suffrage movement and entrenched attitudes of exclusion to achieve the ratification of a federal suffrage amendment in 1920.⁷⁵⁰ NAWSA continued to exploit traditional gender roles and advance arguments of expediency based on women's superior morality, but Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party also employed the growing power of women voters in suffrage states to force the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment" to a vote in Congress and convince thirty-six state legislatures to vote in favor of ratification.

Utahns played an outsized role in that victory, punching above their weight in membership, financial support, and influence in Congress. As Rebekah Clark observed, "Utah suffragists at the end of the nineteenth century had already developed a clear self-image of their own activism, their commitment to the cause of suffrage, and their integral role within the

⁷⁴⁹ "Celebrating Statehood," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 14 (December 15, 1895): 92.

⁷⁵⁰ Kathryn L. MacKay, "Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere," in *Women in Utah: Paradigm or Paradox?*, ed. Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 379.

national movement.”⁷⁵¹ Mormon women’s organization and commitment to suffrage developed through the Relief Society in the 1870s still ran deep, mobilizing support for both moderate and militant suffrage strategies in Utah as the years progressed.

Utah women entered a new era of political participation in 1895 trumpeting the same notions they had declared for decades: that equality and justice demanded they have part in government, that they could help reform and clean up politics, and that women and men needed to work together for the good of society. Although this vision of equality did not play out in the reality of Utah party politics during the early years of statehood, leading women continued to work to make it happen. Women did win office and achieve some of their policy goals in traditionally female domains like public health, education, art, and protections for child and women workers. As they initially directed their local efforts for equality into the local political parties, Mormon women refocused their suffrage efforts on a federal constitutional amendment that would protect women’s voting rights in national law, never to be revoked again. Their unique and complicated journey toward equal suffrage convinced many Utahns of the importance of national advocacy for women’s rights.

Rocky Mountain Suffrage Convention

Just days after the close of the constitutional convention, Salt Lake City welcomed Susan B. Anthony and Rev. Anna Howard Shaw for a NAWSA conference. One of four regional conferences that year, this Rocky Mountain convention provided Utah suffragists the perfect opportunity to celebrate their achievement in regaining suffrage. It was also a rare moment of

⁷⁵¹ Rebekah Ryan Clark, “The Fire of Civic Endeavor: Utah Suffrage After Statehood, 1896–1920,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 301.

inter-religious cooperation among Utah women that smoothed tensions and focused attention forward on statehood and a new era of political participation. Prominent non-Mormon suffragist and philanthropist Emma McVicker hosted the Rev. Shaw, and Anthony stayed with Phoebe Beatie, daughter of Zina D. H. Young and Brigham Young.⁷⁵²

As territorial WSA President, Emmeline B. Wells had spent weeks planning for the convention. She invited dozens of leading Utah women to welcome the NAWSA leaders as they arrived the railroad station and join in a formal breakfast and a ride through Salt Lake City in the large “Utah Drag” touring carriage.⁷⁵³ Anthony and Shaw spoke to thousands in the Salt Lake Tabernacle and the Theatre on Sunday before the convention officially opened the next morning in the City and County building, which Wells had carefully selected as a more neutral venue than the larger halls on Temple Square.⁷⁵⁴ The hall was still draped with flags and bunting from the constitutional convention, to which the Utah WSA added floral arrangements and large pictures of Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁷⁵⁵

The Rocky Mountain suffrage convention provided thousands of women the opportunity to finally see and hear from leaders they had heard so much about through the *Woman’s Exponent* and local suffrage meetings. At Wells’ request, territorial governor Caleb West conveyed official approval by opening the proceedings and welcoming Anthony and Shaw, NAWSA officers, and other visiting suffragists from western states. Anthony’s opening speech

⁷⁵² Susan B. Anthony, *Diary*, May 12, 1895; Susan B. Anthony Papers: Daybook and Diaries, 1856–1906; Diaries; 1895; May 12, 1895; LOC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss11049018/>.

⁷⁵³ “Two Celebrated Women,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, May 12, 1895, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁴ “At the Tabernacle,” *Deseret Evening News*, May 13, 1895, p. 2; “Two Famous Women,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, May 13, 1895, p. 8; “Day of the Suffragists,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 13, 1895, p. 8.

⁷⁵⁵ “The National Conference,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 20 (May 15, 1895): 268.

hailing Utah's progress since her visit in 1871 was frequently interrupted by applause and Shaw, speaking next, "carried the audience by storm."⁷⁵⁶

Anthony and Shaw were likely more popular in Utah than anywhere else in the United States, since Utah had by far the highest rate of NAWSA membership in the country.⁷⁵⁷ Local suffrage leaders were especially excited to meet Anthony, who had supported their right to vote through thick and thin. During the afternoon recess, Emily and Franklin S. Richards hosted a reception for the two visitors with three hundred distinguished Utahns at their Salt Lake City home, decorated in yellow "in honor of the cause."⁷⁵⁸ After returning for a crowded evening session, the convention met in the much larger Assembly Hall on Temple Square the next day.⁷⁵⁹

Mary Ann Freeze was one of the leading Utahns who joined in entertaining Anthony and Shaw.⁷⁶⁰ Freeze had closely followed the debates in Utah's constitutional convention and had circulated pro-suffrage petitions during the height of the battle. Now, she was "delighted" to see and hear the national leaders of her cause up close.⁷⁶¹ "Aside from our religious grand sermons

⁷⁵⁶ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 13 May 13, 1895, The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells, Church Historian's Press, <https://churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells>; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 296.

⁷⁵⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, from 1892 to 1919, Utah had an average of almost 41 NAWSA members per 10,000 residents, while the next highest proportions were Nevada with 33 and New Hampshire with nearly 10. This analysis likely undercounts the number of Utahns who considered themselves suffragists, as the NAWSA membership fee was out of reach for many who scraped together the money to pay dues for their local WSAs. See Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, "Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866–1919," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 1 (February 2001): 55–60.

⁷⁵⁸ "A Brilliant Event," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 14, 1895, p. 5; "Notable Assemblage," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, May 14, 1895, p. 5.

⁷⁵⁹ "The National Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 20 (May 15, 1895): 268.

⁷⁶⁰ Mary Ann B. Freeze diaries, 1875–1899, May 12–14, 1895, MS 6154, CHL.

⁷⁶¹ Freeze diaries, May 12, 1895.

those speakers excelled anything I ever imagined. I think there are few men who should cope successfully with Annie Shaw. It was of the great treats of my life.”⁷⁶²

On Tuesday, conventioners heard from local WSA organizers and made an excursion to the Saltair resort on the Great Salt Lake before the closing session.⁷⁶³ At that session, Colorado suffragist Mary C. C. Bradford proposed a resolution “of profound gratitude to the men of Utah who have so unequivocally and practically witnessed to their faith in the principle of exact justice to all the citizens of this new and glorious commonwealth.”⁷⁶⁴ The next day, Wells noted having group photos taken (“it is a sort of fad”), and paying Anthony and Rev. Shaw from collections that had been taken during the conference.⁷⁶⁵ The NAWSA officers ended their time in Utah as guests at a Women’s Christian Temperance Union reception in Salt Lake and an evening meeting and reception in Ogden, both “packed to suffocation” with audiences keen to hear from “the apostles of woman suffrage.”⁷⁶⁶

The Rocky Mountain Suffrage Convention represented the triumph of both suffrage and statehood efforts in Utah—the political goals Mormon suffragists had pursued for the past decades. Speakers emphasized several themes Utah suffragists had employed in their advocacy over the years: that women deserved equal rights as citizens of the republic, that they would reform and clean up politics and government, and that they were not degraded by participating in the political process. Anthony’s opening remarks emphasized that “women are a part of all men

⁷⁶² Mary Ann B. Freeze diaries, 1875–1899, May 14, 1895, CHL.

⁷⁶³ “The Cause of Suffrage,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, May 5, 1895, p. 5.

⁷⁶⁴ “The National Conference,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 20 (May 15, 1895): 268.

⁷⁶⁵ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 15 May 1895.

⁷⁶⁶ “W.C.T.U. Reception,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 16, 1895, p. 5; “Susan B. Anthony,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, May 16, 1895, p. 1.

who are created equal and that women are a part of the governed whose consent should be given...that women as taxpayers have a right to representation.”⁷⁶⁷ She said voting women would bring reform and clean up politics and reminded listeners that “ever since [NAWSA was] fairly organized Utah has always been with us and among us to help.”⁷⁶⁸

The Rev. Shaw denounced confining women to separate spheres of activity and urged cooperation with men: “the condition of the world requires the best efforts of the best men and women combined.”⁷⁶⁹ Her Mormon listeners had spent the last seven years making that same case to their neighbors and friends. After Colorado suffragist and former political candidate Mary C. C. Bradford thanked Utahns for their example and their help, she refuted B. H. Roberts’ anti-suffrage arguments from the recent constitutional convention. “I have taken part in primaries,” she said, “I have taken part in two conventions, I have stumped the State twice and I don’t feel a bit degraded.”⁷⁷⁰

Utahns at the convention shared their convictions that suffrage was necessary for the forward march of civilization and progress, expanding women’s opportunities and potential to do good. Jeannette Ferry, wife of Colonel William Ferry and a fixture of Park City’s elite mine-owning society, declared that suffrage would make women “the best mothers, the best women and the best part of humanity.”⁷⁷¹ Mary Isabella Horne, a pioneer of 1847 and Salt Lake Stake

⁷⁶⁷ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 6 (August 15, 1895): 47.

⁷⁶⁸ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 6 (August 15, 1895): 48.

⁷⁶⁹ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 6 (August 15, 1895): 55.

⁷⁷⁰ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 10 (October 15, 1895): 70; “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 13 (December 1, 1895): 88.

⁷⁷¹ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 62. Ferry had been an officer in several Presbyterian Missionary Societies and the anti-polygamy movement in Utah. David A. Hales and Sandra Dawn Brimhall, “William and Jeannette Ferry: Presbyterian Pillars in Mormon Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 122–143.

Relief Society president, reminded listeners that the ballot had not previously “unsexed” Utah women and stated: “I have been...a great believer in Suffrage as long as I can remember; in fact I don’t remember the time when I didn’t think it was wrong to show so much difference between men and women. I was always advocating woman’s rights and woman’s elevation.”⁷⁷² And John R. Murdock, who had been a member of the territorial legislature in 1870 and a delegate to the recent constitutional convention, predicted that “more liberty and freedom [will be] extended to the human race” “as we find civilization increase and advance.”⁷⁷³

Although Wells thought the number of Utah speakers on the second day of the convention “rather distracted from the effect,” this was local leaders’ opportunity to share their experience, declare their belief in women’s equality, and receive recognition for their work from a national audience.⁷⁷⁴ Davis County WSA President Lucy Clark declared: “when the last barrier to woman is removed and the ballot is placed in her hands, then will she surely be a help-mate to man.”⁷⁷⁵ Kate Hilliard took credit on behalf of 250 Weber County WSA members for “the first gun that was fired for suffrage...the first petition” in the constitutional convention.⁷⁷⁶

Many speakers recalled what had brought them to the suffrage cause. Emma McVicker, founder of the Free Kindergarten Association, said, “my conversion to woman’s suffrage was

⁷⁷² “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 11/12 (November 1 and 15, 1895): 77.

⁷⁷³ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 11/12 (November 1 and 15, 1895): 78.

⁷⁷⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 14 May 1895.

⁷⁷⁵ “Conference of the N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. (March 15, 1895): 136.

⁷⁷⁶ “Conference of the N.A.W.S.A.,” March 15, 1895; Memorial 1: March 13, 1895; Constitutional Convention (1895), Series 3212, Records, Box 5, Folder 13, UA.

brought about by my connection with charity and reform work.”⁷⁷⁷ Corinne Allen,

Congregationalist, anti-polygamist, and president of the Utah Federation of Clubs, said,

It is but a few years since I became associated with this movement... When [my daughter] was eight years old we were walking up Main street and she said to me, “Mother, I don’t see why the women can’t take some part in politics,” and this opinion she has adhered to up to this time. I finally became convinced that moral reform was impossible until the ballot was granted to women. I used to feel that it would interfere with home life, but I now see that the safety of the home depends upon woman suffrage.⁷⁷⁸

Allen was a key figure in Salt Lake women’s clubs and politics who had worked with Mormon women on the World’s Fair exhibition despite also playing a major role in anti-polygamy crusades before and after 1890.⁷⁷⁹ Her daughter, Florence, would go on to march in the famous 1913 suffrage “hike” to Washington, D.C. and would become the first woman to serve on a state supreme court (in Ohio) and the first woman appointed to a federal court of appeals.⁷⁸⁰

Joanna Melton, a Civil War nurse and president of the G.A.R. Relief Society, who had testified at the constitutional convention’s suffrage hearing, kept the audience laughing at her account of hearing Susan B. Anthony speak decades earlier in Indiana. She’d been told Anthony was a “man woman,” and wanted to see “what kind of a woman a man woman is.” The result? “I was converted then and there before I left the Opera House and I thought that Woman’s Suffrage was just right.” Melton had supported suffrage efforts in the Dakotas before moving to Utah a

⁷⁷⁷ “Conference of the N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. (March 15, 1895): 135–136.

⁷⁷⁸ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 10 (October 15, 1895): 70. It is not clear when Corinne Allen became associated with the Utah WSA.

⁷⁷⁹ Joan Smyth Iversen, “Corinne Allen and Post-Manifesto Polygamy,” *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 110–139. The Allen family built strong enough ties to both factions in Utah that Corinne’s husband Clarence was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives after statehood in 1896.

⁷⁸⁰ “Judge Florence Allen” *The Relief Society Magazine* 11, no. 7 (July 1924): 341–344.

few years earlier. Speaking of Utah's WSA, she said "[Wells] has a good corps behind her and I knew the suffrage question was safe in their hands."⁷⁸¹

Finally, honorary WSA of Utah life president Sarah M. Kimball shared her earliest education in the movement for suffrage. She recalled,

I read an article ridiculing a little paper...called the "*Revolution*" in which I saw the names of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Miss Susan B. Anthony...I reached out after the little paper [and] I was very much struck with it...the theory and object they had in view was to create thought, their idea was if you can get the people to talk upon this subject, if you can get them to agitate the subject, agitation produces reform...Now [years] ago I would not have dared to say the bold, grand things that Miss Anthony said, it would have made me so unpopular and I hardly dared to shoulder it; but the seed was planted within my soul and I have been laboring for the same cause—I felt that it was uplifting, that it was necessary for the nation.⁷⁸²

Kimball said Utah suffragists had moved forward carefully, but that Anthony's work had made her own efforts possible. And now, looking back, she was certain "many could not do the work we have done today, if I had not pioneered the way."⁷⁸³

Ultimately, as Carol Cornwall Madsen described, the Rocky Mountain suffrage convention was "a triumph of good will and rapprochement that had eluded Utah for nearly fifty years."⁷⁸⁴ It brought women together across religious dividing lines in the spirit of celebration and built a sense of momentum toward what suffragists hoped would be upcoming victories in Idaho, California, and Montana. Susan B. Anthony paid homage to Utah's place in the movement and expressed optimism: "the states of these old rock-ribbed mountains are the first to embody justice in their constitution and are going to set the example, which is to be followed by

⁷⁸¹ "Conference N.A.W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 10 (October 15, 1895): 71.

⁷⁸² "Conference N.A.W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 61.

⁷⁸³ "Conference N.A.W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 61.

⁷⁸⁴ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 297.

the other states by knocking that little adjective male out of the suffrage clause of the Constitution.”⁷⁸⁵ The convention cemented Anthony’s already-close relationship with Emmeline B. Wells, whom she would continue to telegraph for a meeting anytime her train travels took her through Ogden.⁷⁸⁶

Entering Partisan Politics

After the convention closed, women engaged in the increasing political activity as Utah geared up to vote on the proposed state constitution and choose officers for the new state. As Republicans, Democrats, and Populists worked to organize their campaigns, Democrats, who had been the most enthusiastic about woman suffrage all along, brought up the question of whether Utah women could vote in the upcoming election.⁷⁸⁷ Wells noted in the *Exponent*, “It will make a very great difference in many respects if women are to be excluded from this first election.”⁷⁸⁸

Ogden resident and widowed mother of five Sarah E. Anderson brought a test case in August, suing her local registrar to add her to the voter rolls.⁷⁸⁹ As one of her attorney, Franklin S. Richards argued that those Utahns who were qualified voters of the proposed state should be allowed to vote on statehood and state officers. Anderson won in district court, but the Utah

⁷⁸⁵ “Conference N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 11/12 (November 1 and 15, 1895): 79.

⁷⁸⁶ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 7 July 1895, 25 February 1896.

⁷⁸⁷ In fact, Democrats Franklin S. Richards and Samuel Thurman had proposed at the end of the constitutional convention that women should be allowed to vote on the constitution and for state officers that November. That proposal had been rejected. See Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 297.

⁷⁸⁸ “Shall Women Vote in November?” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 4 (July 15, 1895): 26.

⁷⁸⁹ “May Women Vote?” *Ogden Daily Standard*, August 7, 1895, p. 3.

Supreme Court ultimately ruled that women would not be legally re-enfranchised until the Edmunds-Tucker Act was replaced by the new state constitution at statehood.⁷⁹⁰

While Anderson's case made its way through the courts, the pro-suffrage *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* reported that women were registering to vote in large numbers, displaying "an eagerness to become citizens which would astonish those who have been claiming that the women do not want to vote."⁷⁹¹ The paper reported that Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon was the first woman to register in Salt Lake City, where one registrar was enrolling women on a separate list pending the decision in Anderson's case.

Before the court decision, the "Colored Women's Republican Club" led by Missouri-born Alice B. Nesbitt also encouraged Black women in Salt Lake City to register as voters. At one meeting, Isabel Cameron Brown, wife of Utah's leading contender for the U.S. Senate "emphasized the necessity for registering, and cautioned [would-be voters] to beware of statements made by certain registrars that colored ladies, as well as working girls, were not entitled to register."⁷⁹² This warning, combined with the fact that the "Colored Women's Republican Club" existed at all when there was already a Republican women's league headed by Emmeline B. Wells, indicates that a color line divided politically active Utah women in social organizations.⁷⁹³ But Black leaders like Alice Nesbitt and Elizabeth A. Taylor would continue to lead efforts to get out the vote in the early years of Utah statehood. They were reimbursed by the

⁷⁹⁰ "Woman May Not Vote," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 1, p. 5; Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 31 August 1895.

⁷⁹¹ "Examiner Has Opened Up," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 8, 1895, p. 1.

⁷⁹² "Rally of Colored Women," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 23, 1895, p. 3.

⁷⁹³ There were a just a few hundred Black women and men in Salt Lake County during the 1890s, many of whom were connected with the Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Douglass. Wells' diary makes no mention of Black voters or Black women in her social circle during these years.

Salt Lake County Republican party for canvassing and campaign expenditures in 1896 and were on the streets on election day in 1898 to urge votes for their preferred candidates.⁷⁹⁴

Although the ruling in Sarah Anderson's case was a disappointment for those who wanted a voice in the new state government, many Utah women were already working their way into official party structures or creating their own parallel associations. Democrats had backed the push for women to vote in November and began recruiting women in early June, encouraging them to join in order to select and serve as delegates.⁷⁹⁵ The party call stated: "whether women may vote or not at the first election...they have an interest in the choice of the proper persons for office in the new state."⁷⁹⁶ Many women answered that call. In July, women made up about one-third of delegates at the territorial Democratic convention, and leaders including Zina D. H. Young and Electa Bullock were made officers on an executive committee that had been expanded to give women "full representation."⁷⁹⁷ Emily S. Richards, her mother-in-law Jane, and other prominent Mormon women such as Mary Isabella Horne, Bathsheba Smith, and Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon ensured women made a strong showing for Democrats.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁴ "What the Defeat Cost," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 29, 1896, p. 5; "Echoes of the Election," *Broad Ax*, November 12, 1898, p. 1. Without voter records from this time, it is impossible to determine how many Black Utahns voted, but it is clear from these and other articles that at least some Black women and men were able to register and vote in Utah elections, despite any social difficulty they may have faced in doing so. In the earliest elections after statehood, both Black and white candidates talked about specifically courting Black voters during the Republican campaign in 1898 using numbers that included women as well as men. See "Mr. Taylor Ratified," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 28, 1896, p. 5; "Republican Women Meet," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 4, 1898, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁵ "A Call to Arms," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, June 2, 1895, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁶ "A Call to Action," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, June 2, 1895, p. 4.

⁷⁹⁷ "It was Democracy's Day," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, July 14, 1895, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁸ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 13 July 1895.

With this development, Emmeline B. Wells noted that “the matter of the women taking part in public affairs is to come before the First Presidency.”⁷⁹⁹ The presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had actively encouraged members to join both parties since 1891 to avoid a Mormon political monolith in the new state, but they had not yet sorted out the question of whether men or women in high Church positions should publicly engage in partisan politics.⁸⁰⁰ A meeting with these male Church leaders and the heads of the women’s organizations led to a decision that Relief Society leaders Young, Smith, and Horne would moderate their public support for Democrats to avoid creating the impression that Mormon women were only active in one party.⁸⁰¹

Unlike most leading Mormons, Emmeline B. Wells joined the Republican party, which began forming separate women’s leagues later that summer out of concern that Democrats were gaining too much ground.⁸⁰² Wells was elected chair of the state Republican women’s committee and traveled across the territory to establish county women’s organizations.⁸⁰³ In this capacity, Wells worked with prominent non-Mormon women such as Emma J. McVicker, Corinne Allen, and Lillie Pardee. This association helped her smooth bitter divides that had previously pitted

⁷⁹⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 26 July 1895.

⁸⁰⁰ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 298.

⁸⁰¹ Wells, *Diary*, 30 July 1895.

⁸⁰² “The Political Arena,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, June 21, 1895, p. 4. Republicans had not initially recruited women to join after the constitutional convention under the assumption they would not be permitted to cast ballots that year, but the party soon worried it would be “swamped” if the court ruled in Anderson’s favor. See Madsen, *Intimate History*, 353.

⁸⁰³ Wells, *Diary*, 9, 11, 18 July and 9, 16–17, 23–24, 31 August 1895. Republican women’s clubs blossomed across the country during the Gilded Age. See Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Utah women against each other along religious lines. And one hopeful sign to Wells of women's value to the party was the fact that it reimbursed her and her companions for their mileage.⁸⁰⁴

Ruth May Fox followed Wells into the Republican party. She noted in her diary: "the Republican women are forming Leagues. I have been made Treasurer of the Ter. Organization. I do hope they will not engender bad feelings in their division on party lines. For my part I care nothing for politics. It is Mormonism or nothing for me."⁸⁰⁵ Because Republicans had so long been the party of opposition to Mormon polygamy and Utah statehood, the local party worked hard to highlight the Mormon women in their ranks and show that good Mormons could be Republicans as well as Democrats. Fox was asked to chair her precinct ladies Republican Club for this reason: "I did not want it but because I was a Mormon they wanted me to take it."⁸⁰⁶

Fox had recently embarked on a public life by assuming leadership roles in women's clubs and the suffrage movement under Wells' mentorship. Her political positions meant that she was heavily involved in Republican campaigning and often traveled to speak at rallies, although she confided in her diary that she was "too frightened to speak" at one meeting that also featured Frank J. Cannon, Utah's congressional delegate.⁸⁰⁷ She continued to show up, speaking to mixed audiences and staying at county conventions until the early hours of the morning.⁸⁰⁸ In this new era, it must have given Fox great pleasure to nominate Wells for the state House of Representatives at the county Republican convention in August.⁸⁰⁹ The party also nominated

⁸⁰⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 16 July 1895.

⁸⁰⁵ Ruth May Fox diary, 1894–1939; July 14, 1895, MS 5469, CHL.

⁸⁰⁶ Fox, September 15, 1895.

⁸⁰⁷ Fox, September 15, 1895.

⁸⁰⁸ Fox, August 23, 1895.

⁸⁰⁹ Fox, Diary, August 23, 1895; Wells, Diary, 23 August 1895.

Lillie R. Pardee for state senate and Emma J. McVicker as superintendent of public instruction.⁸¹⁰

Despite this symbolic success, Utah women's re-entry into the realm of political actors was not entirely smooth. Political differences predictably divided women's political strength. After Wells published a Republican catechism that summer, Emily S. Richards responded with a biting critique serialized in the *Salt Lake Herald*.⁸¹¹ Wells believed that women's efforts were essential to her party and called it "a most forceful compliment...from the Republican men" when Lillie Pardee was made secretary of the territorial committee, but these appointments were rare.⁸¹² "We are having so much work to do and so few workers or speakers that we scarcely know how all is to be accomplished."⁸¹³ And she was often disappointed in men's treatment of women in the party. After one county committee meeting, she "did not feel very much pleased with the proceedings, some men are so uncouth with the ladies."⁸¹⁴

Wells also worried about how women conducted themselves in the political arena as she sought to make women's voices more influential in Utah affairs. She had learned through personal experience just how delicate the balance was between being respectable and being ignored. After a Democratic rally in the fall, she wrote, "I understand Mrs. Edna L. Smith is quite wild- and was even rude in the Convention, I hope it is not true."⁸¹⁵ Although she was

⁸¹⁰ "Republican Ticket," *Deseret Evening News*, September 16, 1895, p. 8. The territorial Republican convention was held after the Utah Supreme Court gave its decision against women voting in the election. But the case did not address the issue of whether women could appear on the ballot before statehood had been achieved.

⁸¹¹ Emily S. Richards, "The Republican catechism criticised and amended for the benefit of the women of Utah to whom it is respectfully presented," 1896, 329.6 R514r, CHL.

⁸¹² Wells, Diary, 12, 28 August 1895.

⁸¹³ Wells, Diary, 12 August 1895.

⁸¹⁴ Wells, Diary, 27 July 1895.

⁸¹⁵ Wells, Diary, 22 October 1895.

herself a seasoned leader and politician who had spoken at national conventions and lobbied presidents and Congressmen, Wells confided in her diary that she worked hard to prove her merit in political circles. “I read up on political matters and inform myself so that I will not be at a loss when conversing with those who are up in everything, and not appear ridiculous.”⁸¹⁶ And she also noted that political disagreements with her daughter Annie Wells Cannon “rather dampen[ed] her] ardor,” although they did not stop her work.⁸¹⁷

Still, there were moments of gratification. When Wells campaigned with Emma McVicker in Logan that fall, she was proud to see how visible women were in the events. “The ladies were in waiting quite a deputation...the County Committee met us and made some arrangements for our entertainment and route & evening meeting. Immense streamers were strung across the street with our names painted on them.”⁸¹⁸ Wells spoke for more than an hour and organized a Republican women’s club which named itself after her.

Wells continued to travel the Republican circuit in September and October, despite the Utah Supreme Court’s ruling on August 31 that women could not vote on statehood or state officers.⁸¹⁹ Because the case had not concerned women running for office, Wells, Pardee, and McVicker were in a legal gray area. The proposed constitution made it clear they were eligible for state offices after statehood, but a growing number of Republicans believed that putting women’s names on the ballot ahead of that time was unwise. In an ironic reversal of positions,

⁸¹⁶ Wells, Diary, 9 September 1895.

⁸¹⁷ Wells, Diary, 28 July 1895. Ironically, Annie would later be elected to two terms in the state legislature as a Republican, in 1912 and 1920.

⁸¹⁸ Wells, Diary, 3 September 1895.

⁸¹⁹ Wells, Diary, 31 August, 23 September, 15, 26 October 1895. The court ruling came right as Democrats met for their territorial convention, so Democrats did not nominate any women for positions. See Madsen, *Intimate History*, 355; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 321.

Democrats attacked the women candidates themselves, writing in the *Herald*: “now that the supreme court has decided that women cannot vote this fall, the ambition of Mrs. Emmeline B. Wells and Lillie Pardee must be nipped in the bud. They must be taken down from their high pedestals.”⁸²⁰ Facing an evaporation of support, both McVicker and Pardee withdrew in September.⁸²¹ Pardee wrote that she was deferring to the party’s legal advice but still believed she had the legal right to be on the ballot, and that “the women of Utah...should have their representatives among the officers of the State.”⁸²²

Wells held out but confided to her diary in October that she had “some annoyances about my name on the Ticket Democrats will make a point of it and so forth. I suppose there is really no alternative but to withdraw.”⁸²³ Still, she did so “against my own better & best judgment. I do not believe it would really affect the party or statehood or cut any figure in the matter whatever, and I think moreover I have a right to be elected to the Legislature- as also other women- I yield unwillingly to the pressure brought to bear against the name of women on the Ticket.”⁸²⁴ Wells struggled to formulate a resignation letter without conceding that she thought it best to “make a test of the principle of woman’s equality, and see how successful I could be in the election.”⁸²⁵ Although a few prominent Republicans told her withdrawing was “the mistake of [her] lifetime,”

⁸²⁰ “The Political Arena,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 2, 1895, p. 5. The article did not name Emma McVicker.

⁸²¹ “Mrs. M’Vicker Withdraws,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 15, 1895, p. 8; “Withdrawal of Mrs. Pardee,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 29, 1895, p. 4.

⁸²² “Withdrawal of Mrs. Pardee,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 29, 1895, p. 4.

⁸²³ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 16 October 1895.

⁸²⁴ Wells, *Diary*, 17 October 1895.

⁸²⁵ Wells, *Diary*, 19–20 October 1895.

she ultimately lacked the party support to remain on the ballot.⁸²⁶ Wells announced her decision to withdraw while defending her position in an open letter on October 19.⁸²⁷ It was a bitter pill to swallow.

This humiliation did not keep Wells out of the fray in the days leading up to the election, as she expressed confidence that opposition to statehood would melt away.⁸²⁸ She urged

Exponent readers to do their part:

Every woman who loves Utah and desires its prosperity should do her utmost to urge men (who have the ballot) to vote for statehood, and see to it as far as possible that no vote shall be lost because of neglect or indifference. Be as conscientious as though the vote were your own and remember that one vote more or less might turn the scale for or against.⁸²⁹

Wells felt that “matters are progressing finely with the Republican party – we are sure to succeed in carrying the election, though the Democrats are as positive as we are.”⁸³⁰ She participated in a Republican women’s parade of carriages on the last Saturday in October, which was “2 miles long” and “a great success,” highlighting women’s power in politics in a similar fashion to local suffrage parades the previous summer.⁸³¹

The election of 1895 was the last one run by the Utah Commission, as well as the last with party-issued ballots. Politically active women once again prepared to serve lunches in their precincts, but Ruth May Fox was relieved to find that “the candidates wives were going to attend

⁸²⁶ Wells, Diary, 24 October 1895; Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 322–26.

⁸²⁷ “Mrs. Wells Off the Ticket,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1895, 5.

⁸²⁸ Wells, Diary, 13 September, 30 October 1895.

⁸²⁹ “Women Should Work for Statehood,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 10 (October 15, 1895): 68.

⁸³⁰ Wells, Diary, 13 September 1895.

⁸³¹ “Republican Women’s Parade,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1895, p. 5; Wells, Diary, 26 October 1895; Fox diary, October 26, 1895. The WSA of Utah had considered the cost of holding its own parade on October 9, but that parade did not happen. Wells, Diary, 9 October 1895.

to it” in hers.⁸³² Emmeline B. Wells wrote that “women are serving lunches in all the precincts both Rep. & Dem. and no doubt Populists as well. One cannot tell what the result will be both parties think they are ahead. I hope there will not be any great demonstration and exultation. I believe in a quiet dignified course.”⁸³³ Fox wrote that evening: “Do not know as yet how it will turn out but do not care much. Believe we have got Statehood assured so far as the vote is concerned and that means suffrage for women.”⁸³⁴

Wells thrilled as the votes rolled in. “The Constitution is carried by a large majority and gives us equal suffrage – no distinction on account of sex. It is a source of gratification to women here and elsewhere.”⁸³⁵ “It seems almost too good to be true that we have equal suffrage.”⁸³⁶ In the *Exponent*, she reminded readers that this victory was not just for Utah. “There is a large majority for statehood, and that means a large majority for equal suffrage. This is a matter of rejoicing for all women everywhere who have the advancement of the world of mankind at heart.”⁸³⁷ The first congratulations from outside Utah arrived in a letter from the Colorado Equal Suffrage Club, which Wells also printed in the *Exponent*.⁸³⁸

In the end, 41,662 of the territory’s 49,717 registered male voters cast ballots in the general election. 31,305 voted to approve the state constitution, 7,687 voted against it, and 2,670

⁸³² Fox, November 2, 1895.

⁸³³ Wells, Diary, 5 November 1895.

⁸³⁴ Fox, November 5, 1895.

⁸³⁵ Wells, Diary, 6 November 1895.

⁸³⁶ Wells, Diary, 7 November 1895.

⁸³⁷ “The New State,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 11,12 (November 1 and 15, 1895): 76.

⁸³⁸ Wells, Diary, 14 November 1895; “Colorado Woman’s Greeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 11/12, (November 1 and 15, 1895): 77.

did not vote on the question.⁸³⁹ It is impossible to determine how many of the votes against the constitution stemmed from opposition to suffrage rather than other concerns about statehood such as increased taxation. But the counties with the highest proportion of “no” votes on the constitution (Weber at thirty-three percent and Salt Lake at twenty-nine percent) were the most urban, with the greatest concentration of businesses and largest non-Mormon populations.⁸⁴⁰ This pattern lines up with where the greatest opposition was expressed to the equal suffrage clause during the constitutional convention.

The vote for statehood and suffrage was an early victory for the national women’s movement which had yet to gain much traction outside the West. Like Wells wrote in the *Exponent*, it was important that male voters had voted in favor of equal political rights for women—just the third time a state’s (or potential state’s) voters had done so. Suffragists preparing for upcoming campaigns in Idaho, California, and Montana certainly took note, as did NAWSA organizers continuing to pressure eastern state legislatures and Congress. As Lucy Clark had declared to her coworkers assembled at the Rocky Mountain suffrage convention, Utahns hoped their rising star would be a “beacon” shining as a goal for other states “sailing toward the light [and] the harbor of equal suffrage.”⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁹ “Utah’s Constitution,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, December 7, 1895, p. 8. Newspapers had pointed out an issue with ballot design ahead of the election; “yes” and “no” were printed on the bottom of each ballot and voters had to scratch out one of the two in order to cast a vote on the constitution. See Jean Bickmore White, “November 5, 1895—the Most Important Election Day in Utah History,” *Beehive History* 21 (1995): 7.

⁸⁴⁰ White, “Most Important Election Day,” 3.

⁸⁴¹ “Conference of the N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. (March 15, 1895): 136.

Suffrage After Statehood

With the question settled at home, Utahns planned festivities and awaited word that President Cleveland had signed a statehood proclamation. Emmeline B. Wells wanted to ensure that women would have visible roles in the official celebrations, “since they will share equally in the interests of the new state.”⁸⁴² She attended an Inauguration Committee meeting on New Year’s Day and afterward “suggested to the Chairman, that it was noticable [sic] women were not considered in the proceedings or in any way recognized as a part of the new state.”⁸⁴³ While pressing that issue, Wells also worked to get women on the staff of the new state legislature. She lobbied the new state senators to hire Lillie Pardee, her fellow would-be candidate, as senate clerk.⁸⁴⁴

The long-awaited news of statehood finally came on January 4, 1896. Wells hurried downtown as guns fired, whistles blew, and bells pealed across Salt Lake City. “I took the first car and found the city streaming with flags and banners. All was gaiety and I was soon joined by other women anxious to participate in the demonstration of joy and gladness.”⁸⁴⁵ Ruth May Fox wrote, “how thankful I am for it seems to me the redemption of Zion has truly commenced.”⁸⁴⁶ Wells celebrated in the *Exponent* that statehood had “brought freedom to women as well as men, the full rights and privileges of citizenship.”⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴² “Celebrating Statehood,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 14 (December 15, 1895): 92.

⁸⁴³ Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, 1 January 1896.

⁸⁴⁴ Wells, *Diary*, 13, 17, 23 November 1895; Pardee was hired as chief clerk of the state senate, and Wells “was delighted to think that the Certificate of the new Senators had to be signed by a woman as well as a man.” Wells, *Diary*, 22 January 1896. She would later help Miss McMaster, who had been a secretary for the constitutional convention, try to secure a position as a committee clerk for the legislature. See *Diary*, 27 January 1896.

⁸⁴⁵ Wells, *Diary*, 4 January 1896.

⁸⁴⁶ Fox, January 5, 1896.

⁸⁴⁷ “The Inauguration,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 15/16 (Jan 1 and 15, 1896): 100.

As Wells had feared, the official inaugural program and festivities did not feature women, but suffragists across the state held their own events celebrating women's newly regained voting rights. Cache County suffragists hosted a program, banquet, and ball in Logan on January 17 that drew 3,000 guests.⁸⁴⁸ The evening honored Orson F. Whitney and Moses Thatcher, constitutional convention delegates who had championed equal suffrage arguments. The WSA of Parowan in southeast Utah held an "exultation meeting" with "yellow ribbon badges," a band, and congratulatory speakers.⁸⁴⁹ Salt Lake suffragists hosted a Leap Year ball to celebrate statehood and equal suffrage, complete with flags, bunting, and large photos of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁸⁵⁰ And Wells published some of the flood of congratulatory letters from national leaders and state suffrage organizations that poured into her office at the *Exponent*.⁸⁵¹

The 1896 NAWSA convention planned a special celebration for Utah's entrance to the Union as the third suffrage state. Wells was heartbroken that she lacked the funds to attend, instead sending long letters to Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt along with the credentials for Utah's delegates.⁸⁵² But she was cheered by a telegram from Rachel Foster Avery that the Utah celebration "created much enthusiasm."⁸⁵³ Carrie Chapman Catt's husband George credited Utah suffragists' organization for their victory, calling them "ten times a greater

⁸⁴⁸ "It Was Woman's Day," *Logan Journal*, January 21, 1896, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁹ "Oh Success! What A Triumph?," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 15/16 (January 1 and 15, 1896): 98.

⁸⁵⁰ Wells, Diary, 16 January 1896.

⁸⁵¹ Wells, Diary, 8, 13–14, 18 January 1896.

⁸⁵² Wells, Diary, 19 January 1896.

⁸⁵³ Wells, Diary, 28 January 1896.

suffrage organization than in any other State.”⁸⁵⁴ That organization was a direct result of Mormon suffragists’ mobilization of the Relief Society network to advance women’s rights in Utah and the nation. Among the Utah delegates who addressed the convention, Sarah A. Boyer of Springville argued that suffrage meant “the breaking down of every institution that threatens to break down the home,” and promised that women would “make the name of Utah a synonym for progress” by “working together with men.”⁸⁵⁵

Boyer wrote to the *Exponent* of the importance of Utah women’s continued involvement with NAWSA. Rather than soliciting the association for assistance, Boyer explained, Utahns were now on a better footing to push the cause forward nationally, including petitioning Congress.⁸⁵⁶ She echoed the hope of the national movement that growing progressivism nationwide would lead states to extend the vote to women to aid in reforms. And she wanted Utahns to take a leading part in that movement.

What role would Utah suffragists play in the continued national struggle? The territorial WSA convention had discussed next steps in the fall of 1895 before the statehood election. As the *Exponent* reported: “All favored the existence of suffrage clubs in the future. They thought it the duty of all to work for the enfranchisement of women until universal suffrage should be obtained.”⁸⁵⁷ Suffragists elected officers and members of the executive committee from eleven counties, showing that support for continued suffrage work was not solely confined to elites in Salt Lake City. In addition, at the suggestion of Honorary President Sarah M. Kimball, the Utah

⁸⁵⁴ “How Woman Suffrage Won,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 25, 1896, p. 1.

⁸⁵⁵ “The Utah Evening,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 18 (February 15, 1896): 144.

⁸⁵⁶ “Visit to Washington,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 14 (May 15, 1896): 153.

⁸⁵⁷ Nellie M. Little, “Utah W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 10 (October 15, 1895): 66.

WSA passed a resolution thanking the constitutional convention for enfranchising women and pledging their “best efforts to help uplift the standard of City, County and State politics.”⁸⁵⁸

Many local WSAs continued to meet, and some had even organized and expanded after the constitutional convention.⁸⁵⁹ For example, the Emery County WSA elected a new president in the spring of 1895 who planned to establish local branches in every town in the county.⁸⁶⁰ And Grand County organized a WSA in remote southeastern Utah on May 8, right after the constitutional convention ended, with fifty members enrolling at the first meeting.⁸⁶¹ At Cedar City in the southwest, the county WSA president noted that their numbers had grown as Utah achieved statehood, meaning members had “countered much prejudice” and “become better fitted to perform [their duties].”⁸⁶²

Emmeline B. Wells was determined to make women’s voices heard in state government. She spent many hours at the first Utah state legislature listening to debates on the floor and speaking with lawmakers to help shape laws on the age of consent, silk production, kindergarten education, and more.⁸⁶³ Wells knew there was power in numbers but found it difficult to convince other women to accompany her. After one particularly trying day she wrote, “I am so annoyed that women do not accept the responsibility of the franchise, and try to look into matters more deeply than they do.”⁸⁶⁴ But when a bill on the age of consent was up for a vote, she

⁸⁵⁸ Little, 66.

⁸⁵⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 19 November 1895.

⁸⁶⁰ “Emery County W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 1 (June 1, 1895): 3.

⁸⁶¹ “Grand Co. W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 2 (June 15, 1895): 10.

⁸⁶² “Cedar City W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 22 (April 15, 1896): 139.

⁸⁶³ Wells, Diary, 20, 30 January, 27 February, 11, 20 March, 8 April 1896.

⁸⁶⁴ Wells, Diary, 4 February 1896.

rounded up a few others and gained admittance to speak before the relevant committee. There, she explained the injustice of the current law and threatened legislators that if they did not raise the age of consent to eighteen, she would ensure they would not receive any women's votes in the future. The law passed, and as Wells explained, as her protégé Susa Young Gates remembered, "it was because we have the franchise and the men know it."⁸⁶⁵ Wells continued to work through the *Exponent*, the state WSA, and social clubs to educate and encourage women to take part in public affairs.⁸⁶⁶

Another disappointment came as state officials appointed few women to boards and committees. Wells had hoped elected leaders would be "magnanimous enough" to recognize women's ability, but outside of the silk commission and other traditionally female realms, women were hardly represented.⁸⁶⁷ Wells printed effusive congratulations to Cornelia Horne Clayton on her appointment to the Provo school board, noting Clayton's qualifications and her former work on the *Exponent*, but the fact that such an appointment was notable contradicted Utah suffragists' plans and hopes.⁸⁶⁸ Given Utah's long history with equal suffrage, Wells did not want Utah women to be "behind those of the neighboring states."⁸⁶⁹

At a Salt Lake County WSA meeting in January 1896, suffragists spoke against what one member described as "girls being dilatory in regard to taking part in politics because their

⁸⁶⁵ Susa Young Gates, "Where Women Vote. In Utah." Political Equality Series 4, no. 6 (September 1899), National American Woman Suffrage Association, M243.3 G259w 1899, CHL; Wells, Diary, 5 February 1896.

⁸⁶⁶ Wells, Diary, 16 March 1896; "Celebrating Statehood," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 14 (December 15, 1895): 92.

⁸⁶⁷ "Celebrating Statehood," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 14 (December 15, 1895): 92; Wells, Diary, 8 April 1896.

⁸⁶⁸ "A Woman on the School Board," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 18 (February 15, 1896): 116.

⁸⁶⁹ "Faith in the Future of Utah," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 13 (December 1, 1895): 84.

brothers and beaux objected to women in politics.”⁸⁷⁰ Members were indignant – did young women think the men in their lives should enjoy more privileges than they themselves did? Experiences like these were perhaps why Emily S. Richards stated to the NAWSA convention that month: “in a far away promised land we behold a perfected state wherein the heart and hand and intelligence of woman contribute their full share to the welfare of the race.”⁸⁷¹ But Richards and her compatriots dedicated their considerable energy to that cause.

As the national campaign got underway in 1896, Utah suffragists flocked to local, county, and state conventions to elect delegates. Weber County suffrage leader Kate Hilliard was the first woman elected a delegate to a national convention, representing Utah as a “middle-of-the-road Populist” at the party convention in St. Louis.⁸⁷² Democrats elected Dr. Ellen Ferguson, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, Emily S. Richards, and Amanda Knight as alternate delegates to their national convention in Chicago.⁸⁷³ Dr. Ferguson attended as an alternate and appeared before the committee on resolutions to advocate for a pro-suffrage platform plank.⁸⁷⁴

Utah women involved themselves in campaigning more than ever in 1896. They formed non-partisan silver clubs across the state to support William Jennings Bryan’s candidacy for president, showing how deeply committed most Utahns were to the cause of free silver.⁸⁷⁵ And

⁸⁷⁰ “S. L. Co. W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 18 (February 15, 1896), 118.

⁸⁷¹ Emily S. Richards, “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” *The Deseret Weekly* 52, no. 9 (February 15, 1896): 258.

⁸⁷² “Populist State Convention,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, June 28, 1896, p. 7; “Women in Politics,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, September 15, 1896, p. 3. Hilliard was also a leader in the Federation of Women’s Clubs and would later run for the state legislature as a Socialist. “List of Nominations, General Election,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, November 11, 1904, p. 2.

⁸⁷³ “Delegates Elected,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 7, 1896, p. 7.

⁸⁷⁴ “The Utah Delegation,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 9, 1896, p. 1.

⁸⁷⁵ “Non-Partisan Silver Women,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 13, 1896, p. 8; “Woman in Politics,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 13, 1896, p. 9. Even most local Republican organizations endorsed Bryan for President. See “Silver Was the Slogan,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, September 4, 1896, p. 1.

both major parties nominated women for public office, with the Democratic women also largely endorsed by the People's Party.⁸⁷⁶ Six women ran for seats in the state legislature and at least fourteen ran for county offices.

The most high-profile race was that for the five open state senate seats representing Salt Lake County. The five Democratic candidates included Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, the doctor, public speaker, suffragist, and plural wife who had gained wide acclaim for her speech at the Chicago World's Fair. Emmeline B. Wells and Dr. Cannon's husband Angus, a prominent ecclesiastical leader currently serving as the president of the Salt Lake Stake (similar to a diocese), were among the five Republican contenders. Both Cannons could have won office, but Utah newspapers played up the humor. The Republican *Salt Lake Tribune* endorsed Angus, to which the Democratic *Salt Lake Herald* responded: "Mrs. Mattie Hughes Cannon, his wife, is the better man of the two. Send Mrs. Cannon to the state senate as a Democrat and let Mr. Cannon, as a Republican, remain at home to manage home industry."⁸⁷⁷

Democrats swept the election in a statewide landslide on the free silver question. In Salt Lake, Dr. Cannon won fewer votes than any of the other Democratic state senate candidates, but still bested all the Republicans to win election as the first female state senator in the nation. Emmeline Wells lost with by far the lowest vote total, one thousand fewer votes than the candidate in ninth place.⁸⁷⁸ Newspapers across the country listed Cannon among the successful

⁸⁷⁶ "Sample Ballot," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, October 25, 1896, p. 14.

⁸⁷⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, October 31, 1896, p. 4.

⁸⁷⁸ The top candidate, George A. Whittaker, received 9068 votes, while Dr. Cannon won 7868 votes to come in fifth overall, after fourth-place David O Rideout, Jr. at 8272. Wells won 4796 votes to come in tenth, well behind ninth-place A. V. Taylor at 5801. "Election Returns: Salt Lake City and County," *Deseret Evening News*, November 4, 1896, p. 2.

candidates, but did not mention her husband, perhaps because they were unaware of the story.⁸⁷⁹

But “Annie Laurie,” an anti-suffragist and special correspondent for *The San Francisco Examiner*, interviewed Dr. Cannon as she wrote several articles on Utah women’s role in the election. Dr. Cannon stated that her greatest policy interests were sanitation and education, and after questions on the subject of how she would care for her children, stated: “you give me a woman who thinks about something besides cook stoves and wash tubs and baby flannels, and I’ll show you, nine times out of ten, a successful mother.”⁸⁸⁰

Thirteen other female candidates also won office in Utah that year. Sarah Anderson, who had brought the test case to vote in 1895, won election as a state representative for Weber County, and Eurithe LaBarthe represented Salt Lake County. Eleven other women were elected to county offices across Utah, with seasoned suffrage leaders Margaret A. Caine as Salt Lake County Auditor and Ellen Jakeman as Utah County Treasurer.⁸⁸¹ Amelia Graehl, Bessie Morehead, Tryphenia West, Charlotte Farmer, Delilah K. Olson, Mary F. Shelby, Maude Layton, and Emily Dods were elected county recorders for Box Elder, Cache, Iron, Juab, Millard, Rich, Sevier, and Tooele counties, with Mary Woolley as Kane County Clerk.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁹ “Scattering Returns,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), November 6, 1896, p. 10; “No Doubt Remains,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, November 6, 1896, p. 7; “Election Notes,” *Washington Standard* (Olympia), November 6, 1896, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁰ “Our Woman Senator,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 11, 1896, p. 5.

⁸⁸¹ “The Democratic Sweep,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 10, 1896, p. 6.

⁸⁸² “The Democratic Sweep,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 10, 1896, p. 6; “Iron County’s Vote,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 14, 1896, p. 5; “Card of Thanks,” *The Round-Up* (Randolph, UT), November 13, 1896, p. 1; “Official Vote of Tooele County,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 14, p. 3. Mary Woolley would be elected mayor of Kanab with an all-female town board in 1911, under the assumed name Mary Chamberlain. Kylie Nielson Turley, “Kanab’s All Woman Town Council, 1912–1914: Politics, Power Struggles, and Polygamy,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 308–28. Unsuccessful candidates in 1896 included Emmeline B. Wells and Martha M. Campbell in Salt Lake County, Fannie Stewart and Rose Moore in Utah County, and Mabel C. Clark in Iron County.

Emmeline B. Wells was clearly disappointed to lose the office she had sought a year earlier. She had waited at Republican headquarters on election night, but as crowds gathered and excitement ran high, she “was weary of the confusion” from contradictory reports and “went home tired out and half-sick – Sat up and read nearly all night here alone – time to think, yet hopeful of the result in my favor.”⁸⁸³ She did not record her loss in her diary, but did write in the *Exponent* “it is a disappointment that all the women were not elected.”⁸⁸⁴ Still, she congratulated the winners and moved on, urging her readers to support policies to improve education, kindergarten, the silk industry, and libraries. One other piece of good news came as Idaho passed a constitutional amendment to become the fourth equal suffrage state. NAWSA credited Utahns and especially Emily S. Richards for helping organize that successful campaign.⁸⁸⁵

In January 1897, Wells changed the *Exponent* masthead to read: “The Ballot in the Hands of the Women of Utah should be a Power to better the Home, the State and the Nation.”⁸⁸⁶ Optimism ran high. Representatives LaBarthe and Anderson did not pass much legislation of their own, although LaBarthe’s “High Hat Law” preventing large hats in theaters was roundly ridiculed.⁸⁸⁷ But Dr. Cannon moved her longtime policy interests forward considerably as she began her four-year term. She introduced legislation creating a state board of health, and also passed a pure food law, funding to educate speech-and-hearing-impaired students, and regulations to protect working women.

⁸⁸³ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 3 November 1896.

⁸⁸⁴ “Woman’s Work and Duty,” *Woman’s Exponent* 25, no. 9/10 (November 1 and 15, 1896): 69.

⁸⁸⁵ *History of Woman Suffrage*, eds. Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, vol. 4, 1883–1900 (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1902), 593.

⁸⁸⁶ *Woman’s Exponent* 25, no. 14/15 (January 15 and February 1, 1897): 97.

⁸⁸⁷ Jean Bickmore White, “Gentle Persuaders: Utah’s First Women Legislators,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1970): 31–49.

Dr. Cannon's votes for U.S. Senator also disproved fears that women in politics would be controlled by their husbands or families. During the drawn-out process in 1897, she voted for excommunicated Mormon Apostle Moses Thatcher on the forty-third ballot in an attempt to break the deadlock and remained in his camp to the end, despite the fact that her husband and church leaders opposed Thatcher.⁸⁸⁸ And in 1899, she refused to vote to re-elect her Republican nephew by marriage, Frank J. Cannon.⁸⁸⁹

Teacher, artist, and suffragist Alice Merrill Horne was elected in 1898 as the only woman in the state House of Representatives. Cannon and Horne worked together during the next term to pass both of their legislative priorities: regulations on infectious diseases and funding for a state art collection.⁸⁹⁰ During the debates, they scattered yellow flowers on legislators' desks to remind them of the influence of women voters. Horne even threw a bunch of jonquils to one lawmaker on the floor when he made a motion to strike the main clause in her art bill. "The men recognized the portent of the yellow flowers and laughed," but no one seconded the motion and the bill passed, creating the first state art collection in the country.⁸⁹¹

Neither Cannon nor Horne ran for re-election in 1900 on the heels of their success. Dr. Cannon made headlines when she had her third baby in April 1899, which sent Angus Cannon to

⁸⁸⁸ Cannon gave a speech on the Senate floor as she switched her vote to Thatcher, which was cheered for its "pluck" despite being against the rules. See "Cheered Mrs. Cannon," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 2, 1897, p. 1.

⁸⁸⁹ White, "Gentle Persuaders," 304.

⁸⁹⁰ S. B. No. 40. An Act Providing for the Suppression of Nuisances and Contagious Diseases, Prescribing Quarantine Rules and Regulations Therefor, and Relating to Burial Permits and Health of Schools; Series 428, Legislature, Senate, Working bills; 1899 Session: Bills 38–40, Box 3, Folder 12, UA; H. B. No. 124 An Act to Provide for the Creation of a State Institute of Art, and Prescribing the Manner of Appointment, Powers and Duties; Series 432, Legislature, House of Representatives, 1899 Session: Bills 121–125, Box 3, Folder 37, UA.

⁸⁹¹ Harriet Horne Arrington, "Alice Merrill Horne, Early Suffrage Promoter and Utah Legislator," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 270.

jail for unlawful cohabitation years after the 1890 Manifesto officially ended polygamy.⁸⁹² There had been talk of Dr. Cannon running for U.S. Senate, but this scandal foreclosed that option. She chose not to run for office again and moved to California in 1904 with her three children where she continued her medical work. Horne did not run for office in 1900 because she was pregnant, but she continued her political involvement in later years, serving as Salt Lake County Democratic chair and campaigning for clean milk and clean air.⁸⁹³ Democrat Elizabeth Cohen lost her campaign for the state legislature in 1900, but college-educated lawyer and President of the Utah Federation of Women's Clubs Mary Coulter won election to represent Ogden and Weber County in 1902.⁸⁹⁴ Still, Utah would not elect another female lawmaker for a decade.⁸⁹⁵

After a long pause, four women would win election as lawmakers in 1912—Annie Wells Cannon, Anna Holden King, Dr. Jane Skolfield, and Edyth Ellerbeck Read.⁸⁹⁶ At least two women were successful in each election after that, including Elizabeth Hayward, who won

⁸⁹² "Senator Cannon's Baby," *Ogden Daily Standard*, April 22, 1899, p. 5; "Cannon Under Arrest," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 9, 1899, p. 1.

⁸⁹³ Arrington, "Alice Merrill Horne," 261–76.

⁸⁹⁴ "Democratic Ticket," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 8, 1900, p. 7; "Weber County Republican Nominees," *Deseret Evening News*, November 1, 1902, p. 14; "The Utah Legislature," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 5, 1902, p. 1.

⁸⁹⁵ A Professor George Corey from Utah wrote in 1902 that "that practice is losing favor." See "Utah. Women Suffrage and Municipal Politics," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1902, p. 147, M243.35 C797u 1902, CHL. It does not appear that any Utah women were nominated for the state legislature from 1904 to 1910 except for Elizabeth Hayward, who ran on the Democratic ticket in Salt Lake County in 1908 and lost, but won election six years later. "Democratic Ticket," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 2, 1908, p. 5.

⁸⁹⁶ "Legislature of Utah is Republican," *Ogden Evening Standard*, November 6, 1912, p. 3.

election to the State Senate in 1918 after two terms in the House of Representatives.⁸⁹⁷ In the legislature, these women passed bills related to women's and children's health, children and women's worker protections, a mother's pension, and prohibition.⁸⁹⁸

This focus is unsurprising because, as Robyn Muncy noted, "the doctrine of separate spheres...followed women into public life" in "female dominions" within Progressive politics.⁸⁹⁹ Looking at other parts of the United States after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Muncy notes that 1920 was not the expected inflection point in American politics, as no women's voting bloc emerged and female legislators were largely unable to break into 'male' policy realms. She argues that women's effectiveness in policymaking depended on control of their own institutions, such the federal Children's Bureau. In this light, it makes sense that Utah's female legislators were most successful passing laws in traditionally 'domestic' realms.

Additionally, Rebecca Edwards' analysis of American women's political engagement may explain why Utah women did not seek and win public office in greater numbers. Edwards' research indicates that in the early twentieth century, after decades of partisan political engagement, many women had come to believe that they could be most effective as nonpartisans who could organize and lobby as "disinterested" participants. She argues, "women did not

⁸⁹⁷ Elizabeth Hayward and Lily Clayton Wolstenholme were elected as state representatives in 1914, Hayward was joined by Dr. Grace Stratton Airey and Daisy Allen after the 1916 election, and Delora Blakely and Anna Thomas Piercey joined Airey as state representatives after 1918. See "Legislature of the State Is Safely Republican," *Ogden Daily Standard*, November 5, 1914, p. 3; "Utah Democrats Elect Their Ticket," *Davis County Clipper*, November 10, 1916, p. 3; "Personnel of 1919 Legislature," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 7, 1918, p. 7.

⁸⁹⁸ Susa Young Gates, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6:646–7.

⁸⁹⁹ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform: 1890–1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36.

choose these tactics as a separatist strategy during their first forays into politics. Rather, after decades of work in partisan campaigns, they had become disillusioned and excluded."⁹⁰⁰

Utah women citizens were some of the few Americans who could vote and run for office during this time, but those with ambitions for policy or reform at the state level may have come to similar conclusions after becoming similarly disillusioned and excluded within their own party apparatuses in the first decade or so after statehood. Or, if they continued to lose their bids for party nominations, they may have contented themselves with working to support their party's chosen candidates. Either way, it is apparent Mormon women's grassroots suffrage organizing in Utah did not carry over to create a unified women's bloc in party politics once the vote was restored. Thus, women's political participation in the early years of Utah statehood seemed to reinforce gendered authority rather than breaking down the divisions between men's and women's political culture.

The one position to which Utah women won election in large numbers was that of county recorder. Research by Utah historical non-profit Better Days 2020 shows that at least 125 women were elected to county officers, with more than ninety as county recorders, in twenty-six (of twenty-seven) Utah counties before 1920.⁹⁰¹ Perhaps women were seen as well suited for the job because of its secretarial nature, but for whatever reason, the town widow with a family to support or another ambitious woman was able to win nomination and election for this office in many Utah counties every year.

⁹⁰⁰ Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 10.

⁹⁰¹ Katherine Kitterman and Rebekah Ryan Clark, *Thinking Women: A Timeline of Suffrage in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), back matter. Biographies for most of the women in these positions are at "Utah Women in County Office, 1896–1920," Utah Women Making History, <https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/explore-the-history/utah-women-in-county-office-1896-1920/>.

Although gendered expectations may have made Utah women appear more fit for the position of county recorder than other public offices, they still had to prove their qualifications and desires to serve in that position in ways men did not. For example, when widowed mother of six Emily Dods was nominated for Tooele County recorder in 1896 on the Democratic ticket, she had to place a notice in the paper to dispel the rumor that her father would actually fill her duties if she were elected.⁹⁰² Campaigning was also tricky because it could backfire for a woman to be seen as self-promoting. Josie Fitzgerald's allies worked around this in 1912 by telling the local paper she was "too busy attending to the duties of her position to go about the county campaigning...so we women are going to do her campaigning for her."⁹⁰³ Fitzgerald was the first woman elected to office in Carbon County.

As Susa Young Gates acknowledged in her chapter for the *History of Woman Suffrage*, it was "difficult to persuade the women to stand for important offices" in Utah.⁹⁰⁴ There were some instances in which women moved on to positions of greater prominence after serving in local office, but these were few and mostly in Salt Lake. For example, Margaret Witcher (later Cherdron) won election as Salt Lake County recorder in 1908 and 1910, then narrowly lost a bid for the Republican nomination for State Treasurer in 1912.⁹⁰⁵ However, Witcher was nominated as a presidential elector that year and became the first woman to deliver a state's electoral votes

⁹⁰² "To the Electors of Tooele County," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 9, 1896, p. 5. Dods won election in 1896 and 1898.

⁹⁰³ "The Editor's Column," *Carbon County News*, October 17, 1912, p. 2.

⁹⁰⁴ Susa Young Gates, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6:647.

⁹⁰⁵ "Progress of Utah Women Shows Complete Success of Women Suffrage" *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, May 22, 1910, p. 4; "Our County Clerk" *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 31, 1910, p. 2; "Mattson Wins State Convention," *Ogden Evening Standard*, September 6, 1912, p. 8.

to Washington, D.C.⁹⁰⁶ Witcher would not hold public office again, but did fill leadership positions in women's political and business associations.

In Ogden, suffrage leaders such as Elizabeth Stanford, Kate Hilliard, and Emily Woodmansee tried to make women a force in the city elections of 1897 by calling a non-partisan women's meeting to endorse candidates. They urged, "Women of Ogden, we must not forget that we possess at least one-half of the voting power of the city, and it becomes our duty to use that power by timely and concerted action in the interest of good government."⁹⁰⁷ Despite their characteristic expression of faith in women's power to improve politics and government by supporting only a certain "kind and class of citizens" in public office, no similar attempts were made for the next year's general election.

It is difficult to determine women's turnout in elections after Utah statehood because officials did not keep separate tallies of male and female voters and voter records from this period have not survived. However, Utah Governor Heber M. Wells asked counties to draw up this information for the 1900 election at the request of Emmeline B. Wells, who included it in her chapter on Utah for the *History of Woman Suffrage*. That data from the sixteen largest Utah counties showed that 28,486 women voted in the general election, compared to 29,738 men.⁹⁰⁸ 95.8 percent of registered women actually voted, slightly higher than the 94.2 percent of registered men who went to the polls.

⁹⁰⁶ "Just History" *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 29, 1924, p. 7; "Mrs. Witcher Tells of Trip: Taft Greatly Interested," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 4, 1913, p. 14.

⁹⁰⁷ "Ladies' Attention," *Ogden Daily Standard*, September 12, 1897, p. 5.

⁹⁰⁸ The population of the entire state was about 276,000. Emmeline B. Wells, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:952.

In August 1900, the Ladies Democratic Club of Provo were frustrated when Democratic leaders in the county circulated a plan to nominate only men for office. Led by Amanda Knight, Electa Bullock, and other women's rights veterans, they protested: "we resent the intimation that in spite of equal suffrage the women of Utah remain nonentities." Their letter published in the paper explained that their efforts were crucial for the party and stated, "we expect visible recognition of this joint responsibility [for electoral wins or losses] by continued representation on the party ticket."⁹⁰⁹ Additionally, the club protested "against discrimination in salary on account of sex," having learned that first-deputy county recorder Rose Young's salary was \$10 less per month than the male second-deputy.⁹¹⁰ Democrats did end up nominating Rose Young for county recorder, but she lost in the general election.⁹¹¹

Before the 1912 election, Emmeline B. Wells wrote, "It has been quite noticeable that notwithstanding Utah is the second oldest suffrage state, her women hold fewer offices than the other four states where suffrage obtains."⁹¹² Acknowledging that most Utah women did not want to run for office, Wells continued, "those who seem to control the work of the conventions and elections have been anything but generous towards the women of the state," and also pointed to a lack of appointments to school boards, "positions where the service of women is especially needed and for which they would seem especially fitted." She urged voting in primaries and elections so women could have an "equal chance in public office."⁹¹³

⁹⁰⁹ "Provo Ladies Protest," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 25, 1900, p. 8.

⁹¹⁰ "Provo Ladies Protest."

⁹¹¹ "County Nominations," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 2, 1900, p. 7; "County Officers Elect," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 26, 1900, p. 3.

⁹¹² "Office for Women," *Woman's Exponent* 41, no. 1 (September 1, 1912): p. 4.

⁹¹³ "Office for Women."

Wells would continue to repeat this message as general Relief Society president, a position to which she was called in 1910. The demands of this calling combined with the financial insolvency of the *Woman's Exponent* ultimately forced her to stop publishing the paper in 1914, remarking “though the pen will be idle, the mind will ever gratefully remember all the associations which this little paper has been instrumental in creating.”⁹¹⁴ But suffragist and writer Susa Young Gates would continue sharing Relief Society and suffrage news through *The Relief Society Magazine*, which she founded later that year.

Working for a Federal Amendment

After Utah statehood, the majority of Utahns who were deeply committed to the cause of women's equality continued to support the national suffrage movement in pressing for a federal suffrage amendment. Just as Mormon suffragists had shifted their efforts inward on Utah society after the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887, they largely focused those efforts outside Utah after statehood. Rather than focusing a united effort on recruiting and supporting female candidates for local political offices, they continued within the national organizations they knew best. They provided financial and leadership support to NAWSA (and later the NWP), attended conventions and gave speeches, petitioned Congress, and encouraged their elected representatives to support a federal suffrage amendment in Washington, D.C. In these ways, Mormon suffragists' efforts helped create space for a fuller realization of women's citizenship in the United States.

As Utah delegates continued to attend and speak at NAWSA conventions, they often joined in testifying before congressional committees on the positive effects of woman suffrage in their state. They also emphasized that equal suffrage was based in bedrock American values. In

⁹¹⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, “Heartfelt Farewell,” *Woman's Exponent* 41, no. 14 (February 1, 1914): 100.

1896, Emily S. Richards countered the argument that most women did not want to vote in her testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary. She stated, “it is all very well for the women of our land to be sentimental and to say that they have all the rights and privileges they want, and that men will always be chivalrous, and so on, but some of us think justice a higher attribute than chivalry.”⁹¹⁵ She continued optimistically, “I assure you, gentlemen, that suffrage solves the problem of equality.”

Utahns’ convention speeches and congressional testimony largely echoed the themes of Mormon women’s pro-suffrage arguments from past decades that women could be independent and moral voters who would help to clean up societal problems at the ballot box. Similar to official NAWSA rhetoric, they also “positioned suffrage as an amalgamation of civil and motherly duties.”⁹¹⁶ In 1898, during her term as state senator, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon addressed the NAWSA convention and joined Susan B. Anthony’s fifteenth testimony before a Congressional committee. As one of the speakers from a suffrage state, Senator Cannon sought to counter anti-suffrage arguments that voting degraded women and made them mannish. Instead, she argued, “[Utah is] a complete vindication of the efforts of equal suffragists...None of the unpleasant results which were predicted have occurred.”⁹¹⁷

Senator Cannon first assured her audiences that Utah women were independent voters who had not abused their privileges in the past. “Ten years before I was old enough to vote,” she

⁹¹⁵ United States Congress, House, Committee on the Judiciary, *Hearing of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., January 28, 1896* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896) 15, Anna Howard Shaw, National American Woman Suffrage Association, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, and Susan B. Anthony Collection, LOC.

⁹¹⁶ Geis, “Key to All Reform,” 20. See also Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women’s Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

⁹¹⁷ Martha Hughes Cannon, “Woman Suffrage in Utah,” House of Representatives, Before the Committee on the Judiciary, February 15, 1898. Hearing on House Joint Resolution 68, p. 12, 324.623 C226w 1898, CHL.

said, “my mother was a voter. I learned at her knee to vote according to my conscience, and not according to the dictation of the bosses.”⁹¹⁸ Senator Cannon also protested against the notion that women were sullied by political participation. Female voters had influenced politics for good in Utah and had “gained admiration and respect while losing none of their old-time prestige.”⁹¹⁹ She also claimed that women were less bound by partisanship than men and thus better able to work for social reform.

Senator Cannon maintained that Utah women’s exercise of the vote had “proved to the world that woman is not only a helpmeet by the fireside, but when allowed to do so she can become a most powerful factor in the affairs of the government.”⁹²⁰ In other words, women could be political actors and improve the public sphere without destroying their homes and families. Finally, she reminded listeners that women had both ideas and the right to weigh in on public questions.⁹²¹ Her testimony added to the evidence offered from Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Kansas (where women had municipal suffrage) that woman suffrage benefitted government and the people as a whole. But despite growing practical experience with woman suffrage in the West, Congress was not easily convinced. Utahns would still be testifying ten years later, when Rose Sullivan joined the NAWSA delegation in 1908.⁹²²

Despite Utah suffragists’ initial enthusiasm after statehood, membership and meetings waned as a federal suffrage amendment continued to stall in Congress and many local WSA leaders focused efforts on their preferred political parties for the first state elections. Carrie

⁹¹⁸ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:304.

⁹¹⁹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:319.

⁹²⁰ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:319.

⁹²¹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:320.

⁹²² “Utah Woman Pleads for Women Suffragists,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 4, 1908, p. 1.

Chapman Catt, soon to head NAWSA after Susan B. Anthony's retirement, did not want her organization to lose Utahns' passion or financial support. She visited Salt Lake City in October 1899 and formed the Utah Council of Women (UCW) to replace the WSA as an official branch of NAWSA in working to enfranchise women in other states. The UCW brought women together across faiths and parties with Emily S. Richards as president and Emmeline B. Wells on the NAWSA Standing Committee on Organization.⁹²³ The UCW "proved to be a dependable source of financial aid to the national movement," sending delegates to NAWSA conventions, holding monthly meetings, and responding to NAWSA's calls for petitions and other support.⁹²⁴

The UCW boasted a deep bench of leaders in Salt Lake City and at least fourteen other counties. Its 1901 letterhead listed ten central officers—some of whom were veteran leaders from the Utah WSA, while others were prominent philanthropists or future state legislators. Five honorary presidents were Relief Society leaders, and two were prominent non-Mormon women. The large majority of the fourteen county vice-presidents in 1901 had served as WSA presidents or officers in the 1890s.⁹²⁵ UCW letterhead from a different, unknown, date listed another set of central officers under Emily S. Richards who were also prominent in both political parties. They included 1900 Democratic National Convention delegate Elizabeth Cohen and future state senator and state representatives Elizabeth Hayward and Dr. Jane Skolfield.⁹²⁶

⁹²³ "Editorial Notes," *Woman's Exponent* 28, no. 11 (November 1, 1899): 69; Clark, "Fire of Civic Endeavor," 290.

⁹²⁴ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 352.

⁹²⁵ Emily S. Richards letter to the First Presidency, November 17, 1901; First Presidency (Lorenzo Snow) general correspondence, 1898–1901; Letters, Ric–Ruc; CR 1 170, CHL.

⁹²⁶ Utah State Suffrage Council letterhead, Susa Young Gates papers, circa 1870–1933; General Correspondence; Alphabetical Subject Files; Women's Suffrage, 1892–1933; 1921, 1933; MS 7692, CHL.

Newspaper announcements of UCW meetings made their purpose clear: Utah women should “do all they can, that the sisters in other states may receive the power and opportunity of doing good through the ballot.”⁹²⁷ During what has sometimes been termed the doldrums of the suffrage movement in the 1900s, the UCW was a major contributor to NAWSA conventions and fundraisers. It donated items to NAWSA fundraising bazaars that played on the state’s unique history and special status, sending “little voter” dolls and handkerchiefs, scarfs, and quilts made of Utah silk for their prominent booths with the other suffrage states.⁹²⁸ On the home front, the UCW formed a council in 1911 that brought women’s organizations together to review the bills related to women in each Utah legislative session.⁹²⁹

In addition to NAWSA, Mormon women continued to work for women’s rights through the National and International Councils of Women. Despite a brief détente in the mid 1890s, the turn of the century brought an era of heightened anti-polygamy activity that sometimes made life difficult for Mormon delegates, similar to the 1880s. When Utah elected B. H. Roberts to Congress in 1898, American women’s organizations urged the House of Representatives not to seat him due to his past polygamous marriages, forcing the Relief Society delegates to the 1899 NCW convention into the awkward position of defending Roberts, who had opposed equal suffrage in Utah.⁹³⁰ A few years later, Utah suffragist Corinne Allen led a campaign at the ICW congress in Berlin to exclude Mormon women from the International Suffrage Alliance (ISA)

⁹²⁷ “Utah Suffrage Council,” *Deseret Evening News*, April 6, 1904, p. 4.

⁹²⁸ “Utah Doll Featue [sic] at Suffrage Bazar [sic],” *Deseret Evening News*, December 23, 1906, p. 16; *Woman’s Exponent* 29, no. 15 (January 1, 1901): 76. UCW President Emily S. Richards asked the Mormon First Presidency to contribute books written by Church authors for one bazaar in 1901. Emily S. Richards letter to the First Presidency, November 17, 1901; CHL.

⁹²⁹ Susa Young Gates, “Utah,” in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6:646.

⁹³⁰ Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, 11 February 1899.

which was founded there. Allen was ultimately unsuccessful, but in 1905 tensions rose again when the NCW discussed expelling Mormons and condemning the election of Utah Senator Reed Smoot as a believer in polygamy.⁹³¹ Incidents like these demonstrated that Mormons' position in the broader women's movement was still tenuous.⁹³²

Still, Emmeline B. Wells' carefully cultivated relationships, especially with Susan B. Anthony, proved strong enough to keep Mormons within these national and international organizations. When NAWSA celebrated Anthony's eightieth birthday in 1900, Utahns honored their staunchest supporter with a bolt of silk made entirely by Utah women. Anthony had a cherished dress made from the silk and wrote that her enjoyment of the gift was "quadrupled because it was made by women politically equal to men."⁹³³ When she died in 1906, she bequeathed a gold ring to Emmeline B. Wells as a symbol of their friendship.⁹³⁴ Utah suffragists honored Anthony with a memorial service in the Salt Lake Assembly Hall presided over by general Relief Society president Bathsheba Smith.⁹³⁵

At home in Utah, despite increasing interreligious cooperation in the UCW, women's political and advocacy organizations remained largely separated along the color line. It is unclear how long the "Colored Women's Republican Club" existed, but meetings for "colored voters" were still being held by both parties in Salt Lake City in the early 1900s, with women sometimes

⁹³¹ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 465–6.

⁹³² Joan Smyth Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in the U.S. Women's Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).

⁹³³ Madsen, *Advocate for Women*, 354.

⁹³⁴ Madsen, *Intimate History*, 420.

⁹³⁵ "Miss Susan B. Anthony: A Friend to Humanity," *Woman's Exponent* 34, no. 9 (March 1, 1906): 60.

among the speakers.⁹³⁶ Membership records were not preserved for the UCW, but Black women were not named as UCW leaders.

In 1904, Elizabeth A. Taylor hosted a convention in Salt Lake City to organize the Western Federation of Colored Women.⁹³⁷ Taylor, who had been active in politics since at least 1895 and whose husband had run for the state legislature in 1896, had built enough political capital to have Utah's governor and the Salt Lake City mayor address the convention.⁹³⁸ In her own opening speech, Taylor stated "I believe that the colored women should stand together more than any other class of civilized women in the world."⁹³⁹ Similar to other Black women's organizations in the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the WFCW worked separately from white organizations to address its members' intersectional concerns as women and people of color whose families faced social and legal barriers, limited educational and professional opportunities, and restricted access to the polls. It is unclear whether the WFCW directly supported suffrage in addition to its other charitable and social efforts, but it did hold fundraisers in Salt Lake City for an orphanage and a home for the elderly.⁹⁴⁰

As the twentieth century progressed, white Utah suffragists continued to work through NAWSA, which urged members to petition their state legislatures and Congress. NAWSA could always count on Utah to fill an outsized contribution to petition drives, given its long history of

⁹³⁶ Fewer women appeared on the program or as named participants as the years progressed. "Colored Republican Meeting," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 29, 1904, p. 2; "Registration Light on First Day's Effort," *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 18, 1905, p. 3; "Big Rally Planned," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 25, 1908, p. 3; "Colored Republicans Held a Good Meeting," *Ogden Daily Standard*, October 29, 1909, p. 1.

⁹³⁷ "Western Colored Women," *Deseret Evening News*, June 15, 1904, p. 2; "Colored Women Form Organization," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 3, 1904, p. 8.

⁹³⁸ "Colored Women Hold Convention," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, July 6, 1904, p. 5.

⁹³⁹ "Addresses Her Colored Sisters," *Deseret Evening News*, July 6, 1904, p. 5.

⁹⁴⁰ "Western Federation of Colored Women's Benefit," *Ogden Daily Standard*, March 24, 1905, p. 7.

widespread suffrage support.⁹⁴¹ In 1909, NAWSA requested every state to obtain signatures on a “monster petition” that it would present to Congress in a mile-long procession the next spring during the NAWSA convention. Utah was assigned a quota of 13,000 signatures but gathered 40,000—comprising one tenth of the total number from across the country.⁹⁴²

Especially as the UCW became less active, Relief Society networks and leadership still played an outsized role in fostering suffrage activity in Utah. As Emmeline B. Wells described, “the society as a whole believes in equal suffrage, and has...taught and inculcated the principle of equal political rights.”⁹⁴³ For example, early in 1909, Ada Ostberg, Relief Society secretary in the small southeast Utah town of Spring Glen, received a letter from a regional Relief Society secretary with instructions for circulating a different suffrage petition. The presidencies of the Relief Society and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) had requested a joint effort to gather signatures to send to Carrie Chapman Catt in New York. Hand-copied instructions asked local Relief Society leaders to solicit signatures from both women and men, having signers write down their address and occupation as well as their full name. The instructions urged women to go door to door visiting both homes and businesses and gave them examples of rebuttals to use if anyone said women did not want to vote.⁹⁴⁴ The NAWSA petition later that year was likely circulated by many of the same Relief Society workers for the UCW.

⁹⁴¹ “The Resolutions,” *Woman’s Exponent* 25, no. 19 (April 1, 1897), 128.

⁹⁴² “Council of Women Has Busy Meeting,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 2, 1909, p. 12; “Suffragists at Capitol,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1910, p. 7; “Suffragists Invade Capitol,” *Deseret Evening News*, April 19, 1909, p. 8.

⁹⁴³ “A Brief Historical Sketch of the National Woman’s Relief Society,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 9 (October 1, 1895): 61.

⁹⁴⁴ Annie Maria Allen, Castle Dale, Utah, to Ada Ostberg, Spring Glen, Utah, January 18, 1909; Spring Glen Ward, Carbon Stake, Spring Glen Ward Relief Society papers, 1906–1912; LR 8639 21, CHL.

But with the years rolling on and no new states joining the suffrage ranks, Susa Young Gates noted that “it was hard to keep up the interest.”⁹⁴⁵ Monthly UCW meetings largely ended by 1910 as leaders and members focused their day-to-day efforts on local politics and social reform, but the organization mobilized whenever NAWSA sent a petition or planned a particular demonstration.⁹⁴⁶ Some Utahns such as Susa Young Gates joined a short-lived National Council of Women Voters organized by Emma Smith DeVoe just after Washington approved a state suffrage amendment in 1910.⁹⁴⁷ This non-partisan organization worked to educate women voters in the five suffrage states and promote the cause beyond their borders.⁹⁴⁸

As younger women with experience in the militant wing of Britain’s suffrage movement rose to leadership in NAWSA, disagreements over tactics and priorities once again split the national movement. Most Utah suffragists remained loyal to NAWSA but their “longstanding support for [a federal] amendment led them to also form alliances with more radical organizations that emerged with an exclusive focus on constitutional change.”⁹⁴⁹ When Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organized a NAWSA parade on the day before President Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration in 1913, former Women’s Democratic Club president Edna Groshell marched at the head of Utah’s contingent.⁹⁵⁰ The parade was marred when the police failed to stop harassment from onlookers, but the resulting publicity encouraged Paul and Burns to stage

⁹⁴⁵ Susa Young Gates, “Utah,” in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6:645.

⁹⁴⁶ Clark, “Fire of Civic Endeavor,” 287–305.

⁹⁴⁷ “Utah Suffragists Delayed on Trains,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 15, 1911, p. 15.

⁹⁴⁸ “Platform Announced by Women’s Council,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 17, 1911, p. 4.

⁹⁴⁹ Clark, “Fire of Civic Endeavor,” 295.

⁹⁵⁰ “Mrs. Groshell Leads Big Parade Was Utah’s Accredited Delegate,” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, March 10, 1913, p. 3; “Utahns Will Witness Ceremonies,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, March 4, 1913, p. 1.

more public demonstrations. They formed the Congressional Union (CU) for Woman Suffrage and officially broke from NAWSA in 1914. Utah continued to hold rallies, raise funds, sign petitions, and attend conventions for both NAWSA and the CU.

Paul's strategy forewent pouring time and resources into state-by-state campaigns, instead using the power of public pressure and western women's votes to force Congress to pass a federal amendment. Because Utah suffragists had a long suffrage history and remembered the sting of losing the vote, many were easily convinced of the wisdom in Paul's strategy. In a state where public political culture at least paid lip service to women's equality, it did not create waves for political, social, and religious leaders to publicly support a suffrage amendment and remind their elected officials to do so as well. Utah's Senators Reed Smoot and George Sutherland could be counted on to meet with suffrage delegations in Utah and D. C. and to introduce their petitions to Congress with pro-suffrage speeches.⁹⁵¹ Republican women's organizer Mary Garrett Hay once said Senator Smoot "had done more than any other man in Congress for the cause of women's suffrage...He never fails...and looks after the interests...of women everywhere."⁹⁵²

Utahns soon swelled Paul's ranks and officially pledged their support for the CU's work at a convention in Salt Lake City headlined by Paul, CU organizer Mabel Vernon, Senator Sutherland, and Annie Wells Cannon.⁹⁵³ The convention included carefully-orchestrated opportunities for publicity, such as an automobile parade up Main Street and a photo of Utahns thanking Senator Smoot for his support for a suffrage amendment in front of a banner demanding

⁹⁵¹ "Suffragists at the Capitol," *Ogden Daily Standard*, July 31, 1913, p. 1.

⁹⁵² "The Official Round Table," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 3 (March 1920): 155.

⁹⁵³ "Suffragettes are Ready for Convention Will Name Delegates to San Francisco," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 19, 1915, p. 12; "Utah Women Pledge Support," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 21, 1915, p. 12.

the enfranchisement of women.⁹⁵⁴ Paul organized an official CU branch for Utah including women of multiple faiths and parties with former presidential elector Margaret Witcher Cherdron as state chair, and declared herself pleased with Utahns' "enthusiasm and interest."⁹⁵⁵ Cherdron presided at a meeting of the CU's first national convention in Washington, D.C., and Utah state representative Lily Clayton Wolstenholme was one of the few women selected to personally visit President Woodrow Wilson to urge his support for a federal suffrage amendment.⁹⁵⁶

Under Cherdron's leadership, the Utah CU branch supported national publicity campaigns such as the automobile journey of suffrage envoys driving a petition for a federal suffrage amendment from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. Utahns turned out in force to greet envoy Sara Bard Field when she stopped in Salt Lake City with leading suffragists, male dignitaries from across the state, and eighty-seven-year-old Emmeline B. Wells standing on the steps of the newly-constructed State Capitol.⁹⁵⁷ Newspapers eagerly covered the spectacle with striking photographs, and as the *Salt Lake Tribune* described it, Field "stood militant upon the steps of the state capitol...without a foe to face."⁹⁵⁸ She later recalled being told "the Mormon women here are going to give you every support that can be given and we will stand by this in

⁹⁵⁴ "U.S. Senator Reed Smoot Pledges Support to Bill Enfranchising Women of the Nation," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, August 20, 1915, p. 12.

⁹⁵⁵ Alice Paul to Miss Lancaster, August 23, 1915, Alice Paul Papers, Series II, Suffrage; Congressional Union: general correspondence, 1915; MC 399, folder 229; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

⁹⁵⁶ "News of the Women's Clubs," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 5, 1915, p. 45; "President Promises Support for Women," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 22, 1915, p. 4.

⁹⁵⁷ "Suffragists of City Extend Welcome to Envoys of Congressional Union," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, October 5, 1915, p. 1; "Militant Suffragist Speaks From Steps of Capitol," *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 5, 1915, p. 8.

⁹⁵⁸ "Salt Lake Women Welcome Suffrage Envoy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 4, 1915, p. 1.

large numbers no matter what it takes.”⁹⁵⁹ When Field reached D.C., Senator Sutherland officially welcomed her on the steps of the U.S. Capitol after a grand parade and introduced the federal woman suffrage amendment to the Senate yet again.⁹⁶⁰

When the CU officially formed the National Woman’s Party (NWP) in 1916 to campaign against politicians who did not support suffrage, Utahn Margaret Lee was one of the officers.⁹⁶¹ Utah sent twenty-eight delegates to the NWP’s summer convention that year and held weekly meetings at its Salt Lake City headquarters during the campaign season.⁹⁶² Affiliation with the NWP was largely uncontroversial among Utah suffragists, and the NWP’s strategy influenced Carrie Chapman Catt as President of NAWSA to unveil a new “Winning Plan” with greater emphasis on pushing for a federal amendment.

1917 marked a turning point in the suffrage campaign with the Silent Sentinels protest and the entry of the United States into the World War. The NWP started picketing outside the White House in January, the first-ever protest at that location, to pressure President Wilson into supporting the suffrage amendment. After the declaration of war with Germany in April, Catt, a pacifist, chose to throw NAWSA’s energies behind the war effort to prove women’s capabilities and loyalty. Most Utahns followed that tactic under the leadership of women like Lily Clayton Wolstenholme, who headed the National League of Women’s Services to direct women’s war work and encourage military recruitment.⁹⁶³ As leader of the UCW, Emily S. Richards joined

⁹⁵⁹ Amelia R. Fry, *Sara Bard Field: Poet and Suffragist*, transcript of an oral history conducted 1961 by Amelia R. Fry, p. 311, Suffragists Oral History Project, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, 1979.

⁹⁶⁰ “Monster Suffrage Petition Presented,” *Evening Star* [Washington, DC], December 6, 1915, p. 1.

⁹⁶¹ “Women Launch Party to Promote Suffrage,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, June 6, 1916, p. 7.

⁹⁶² “Women’s Party Names Delegates,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 28, 1916, p. 16; “Woman’s Party Active,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 23, 1916, p. 8.

⁹⁶³ “Salt Lake Woman Seeks Election to State Senate,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 29, 1920, p. 3.

Catt and one hundred women in a meeting with President Wilson to formally offer the services of NAWSA's two million members.⁹⁶⁴

The NWP determined not to let war change its course and continued picketing, now holding signs calling out the hypocrisy of fighting for democracy abroad while denying women's right to vote. Police began to arrest picketers that summer for obstructing traffic. Utah's suffrage ranks divided over the issue when Utahns Minnie Quay and Lovern Robertson left for Washington, D.C. to join the picket line.⁹⁶⁵ The UCW and Women's Democratic Club published a joint letter kicking Quay out of the WDC, denouncing the tactics of "the so-called Woman's Party" and endorsing NAWSA's approach in opposition to "this militant group of women."⁹⁶⁶ Democratic Utah Senator William King, who had replaced Sutherland, attacked the NWP for campaigning against Democrats and said he opposed a federal suffrage amendment on the basis of states' rights.⁹⁶⁷ Republican Utah Senator Reed Smoot reiterated his support for the amendment but did not endorse the picketers, saying the protest would not "do any good."⁹⁶⁸

But Utah NWP chair Elizabeth Cutler Jenkins announced that she was funding Quay and Robertson's travel to Washington, D.C., without regard to their personal politics, because "I am

⁹⁶⁴ Richards also served on the Utah State Council of Defense, the Women's Liberty Loan Committee, and as a member of the Red Cross. "Emily Sophia Tanner Richards," *Relief Society Magazine* 26, no. 10 (October 1929): 525.

⁹⁶⁵ "Suffragist Leaves for Washington," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 31, 1917, p. 16; "Salt Lake Woman to Picket White House," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 1, 1917, p. 9.

⁹⁶⁶ Quay had campaigned for President Wilson in 1916 and joined the WDC in early 1917, but the club claimed that she had joined under false pretenses since she had previously served as a Republican election judge and sought election as a Republican delegate. They did not address Robertson because she was a Socialist. "Say Mrs. Quay is not a Democrat," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 31, 1917, p. 8. WDC President Hortense Nebeker went so far as to state the club's opposition to the Susan B. Anthony amendment in a quote for another newspaper article that day. See "Mrs. Jenkins Hires White House Pickets," *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 31, 1917, p. 5.

⁹⁶⁷ "Senator King Raps Women Who Annoy the President," *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 29, 1917, p. 5.

⁹⁶⁸ "Salt Lake Pickets Again Behind Bars," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 14, 1917, p. 16.

interested only in the fact that [they are] earnestly working on the proposed Susan B. Anthony Amendment, through which it is hoped to give suffrage to all women of the country... We are working for the amendment, disregarding party politics. We oppose only those who oppose us.”⁹⁶⁹ Robertson declared, “I do not expect to escape arrest,” and her husband later told reporters: “even if my wife must go to jail, I will heartily indorse anything she may do for woman’s suffrage that is not against the law.”⁹⁷⁰

Quay and Robertson were arrested on November 10 along with 39 other protestors carrying banners urging President Wilson to support a federal women’s suffrage amendment.⁹⁷¹ After their release on \$25 bail each, the suffragists attended their scheduled court hearing and returned directly to the White House to picket again, where they were rearrested and jailed.⁹⁷² Quay and Roberts were among those sentenced to thirty days in prison and held at the Occoquan Workhouse, where they demanded to be treated as political prisoners and were mistreated during what came to be known as the Night of Terror.⁹⁷³

It is unclear whether the Utahns participated in some women’s hunger strike while in prison, but at least Robertson spent time in the hospital and both were released early as negative publicity rose.⁹⁷⁴ Quay and Robertson both filed affidavits documenting their mistreatment and

⁹⁶⁹ “Mrs. Jenkins Hires White House Pickets,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 31, 1917, p. 5.

⁹⁷⁰ “Husbands of Utahns Arrested in Washington Voice Indignation,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, November 11, 1917, p. 7.

⁹⁷¹ “41 Suffragists, 2 Utahns, Arrested,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, November 11, 1917, p. 1; “No Word Received from Utah Pickets,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 12, 1917, p. 12.

⁹⁷² “Utah Pickets at White House in Trouble Again,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 13, 1917, p. 1; “Salt Lake Pickets Again Behind Bars,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 14, 1917, p. 16.

⁹⁷³ “2 Utah Militants in Occoquan Jail,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 15, 1917, p. 1; Minnie P. Quay, Affidavit signed and notarized, November 28, 1917, National Woman’s Party Records, Manuscript Division, LOC.

⁹⁷⁴ “Salt Lake Picket Now in Hospital,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 25, 1917, p. 4.

were commended by NWP leaders for “the revolutionary spirit” that inspired them to “endure jail, scorn, being represented as criminals, hunger strikes, brutality of prison warden, even death, for liberty and free agency for women.”⁹⁷⁵ Their experience did not dampen their commitment to further action; when Quay was asked about whether she would join future pickets if Congress rejected the suffrage amendment, she replied: “If I am needed, I shall not hesitate to return at once...I am ready to do anything within my power and no sacrifice is too great.”⁹⁷⁶

As Alice Paul hoped, increased publicity attracted greater public support for the suffrage cause. Utahns continued to do their part to keep the pressure on Congress wherever they could exert influence. For example, Utah Governor William Spry telegraphed Republican presidential nominee Charles Hughes in 1916 with a request to emphasize the party’s pro-suffrage plank in his acceptance speech.⁹⁷⁷ Spry had spoken at the ceremony on the steps of the Capitol welcoming CU envoy Sara Bard Field the previous fall and kept a file of correspondence he received with requests for information about the benefits of equal suffrage in Utah.⁹⁷⁸

Utah women could exert a more direct influence inside the state legislature. Local papers proudly reported in 1917 that of eleven female state legislators currently serving in five states, four were in Utah.⁹⁷⁹ During that year’s legislative session, Representative Elizabeth Hayward from Salt Lake City introduced a resolution asking the President and Congress to pass a suffrage amendment as a “measure of justice to one-half the citizens of these United States,” which

⁹⁷⁵ “Mrs. Jenkins Says Women Had Laughs in Prison,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, December 16, 1917, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁶ “1000 Pickets Will Heckle Wilson, Says Mrs. Quay,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, December 20, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁷ It is unclear whether Governor Spry did so at the request of Utah suffragists, but it would have been likely. Governor William Spry to Chas E. Hughes, July 31, 1916; Series 226, Governor Spry, Correspondence, Womens' [sic] Suffrage, Box 13, Folder 81, UA.

⁹⁷⁸ “Salt Lake Women Welcome Suffrage Envoy,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 4, 1915, p. 1.

⁹⁷⁹ “Eleven Women Legislate,” *Duchesne Record*, March 31, 1917, p. 2.

passed unanimously.⁹⁸⁰ Hayward had been active in both UCW and NWP efforts in Utah, attended several national democratic conventions as a delegate, and focused especially on child labor laws during her service in the legislature.⁹⁸¹ She ran a similar resolution in 1919 that also passed unanimously.⁹⁸²

When Congress finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment and sent it to the states for ratification, Hayward led the process in Utah. The UCW and NWP had urged Utah Governor Bamberger to call a special legislative session to ratify the Amendment, which he opened at the end of September.⁹⁸³ Everyone knew Senator Hayward would introduce the joint resolution to ratify, and it passed unanimously.⁹⁸⁴ The Utah House of Representatives took up the matter the next day, where Speaker of the House John E. Heppler requested that Representative Anna T. Piercey chair the session.⁹⁸⁵ Representative Piercey was a widow and a wage earner who, like Senator Hayward, had championed the rights of working women and children as a legislator.

⁹⁸⁰ "Asks Congress for Law on Suffrage," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 18, 1917, p. 32; "Suffrage Memorial Introduced in House," *Salt Lake Telegram*, February 18, 1917, p. 27; 1917 Session: House Joint Memorial No. 6, March 2, 1917; Series 4076, Secretary of State, Legislative bills, Box 20, Folder 81, UA.

⁹⁸¹ Hayward acted in her first term in office to reverse a planned closure of the Utah Art Institute which Alice Merrill Horne and Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon had fought to establish in 1899. "Mrs. Elizabeth Hayward," *Deseret Evening News*, July 4, 1908, p. 5; "Suffrage Mass Meeting Friday," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 14, 1915, p. 12; "Around Town," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 23, 1916, p. 5; "Artists May Yet Save Art Institute," *Utah Daily Chronicle*, March 1, 1915, p. 1.

⁹⁸² 1919 Session: Senate Joint Memorial No. 1, January 16, 1919; Series 4076, Secretary of State, Legislative bills, Box 21, Folder 75, UA.

⁹⁸³ "Special Legislature for Suffrage Asked," *Salt Lake Tribune* July 10, 1919, p. 22; "Governors Show Interest in Suffrage: Special Sessions Are Promised Women," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 20, 1919, p. 8.

⁹⁸⁴ "Name Woman to Introduce Suffrage Measure," *Salt Lake Telegram*, September 29, 1919, p. 5.

⁹⁸⁵ "Suffrage Ratified by House, Now Goes to Chief Executive," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 1, 1919, p. 18. Heppler's decision may have been influenced by his mother, Lucy, a suffrage leader in Sevier County. There had been talk of the House electing Dr. Grace Stratton Airey as Speaker for the session focused on suffrage, but newspapers reported a general consensus that the special session should be conducted quickly and that "perhaps a man in the chair would be able to force more speed in the lower house than would a woman." See "Legislature to Open Tomorrow," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 28, 1919, p. 1.

Under Piercey's leadership, Dr. Grace Stratton Airey and Delora W. Blakely gave short speeches in support and the House also voted unanimously for ratification.⁹⁸⁶ Utah became the seventeenth state overall and the first suffrage state to ratify the Amendment.⁹⁸⁷

Through Senator Hayward's resolution, the Utah legislature put it on record that "the State of Utah has always favored equal suffrage, and many of its citizens, both men and women, through personal efforts, and untiring energy, have labored for the adoption of the suffrage amendment to the Constitution of the United States."⁹⁸⁸ Now Utah suffragists eagerly waited for more ratifications to roll in. Fourteen delegates represented the state at NAWSA's (premature) "Victory convention" in February 1920, which honored suffrage pioneers including Utah's Emmeline B. Wells, Emily S. Richards, and Susa Young Gates.⁹⁸⁹

Wells, Richards, and Gates represented three generations of Mormon suffragists who had led in the cause. Born in 1828, 1849, and 1856, respectively, they had seen Utah women gain the vote in 1870 and grown into public service surrounded by Mormon women determined to participate in politics to defend their faith community and then their own voting rights. They had petitioned and pleaded to retain suffrage, mobilized the organizational power of Relief Society to win it back, and represented both their religion and their sex on the national and international stage. They had served in political offices and educated and encouraged other women to do the

⁹⁸⁶ "Suffrage Ratified by House, Now Goes to Chief Executive," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 1, 1919, p. 18. Both Dr. Airey and Rep. Blakely were well-known women's advocates in Utah. Dr. Airey chaired the legislature's Committee on Public Health and had been a delegate to a national suffrage convention. Representative Blakely was an educator who supported widowed mothers and immigrants through legislation and women's charitable organizations.

⁹⁸⁷ "Governor Signs Suffrage Bill," *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 4, 1919, p. 2.

⁹⁸⁸ 1919 Special: Joint Resolution 1, October 3, 1919; Series 428, Legislature, Senate, Working bills, Box 16, Folder 35, UA.

⁹⁸⁹ Donnette Smith Kesler, "Three Important Conventions," *The Young Woman's Journal* 31, no. 5 (May 1920): 271–276; "The Official Round Table," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 4 (April 1920): 225.

same. As NAWSA celebrated the centennial of Susan B. Anthony's birth and the upcoming ratification of Anthony's largest political objective, these Utahns could proudly point to half a century of their own history in service of that same goal.

The final ratification for the Nineteenth Amendment came down to Tennessee that August. As the dust settled on that final, fierce battle, Utahns felt confident that their history demonstrated what to expect as women entered the electorate in 33 states. "While the rest of the country stands back and wonders what the women will do with the ballot now that they have it, Utah and other suffrage states will not be confused," the *Salt Lake Telegram* editorialized. "They know in the beginning that the new voters will acquit themselves with credit, just as they have in business and in the home."⁹⁹⁰ Of course, the Amendment's ratification did not mean that all women would be able to cast ballots; even though women could not be kept from the polls due to their sex, discriminatory U.S. citizenship laws and local regulations such as poll taxes and literacy tests would continue to disenfranchise voters of color, both women and men. But there was no mention of this in the Utah papers that August, as white Utahns had the luxury to ignore these barriers that activists would spend the next century fighting to overturn.

Utah suffragists waited until the U.S. Secretary of State certified Tennessee's ratification to celebrate this long-awaited victory with a parade and speeches at the State Capitol.⁹⁹¹ Reflecting another turning point in Utah's suffrage organizations, the event took place under the leadership of the League of Women Voters, which had replaced the UCW with Antoinette

⁹⁹⁰ "Women Achieve Victory," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 20, 1920, p. 11.

⁹⁹¹ "S.L. Suffragettes Plan Celebration," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 19, 1920, p. 2; "Women Postpone Celebration of Victory," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 23, 1920, p. 2; "Suffrage Proclaimed," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 26, 1920, p. 1; "Women Celebrate Suffrage Victory," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 31, 1920, p. 12.

Kinney at the helm.⁹⁹² As usual, Utah's most prominent elected officials proudly took part to honor Utah's leadership in suffrage rights and declare their confidence for the future.⁹⁹³ But according to Susa Young Gates,

The most impressive figure on the platform was President Emmeline B. Wells, 92 years old, who had voted since 1870 and who had labored all these years for this glorious achievement. What those dim eyes had seen of history in the making, what those old ears had heard and what that clear brain had conceived and carried out only her close associates knew. She was the incarnate figure of tender, delicate, eternally determined womanhood, arrived and triumphant.⁹⁹⁴

Wells' triumph was the result of the efforts of thousands of Utah women and men who had persisted in their dedication to women's equality through thick and thin. "Neither pawns nor militants, [Utahns had] actively advocated for and participated in the women's suffrage movement for fifty years," in a long and complex struggle with setbacks, disappointments, and failures along the way.⁹⁹⁵ As the United States opened a new chapter of democratization, Utah women were proud that they had taken some of the first steps on the path to get there.

⁹⁹² "The Official Round Table," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 1 (January 1920): 40.

⁹⁹³ "Utah Women Observe Suffrage Victory," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 1, 1920, p. 3.

⁹⁹⁴ Susa Young Gates, "Utah," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6:650.

⁹⁹⁵ Clark, "Fire of Civic Endeavor," 301.

EPILOGUE

“PROPER CREDIT IN THE RANKS OF SUFFRAGE”

In early 1920, general Relief Society President Emmeline B. Wells called for the Societies in all stakes and wards to hold a jubilee celebration for the fiftieth anniversary of Utah’s 1870 equal suffrage law.⁹⁹⁶ Predictably, the *Deseret Evening News* printed photos of George Q. Cannon and Abraham O. Smoot with the announcement of the celebration, honoring men who had passed Utah Territory’s historic suffrage law and eliding the women whose rights and votes were the cause for celebration.⁹⁹⁷ The *News* did reprint some of the leading Mormon women’s remarks after gaining the franchise, but devoted just as much space to listing the roster of men who had served in the 1870 legislature. There were clearly still two separate political cultures in Utah.

Local Relief Societies planned their own celebrations and a general Relief Society committee planned an exhibit of influential Utah suffragists’ portraits and an event at Salt Lake’s Social Hall on February 12.⁹⁹⁸ Speakers on the program represented women who had voted early in Utah’s history, current leaders of women’s organizations, and descendants of the male politicians who had extended voting rights to women citizens in both 1870 and 1896.⁹⁹⁹ Their topics covered the history of women’s suffrage at different points in Utah history, the

⁹⁹⁶ Relief Society General Presidency letter to Stake Presidents of the Relief Society, Susa Young Gates papers, circa 1870–1933; General Correspondence; Alphabetical Subject Files; Women’s Suffrage, 1892–1933; 1920; MS 7692, CHL (hereafter cited as SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, 1920); “Women Will Celebrate Golden Jubilee, Marking Fiftieth Anniversary of Suffrage in Utah,” *Deseret Evening News* clipping, January 24, 1920, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, 1920.

⁹⁹⁷ “Women Will Celebrate Golden Jubilee.”

⁹⁹⁸ “Late Locals,” *Tooele Transcript Bulletin*, January 20, 1920, p. 8; “Fifty Years Since Suffrage Won Here,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 2, 1920, p. 4; “Fiftieth Suffrage Anniversary in Utah,” *Ogden Daily Standard*, February 9, 1920, p. 2; “Official Round Table,” *Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 7 (July 1920): 420.

⁹⁹⁹ Utah Suffrage Jubilee program, February 12, 1920, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, 1920.

accomplishments of women in the Utah legislature and the national suffrage movement, a poem by Ruth May Fox, and a children's choir comprised of "the third and fourth generation of women voters."¹⁰⁰⁰

This celebration in Salt Lake City had to be postponed due to the flu epidemic, which had killed a few thousand Utahns since 1918 and was still raging that winter.¹⁰⁰¹ Some Utah newspapers printed small notices marking the February 12 anniversary, with a few noting that Seraph Young had been the first woman to cast her ballot in the municipal election two days later.¹⁰⁰² Many shared information from the Utah State Historical Society reminding readers that Utah had been half a century ahead of the rest of the nation in extending equal voting rights to women.¹⁰⁰³ And they continued to update Utahns on the slow progress of the Nineteenth Amendment, including Idaho and Arizona's ratifications on February 11 and 12.¹⁰⁰⁴

Mormon women presented their own suffrage history much more thoroughly than the Utah newspapers, with features spread across several issues of the *Relief Society Magazine* in 1920. Editor Susa Young Gates remarked that the whole history of the national movement had been written, but she wanted her readers to know that Mormon women had pioneered the franchise for nearly fifty years. She herself had been "the earliest pioneer voter present" at NAWSA's victory convention in Chicago, and she proudly rehearsed the history of Mormon

¹⁰⁰⁰ Utah Suffrage Jubilee program.

¹⁰⁰¹ "Anniversary," *Salt Lake Telegram*, February 12, 1920, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰² "Town Topics," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, February 13, 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰³ "Utah the Pioneer in Woman Suffrage," *Box Elder News Journal*, January 30, 1920, p. 1; "U.S. Fifty Years Behind Utah," *Manti Messenger*, January 30, 1920, p. 1; "Women Suffrage Enacted in Utah Fifty Years Ago," *Tooele Transcript Bulletin*, January 30, 1920, p. 1; "Utah and Suffrage," *Ogden Daily Standard*, January 31, 1920, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰⁴ "News of a Week in Condensed Form," *Beaver County News*, February 18, 1920, p. 2; "News of a Week in Condensed Form," *Millard County Chronicle*, February 19, 1920, p. 8; "News of a Week in Condensed Form," *Washington County News*, February 19, 1920, p. 6.

women voting in church matters, the Utah legislature's unanimous extension of the vote in 1870, and the leading women who had championed suffrage within and without Utah's borders.¹⁰⁰⁵ She printed a recent photograph of Seraph Young Ford, honoring her as "the first in Utah and the United States to exercise the elective franchise."¹⁰⁰⁶ And she recounted the Relief Society's role in Utah suffrage efforts as she traced the ups and downs of the movement.¹⁰⁰⁷

In an editorial, Gates wrote that political observers' question about how women would use suffrage was "rather a silly question for its answer is so obvious. Women will use the vote according to nature, inclination, marriage, and conditions, just as men do."¹⁰⁰⁸ She expressed her belief that the right to vote carried with it a responsibility, of which Utah women had proven themselves more than capable, but she did not predict that American women would vote very differently than men. "[Woman] may vote on the right side of a question or the wrong side of the question, just as a man may, according to her likes and her leanings."¹⁰⁰⁹ Still, Gates was convinced that the franchise would give American women the opportunity to learn and make progress, a huge benefit to them and to their children for generations to come.

The adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 was the capstone of fifty years of Mormon women's suffrage activism. At least three generations of Mormon women had carried the cause forward since they had collectively stepped into the arena of formal politics in 1870. Although they were the first in the United States to cast ballots under an equal suffrage law,

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Suffrage Won by the Mothers of the United States," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 5 (May 1920): 254, 262.

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Suffrage Won by the Mothers," 264.

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Suffrage Won by the Mothers," 264–6.

¹⁰⁰⁸ "What Women Will Do with the Suffrage," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 5 (May 1920): 291.

¹⁰⁰⁹ "What Women Will Do," 292.

Mormon women's suffrage rights were a political football for the next decade and a half in the larger national conflict over the practice of polygamy and Utah statehood. The women at the center of this conflict expressed "no ordinary feelings" as they voted, petitioned, spoke, and lobbied lawmakers to protect their marital practices and their right to vote.¹⁰¹⁰ Even though these collective efforts could not prevent Utah women's disenfranchisement in 1887, they did shape how many Mormon women saw themselves and their place in the American republic. Their early political engagement cemented their belief in equality and sustained continued suffrage activism in Utah for decades to come.

Mormon women developed leadership abilities and organizational networks through the Relief Society that enabled them to mobilize in large numbers, whether holding pro-polygamy indignation meetings in 1870, rallying their local communities to support equal suffrage in Utah's constitution in 1895, or circulating petitions for a federal suffrage amendment in 1909. Directed and inspired by women like Sarah M. Kimball, Emmeline B. Wells, and Emily S. Richards, grassroots leaders in small farm villages and larger towns sounded the "gospel of equal rights" in every corner of Utah.¹⁰¹¹ As immigrants and native-born Americans, well-educated or self-taught, these women shared a faith in their power to do good and the justice of their cause. And their experience, example, and financial support helped pave the way for the Nineteenth Amendment to become law.

Although NAWSA and the NWP declared suffrage work complete in 1920, the ratification of the "Susan B. Anthony" Amendment did not secure access to the polls for all

¹⁰¹⁰ Bathsbeba W. Smith, in Proceedings in Mass Meeting of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest Against the Passage of Cullom's Bill, January 14, 1870 ([Salt Lake City]: [publisher not identified], 1870), 1; M243.91 P963 1870, CHL.

¹⁰¹¹ Alvira Lucy Cox, "Equal Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 7 (Oct. 15, 1893): 50.

women. The Nineteenth Amendment meant states could not bar women from the polls simply because of their sex. But racially discriminatory U.S. citizenship laws and myriad state restrictions such as poll taxes and literacy tests dramatically limited the number of women (and men) who could cast ballots due to their race, national origin, wealth, or education. With white women's organizations uninterested in combatting voter suppression, especially in the South, Black women, Indigenous women, and other women of color continued to fight for citizenship rights and equal access to the ballot box.¹⁰¹²

Although Mormon women contributed the national suffrage movement for fifty years, they always occupied an uneasy place in the movement because their early voting history had been so tangled up with polygamy. As Susa Young Gates would find, that made it hard to ensure her suffragist foremothers got their due. Organizations on both sides of the suffrage issue had used Utah as an example to make their points in the final campaigns, but the ways in which Utah history was used (or misused) pushed it out of the national suffrage narrative and public memory.

When Utah entered the Union as the third equal suffrage state in 1896, NAWSA added a third star to its suffrage flag. Women's rights advocates had increasingly adopted visual symbols for their movement with yellow flowers, suffrage flags, and more as the nineteenth century drew to a close. During the NAWSA convention of 1896, the *Washington Post* published a cartoon titled "The Apotheosis of Suffrage," an allusion to the Apotheosis of Washington fresco in the

¹⁰¹² Martha S. Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Cathleen Cahill, *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020). While Utah did not have poll taxes or literacy tests in place after 1920, discrimination made it more difficult for voters of color to register and cast ballots. And Utah law disenfranchised residents of Indigenous reservations by designating them non-residents of the state. In 1956, Preston Allen, a Ute living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, sued the Duchesne County clerk for refusing to register him to vote. The Utah Supreme Court ruled against Allen, but the state legislature repealed the law after he appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Thus, although Utah was among the earliest to extend voting rights to women citizens, it was among the last states to allow its original inhabitants to participate in the political process. See Willard Hughes Rollings, "Citizenship and Suffrage: The Native American Struggle for Civil Rights in the American West, 1830–1965," *Nevada Law Journal* 5 (2004): 138–9.

U.S. Capitol rotunda.¹⁰¹³ Artist George Coffin depicted Utah and Wyoming as young maidens next to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who assumed the figures of the Goddess of Liberty and Goddess of Victory on either side of Washington. This cartoon placed Utah women in a position of prominence and honor, in sharp contrast to their depiction as slaves, ugly comic figures, or non-white foreigners during the anti-polygamy campaigns of the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰¹⁴ A victorious sunburst and laurel leaves reflected an optimism born of Utah's success.

Gary and Carol Bunker found that as the national campaign for suffrage gained momentum and anti-suffrage lost ground, popular art and cartoons “began to picture Utah in the vanguard of advancing women's rights.”¹⁰¹⁵ With the rise of publicity departments in the national suffrage organizations and a growing number of states mounted campaigns in the 1910s, suffragists employed banners, postcards, and cartoons to highlight the increasing number of suffrage states and create a bandwagon effect for others to follow.¹⁰¹⁶ Utah was featured alongside Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho in materials depicting the equal suffrage states as triumphant warriors or ladies hosting a congenial tea party.¹⁰¹⁷ As part of the advance ranks, Utah women could be proud of themselves for opening the door and helping others step through it.

¹⁰¹³ George Yost Coffin, *The Apotheosis of Suffrage*, 1896, Photograph, LOC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016679928>.

¹⁰¹⁴ Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852–1890* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Paul W. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰¹⁵ Gary L. Bunker and Carol B. Bunker, “Woman Suffrage, Popular Art, and Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 44.

¹⁰¹⁶ Allison K. Lange, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 134.

¹⁰¹⁷ Bunker and Bunker, “Woman Suffrage, Popular Art,” 32–51.

Suffragists across the country could use special stamps or postcards to share the message that Utah was a state to follow. NAWSA and some state suffrage leagues sold stamps in the early 1900s featuring the four suffrage states. These unofficial stamps could be added to envelopes as a statement of support, with messages such as “In Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho women vote on equal terms with men.”¹⁰¹⁸ President Taft purchased the first stamp in one 1909 series as a show of support.¹⁰¹⁹ NAWSA also approved a thirty-postcard set in 1910 that highlighted positive results in suffrage states and included several “United Equal Suffrage States” designs with four-starred flags. Like those for Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho, the Utah-specific card displayed the date of its suffrage victory next to the flag, with this line below: “The Union of States As They Ought To Be.”¹⁰²⁰

Even when Utah and other western states were held up as examples in suffrage campaigns, the associations would not always have been positive. Suffragists in eastern states with decades of organized suffrage work but no victories under their belts might have employed these examples somewhat ironically. One banner from Ohio’s 1912 banner read: “Women Vote—in Wyoming, Washington, Colorado, Utah, California and Idaho—Why Not in Ohio?”¹⁰²¹ One implication of this message could be that if uncouth, upstart women out west were allowed to vote, those in more civilized states should not be behind them.

¹⁰¹⁸ “Envelope : Woman Suffrage Headquarters, Concord, New Hampshire to Mrs. I.F. Porter, Bath, New Hampshire. January 14, 1903,” *Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection*, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/1180>.

¹⁰¹⁹ “Prest. Taft First to Buy Suffrage Stamp,” *Deseret Evening News*, April 13, 1909, p. 1.

¹⁰²⁰ “United Equal Suffrage States of America: Utah 1896 The Third State to Enter,” Catherine H. Palczewski Postcard Archive, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

¹⁰²¹ “Flier: Women vote in Wyoming Washington, Colorado, Utah, California and Idaho. Why not in Ohio? 1912,” *Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection*, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/1588>. Suffragists used similar banners in other states.

As more and more states joined the suffrage ranks, it became easier to forget about the earlier adopters and especially avoid the messy and controversial history surrounding Utah women's first votes, now so far in the rear-view mirror.¹⁰²² For example, when NAWSA held a historical pageant as part of its (somewhat premature) victory convention in 1920, Utah delegates led by Susa Young Gates had "to insist that [Utah] be given her proper credit in the ranks of suffrage" by asking for a change in the presentation to acknowledge that Utah women had voted before Wyoming's first election in 1870.¹⁰²³

At first, national suffragists likely just found it easiest to skip over the first years Utah women had exercised the franchise to avoid detailed explanations or anything that could be misconstrued as approval of polygamy. Even at the NAWSA 1896 convention celebrating Utah's admission to the Union as a suffrage state, speakers declared that Wyoming "stood alone for a quarter of a century as the only State where women voted," eliding Utah's initial seventeen-year history of voting that had garnered much more attention than Wyoming's at the time.¹⁰²⁴ Then and later, whether or not they were even aware that Utah women had voted from 1870 to 1887, many suffragists likely considered Utah women's initial enfranchisement "seriously compromised by theocracy and polygamy."¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²² From the time of the NWSA/AWSA split in 1870, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had placed great importance on compiling a history of the women's rights movement and commemorating anniversaries that would shape public memory and shore up their claims to leadership in the fight for suffrage. Utahns Emmeline B. Wells and Susa Young Gates had been invited to contribute chapters on Utah for their *History of Woman Suffrage*, but this did not mean that Utah's early extension of suffrage became part of the dominant suffrage narrative.

¹⁰²³ Donette Kesler, "Report of the N.A.W.S.A. Held in Chicago," *Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 6 (June 1920): 324; "The Official Round Table," *The Relief Society Magazine* 7, no. 4 (April 1920): 225.

¹⁰²⁴ "The Washington Convention," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 17 (February 1, 1896): 109.

¹⁰²⁵ T. A. Larson, "Woman Suffrage in Western America," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 17.

Nobody could deny that suffrage had progressed from west to east, but that did not mean Utah was highlighted for being first to vote. Suffrage maps tracking state-by-state progress were especially popular visuals (always listing Utah's date as 1896), and one graced the centerfold of *Puck's* suffrage issue during the New York suffrage campaign of 1915.¹⁰²⁶ Cartoonist Henry Mayer depicted a Lady Liberty-like figure dressed in yellow with "Votes for Women" on her cape, striding east from the white suffrage states toward the outstretched hands of women reaching for her torch from the darkness. Of course, the woman had to stand somewhere, but Mayer chose to place her covering Utah with the state's name squished in a corner and partly covered by her clothing, as though it were the one state of no consequence.

Suffragists may also have shied away from singling out Utah as anti-suffragists tried to tie suffrage to Mormonism, Socialism, and other unpopular movements or causes. All that was needed to discredit the movement was a line like this: "With the Mormons devoted to woman suffrage in the West and the Socialists campaigning for it in the East, the cause of "votes for women" seems to be in devoted hands."¹⁰²⁷ Grace Goodwin, author of *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* claimed that "Mormons and Socialists [were] using suffragists as catspaws."¹⁰²⁸ Other anti-suffragists were also quick to imply that Mormons' sinister interests lay behind suffrage campaigns, for example: "Suffrage has been forced upon several of our Western States through the efforts of the Socialists, the I.W.Ws, and the Mormons."¹⁰²⁹ Anti-suffragists often supported these claims with data showing the size of the Mormon population in each of the suffrage states.

¹⁰²⁶ Henry Mayer, "The Awakening," Illustration in *Puck* 77, no. 1981 (February 20, 1915): 14–15; Photograph, LOC, <https://loc.gov/item/98502044/>.

¹⁰²⁷ "In Devoted Hands," *The Washington Herald* (Washington, D.C.), December 6, 1911, p. 3.

¹⁰²⁸ "Calls Suffragists Mormons' Catspaws," *The Washington Herald* (Washington, D.C.), March 28, 1914, p. 2.

¹⁰²⁹ "Suffrage—Pro and Con," *Connecticut Western News* (Canaan, CT), December 24, 1914, p. 1.

The Pennsylvania Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage issued a flyer in about 1912 listing claims of the disastrous results of equal suffrage and growing Mormon strength in western states.¹⁰³⁰ While it did not connect any of the damage done by equal suffrage to Mormonism per se, it did claim that rising divorce rates, men's legal liabilities to support their wives, and a Mormon apostle in the U.S. Senate were all somehow the consequence of votes for women. "If you do not want Mormonism, Socialism and Feminism," the flyer concluded, "Vote NO on Woman Suffrage."¹⁰³¹

Mrs. Rossiter Johnson, head of the New York's anti-suffrage Guidon Club, argued that "Utah is perhaps the strongest woman suffrage State of all...Mormonism introduced the suffrage into the United States...and since then no large body of thinkers has adopted the idea save the Socialists."¹⁰³² She charged that Mormon leaders controlled women's votes and used them to sustain the church's political power, and that its lobby was at work in every session of Congress to further the suffrage cause. After Johnson's interview gained wide publicity, Robert E. Pratt, President of the Mormon Eastern States Mission headquartered in New York City, wrote a good-natured reply to the *New York Times*. "An article...some weeks back credits to the Mormon Church the origin of the votes-for-women idea in this country. As voicing, I think, a practically unanimous Mormon opinion, may I step forward to say that we are very glad to welcome this charge?"¹⁰³³

¹⁰³⁰ "Do You Know What Women Lose and Mormons Gain by Votes for Women?" Philadelphia: Issued by The Pennsylvania Association Opposed to Women Suffrage, [1912?] Philadelphia Allied Printing, 324.623 D631 1912?, CHL.

¹⁰³¹ "What Women Lose and Mormons Gain."

¹⁰³² "Suffrage Appeals to Lawless and Hysterical Women," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1913, p. SM8.

¹⁰³³ Robert E. Pratt, "First Woman Suffragists," *New York Times*, May 26, 1913, p. 6.

A postcard produced in Utah sometime near the end of 1920 proudly featured photographs and birth dates for “Five Generations of Voting Mormon Women,” along with the date each first cast a ballot.¹⁰³⁴ Starting with Mary Gibbs Bigelow and her daughter Lucy Bigelow Young, who had voted in Salt Lake City’s municipal election on February 14, 1870, the line stretched forward through Young’s daughter Susa Young Gates and her daughter Leah D. Widtsoe to Anna Gaarden Widtsoe, who had turned twenty-one in time to vote on November 5, 1920. Likely created by Gates herself, the postcard offered a glimpse into Utah women’s groundbreaking political history and bright future.

The women’s changing hair and dress styles in the photographs were a striking representation of the long, slow, and convoluted path toward women’s equal suffrage rights in the United States. The postcard did not have to label Utah as the starting place of the suffrage movement to imply that Mormon women had paved the way: who else could boast five generations of voters in their maternal line? The message was clear: stern-faced pioneers like Bigelow and Young, born in 1809 and 1830, had settled a new homeland and laid a foundation that allowed their daughter and granddaughter Gates to enjoy voting rights in her early adulthood, win them back, and go on to speak before national and international women’s rights conventions in her black, Utah-made silk.¹⁰³⁵ Now, nearly a quarter century after Utah statehood,

¹⁰³⁴ Five generations of voting Mormon women, circa 1920, PH 463, CHL. Some of the dates must have been remembered incorrectly, such as Leah D. Widstoe’s first vote marked for November 1895, when women could not vote. Given the publicity surrounding Sarah Anderson’s test case that year and the resultant Supreme Court decision that women could not vote, it would have been impossible for Widtsoe to vote without attracting attention. Gates was likely misremembering while seeking to tie her daughter’s vote into Utah’s achievement of statehood. Further, Susa Young Gate’s first vote was listed as November 1872, when she was just sixteen years old. Gates, who likely produced the postcard, had included that caveat that she “was married” at that time, but her marriage took place in December of that year and even marriage to a U.S. citizen did not supersede the age requirement of twenty-one for female voters. Whether Gates first voted in 1872 or a few years later, she may have done so while underage, indicating that some claims of Mormon women’s illegal voting may have been based in truth.

¹⁰³⁵ Kesler, “Report of the N.A.W.S.A.,” 324.

the full privileges of equal citizenship would finally be within the reach of ‘New Women’ like Bigelow’s great-great-granddaughter Anna Widtsoe, freed from inhibiting conventions of dress, custom, and law and prepared to face the world on her own terms.

That Gates wanted to emphasize Mormon women’s unique voting history and contributions to the national suffrage movement is no surprise. It was a point of pride to her that her family and co-religionists had pioneered the vote, and she knew the power of firsts in history. She had already tried to restore the fact that women in Utah had voted before Wyoming into NAWSA’s historical narrative at the Victory convention in February 1920.¹⁰³⁶ She would still be trying years later.

As NAWSA, Wyoming, the rest of the country, and Utahns themselves forgot Utah’s earliest chapter in suffrage history, Mormon women’s role in the broader national movement faded from public memory. When Utah’s uniquely complicated suffrage history did bubble to the surface, it was too easily dismissed as an experiment or a Mormon public relations ploy. And this dismissal obscured the tangible political experience Utah women gained as voters and political actors from 1870 to 1920. But “Utah women’s engagement in politics mattered, both to themselves and to other women across the country.”¹⁰³⁷

From their earliest political efforts, petitioning and resolving as the “daughters and wives of American citizens” to protect Joseph Smith from extradition or their husbands and fathers from prison, Mormon women had gradually begun to speak politically on their own behalf. Within just a few years of first gaining the vote, they were mobilizing thousands of women to bring to bear every lever of political influence they could on federal lawmakers. They circulated

¹⁰³⁶ Kesler, “Report of the N.A.W.S.A.,” 324.

¹⁰³⁷ Katherine Kitterman, “First to Vote: Commemorating Utah’s Suffragists,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 272.

petitions, spoke at national suffrage conventions, published articles in the *Women's Exponent*, and lobbied federal lawmakers to protect first their religious practice of polygamy, then their right to vote, and ultimately the suffrage rights of women across the nation.

By adopting and adapting the avenues of political participation that were open to them, Mormon women hoped to anchor a commitment to suffrage and women's equality deep into local and national political culture. They brought the "fire of civic endeavor"¹⁰³⁸ with them into twentieth century as voters, lawmakers, and women who expected their voices to be heard. Although the reality of their political participation did not dissolve all of the boundaries they hoped, they still defied stereotypes. As State Senator Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon testified before Congress, Mormon women's political engagement "proved to the world that woman is not only a helpmeet by the fireside, but when allowed to do so she can become a most powerful factor in the affairs of the government."¹⁰³⁹

Decades later, Susa Young Gates would be frustrated that her efforts to clarify Utah's leading place in history were met with indifference or misunderstanding. In June 1925, she wrote to Wyoming's Secretary of State about a recent article in the *Colliers* magazine stating Wyoming women had been first to vote, in September 1870. "I have long wanted to clear up some disputed points in regard to the first woman who voted in the United States," Gates explained, and asked for information confirming the date of Wyoming's first election with equal suffrage.¹⁰⁴⁰ Gates corresponded with Mrs. Cyrus Beard, the Wyoming state historian, and Dr. Grace Hebard, a

¹⁰³⁸ Rebekah Ryan Clark, "The Fire of Civic Endeavor: Utah Suffrage After Statehood, 1896–1920," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 287–305.

¹⁰³⁹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, 4:319.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Susa Young Gates letter to Secretary of State Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 18, 1925; Susa Young Gates papers, circa 1870–1933; General Correspondence; Alphabetical Subject Files; Women's Suffrage, 1892–1933; Wyoming issue, 1924–1931 (hereafter cited as SYG papers, Women's Suffrage, Wyoming issue); MS 7692, CHL.

professor at the University of Wyoming, until the women reached an agreement on the historical record.¹⁰⁴¹ Hebard suggested they could “find something useful to your state and to my state for all time to come,” and they decided that Gates would write an article to clarify the matter, being careful not to offend anyone.¹⁰⁴² It is unclear whether Gates’ draft appeared in print anywhere.

Mormon women’s contributions to the national suffrage movement were forgotten and misremembered in the aftermath of the Nineteenth Amendment, all the way up to commemorations for the Amendment’s centennial. In 1924, Seraph Young Ford’s daughter wrote to Gates asking for sources because when she told people about her mother’s history-making vote, they “act as the man in the comic opera – “List for awhile, with pitying smile, then wink, and walk away.” So I need the proof, you see.”¹⁰⁴³ Nearly a century later, in 2020, national historical organizations would continue to publish materials and host programs explaining that Utahns first won the vote in 1896.¹⁰⁴⁴ But that same year, Arlington National Cemetery corrected Seraph Young’s misspelled name on her headstone and added her to their listing of notable

¹⁰⁴¹ Mrs. Cyrus Beard letter to Susa Young Gates, June 25, 1925, SYG papers Wyoming issue; Susa Young Gates letter to Mrs. Cyrus Beard, August 18, 1925, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Mrs. Cyrus Beard letter to Susa Young Gates, September 24, 1926, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Mrs. Cyrus Beard letter to Susa Young Gates, October 26, 1926, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Susa Young Gates letter to Grace Raymond Hebard, November 20, 1930; SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Susa Young Gates letter to Grace Raymond Hebard, November 26, 1930, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Grace Raymond Hebard letter to Susa Young Gates, December 1, 1930, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue.

¹⁰⁴² Grace Raymond Hebard letter to Susa Young Gates, November 20, 1930, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Susa Young Gates letter to Grace Raymond Hebard, February 10, 1931, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue.

¹⁰⁴³ Susa Young Gates article draft titled “Some Light on an Old Story,” SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue; Cherry Ford White letter to Susa Young Gates, February 9, 1924, SYG papers, Women’s Suffrage, Wyoming issue.

¹⁰⁴⁴ See for example Emma Rothberg, “Louisa Ann Swain,” National Women’s History Museum, 2020, at <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/louisa-ann-swain>; “Woman Suffrage: The West Came First,” virtual panel hosted by the National Women’s History Museum and Michigan Women Forward, August 26, 2020, <https://www.womenshistory.org/celebrating-centennial/august-26-programming/woman-suffrage-west-came-first>.

women buried there.¹⁰⁴⁵ Young's and Utah's controversial suffrage history were more relevant than ever at a time Americans looked back on the long, messy, and unfinished movement for equal access to the ballot box.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Becky Jacobs, "Utahns Honor First Woman To Vote by Correcting Misspelled Gravestone," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 29, 2020.

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