

Votes for Women! American Suffragists and the Battle for the Ballot

Winifred Conkling

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Winifred Conkling's *Votes for Women!* details the arduous struggle for women's suffrage in America with compelling biographical profiles of some of the movement's key figures.

Beginning with the earlier part of the suffrage movement, *Votes for Women!* combines strong historical research and spirited narrative, spotlighting the lives of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two remarkable women who fortuitously crossed paths and began a decades-long friendship and a crusade for female equality.

Though they had their differences in lifestyle, opinion, and general temperament, Stanton and Anthony worked tirelessly toward the shared goal of women's suffrage. Sadly, neither would live long enough to legally cast her own vote, but as Stanton suggested, their seeds of "winter wheat" would be reaped by generations to come.

Moving into the early twentieth century, *Votes for Women!* follows the wave of enthusiasm that brought renewed energy to the movement. Alice Paul, from a New Jersey Quaker family, transformed the lessons of her socially conscious upbringing into action, rallying supporters to march on Washington and demand action from Woodrow Wilson. Members of this later, more diverse suffragette group were arrested, force-fed in prison, sent to dismal workhouses, or cursed at and assaulted by drunken men demanding to know who was "minding the babies."

Other aspects of the suffrage quest, such as the contributions of African American social justice activists Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells, and the tenuous balancing of civil rights with women's rights, are also well detailed. Through letters, journals, biographies, photographs, and newspaper accounts, the efforts of the known and unknown women who took up the cause of suffrage are vividly storied, concluding how Seneca Falls's crop of "winter wheat" continues to grow and bring in its collective harvest.

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