

SUSAN B. ANTHONY



"We shall some day be heeded, and everybody will think it was always so. They have no idea of how every single inch of ground that she stands upon today has been gained by the hard work of some little handful of women in the past."

SUSAN B. ANTHONY was a pioneering advocate for women's rights. She worked tirelessly, often with her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to change attitudes and laws in the United States so that women would be treated equally and fairly, and granted the right to vote.

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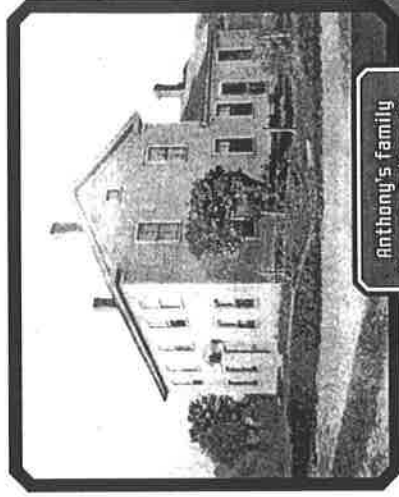
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EARLY YEARS

Susan Brownell Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, on a farm in Adams, Massachusetts. She was the second child in her family. Her family believed in the **Quaker** faith, which opposes all war, encourages people to live a simple life, and stands up for the equality of men and women. Anthony's grandfather had fought in the American Revolution and served in the Massachusetts legislature.

From the time she was little, Anthony was surrounded by women who worked for a living. She and her siblings were expected to pitch in to help with chores on the farm. When she was six, the family moved to a large brick house in Battenville, New York, where her father ran cotton mills. He also educated his children and the women who worked in his mills. Later, he hired experienced women to teach them at their homes.

Anthony herself began to teach in local schools when she was fifteen. Even then, she felt it was unfair that she was paid less than male teachers for the same work. When she turned seventeen, she attended



Anthony's family home in Battenville

the Deborah Moulson's Female Seminary, a Quaker school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unlike most schools for girls at that time, Anthony was taught algebra, literature, chemistry, and philosophy. She enjoyed her studies but hated that the school's founder, and headmistress, was often cruel and excessively strict with all the girls, especially with Anthony. Anthony was glad that her sister, Guelma, attended school with her. At least she had someone to talk to about how unhappy the headmistress made her feel at school.

In 1837, there was an economic downturn in the United States. Anthony's father went bankrupt. He could no longer pay the tuition for his daughters and withdrew both girls from school. He was even forced to sell everything they owned in an auction, including their clothes and personal possessions. The family moved to a settlement called Hardscrabble, New York, and started over.

FINDING HER WAY

To help pay her family's debts, Anthony took a teaching job in a New Rochelle, New York, boarding school. She was a strict and demanding teacher, but she was also critical of her own work. By 1845, the economy improved and things looked up for the Anthony family. Her father bought a farm outside Rochester, New York. This time she became

headmistress of Canajoharie Academy. She was feeling more confident in her abilities, and she liked her independence so much that she even refused several suitors who wanted to marry her.

But Anthony was also becoming restless. In 1849, she helped her father run the farm while he built up an insurance business. She also began to become more involved in the temperance movement, which encouraged people to stay away from alcohol. She organized meetings and traveled to neighboring towns. She was terrific at detail work and tireless in her efforts. But soon another cause captured her interest and passion for change—the abolitionist movement against slavery. Anthony and her father became active in helping slaves escape to freedom in Canada.

MEETING STANTON

In 1851, Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It was a meeting and a friendship that would change the lives of both women, who had a passionate interest in temperance, abolition, and especially women's rights. They shared



Daniel Anthony,
Susan's father

stories of how they both had been shunned by organizations they had help organize and support—just because they were women.

Anthony told Stanton how she had worked to organize a temperance convention. But when she asked to speak in front of the convention, instead of being welcomed, the male chairman said, “The sisters were not invited to speak but to listen and learn.” Anthony was furious. How could they treat women this way? They’d contributed as much as men to the movement. They had a right to be heard, too. Anthony was so angry, she stormed out of the meeting. A few women joined her, but many stayed in their seats, worried that if they spoke up, men would call them “meddlesome” and “disturbers.”

Stanton told Anthony that when she’d asked to speak in front of the World Anti-Slavery Convention, she’d been denied the right, too—just because she was a woman.

The friends decided that if men in the temperance movement wouldn’t treat women with respect, they’d start their own temperance organization. In April

1852, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth



Susan B. Anthony
as a young woman

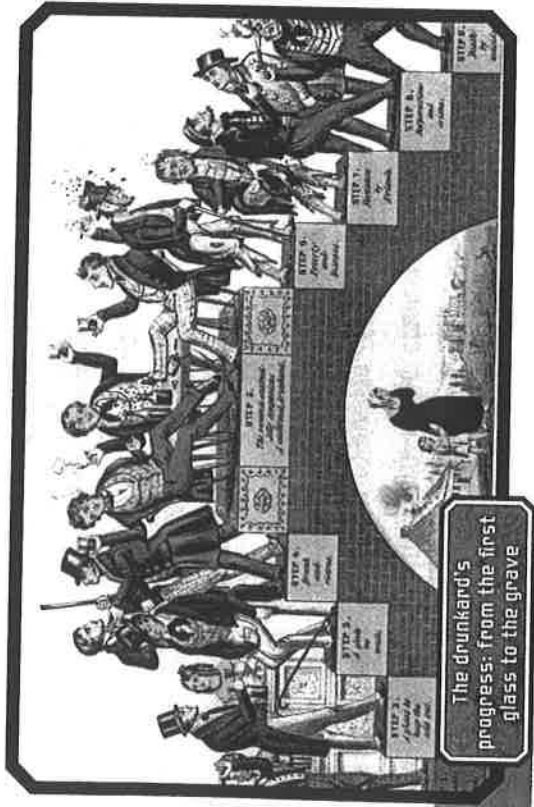
Stanton, and five hundred women met in Rochester, New York, to establish the Women’s State Temperance Society. Stanton even wrote a speech insisting that if a woman had an alcoholic husband, she should have the right to divorce him.

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS

That September, Anthony attended her first women’s rights convention in Syracuse, New York, and was appointed secretary. She pushed for women to be admitted to college and advocated that they refuse to pay taxes unless they could own property and leave churches that didn’t treat them equally. The local newspapers scoffed at Stanton and Anthony and their demands for equal rights. They called them “frantic and contemptible.” But the newspapermen’s narrow-minded attitude only strengthened Anthony’s determination to speak up. She was now convinced that women had to be granted the vote. Without it, they’d never have the power to change their lives.

For the next few years, Anthony traveled from town to town, organizing meetings, gathering petitions, and speaking up. The press continued to mock her ideas, but what really stung was that even women in the temperance movement refused to support her position on equality.

Both men and women mocked Anthony and Stanton



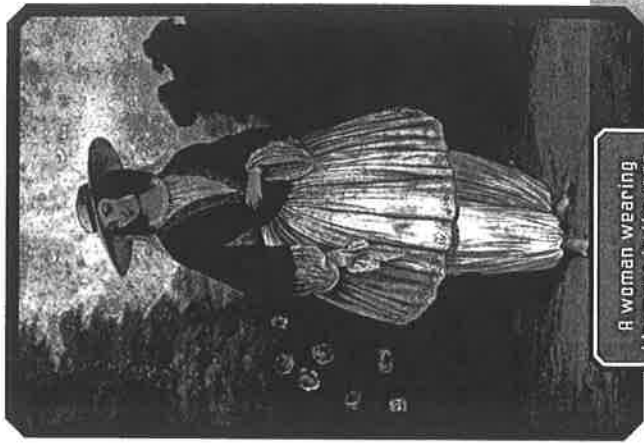
when they wore Amelia Bloomer's short dresses. Although the **bloomers** made walking easier and more comfortable, Anthony and Stanton realized that wearing the outfits was getting in the way of their message about equal rights for women. The friends decided they had to return to wearing their tight-fitting, long dresses. As Anthony said, "The attention of my audience was fixed upon my clothes instead of my words."

In 1855, Anthony traveled to every county in New York State, speaking, petitioning, and promoting the cause of equal rights. She used her own money to travel and often had to sleep in unheated rooms. Most of her talks were well-attended. Some people came to hear

her speak out of curiosity. Others believed in her cause. Even a few newspapermen, who disagreed with her positions, were impressed with her determination and straightforward talk. One journalist wrote: "We cheerfully accord to her credit as a public speaker . . . expressing herself with clearness and many times with elegance and force."

Despite hardships and the physical pain of speaking

for hours and traveling for days, Anthony was convinced that her efforts were critical to all women. Everywhere she went, she saw evidence of women who had suffered because they had few rights and no control even over their own money and property. The executive committee chairman of the American antislavery movement was so impressed with her energy, persistence, and organizational skills, he asked her to arrange speaking tours not just for herself but for others, too. It was a welcomed way to make money, and Anthony said yes.

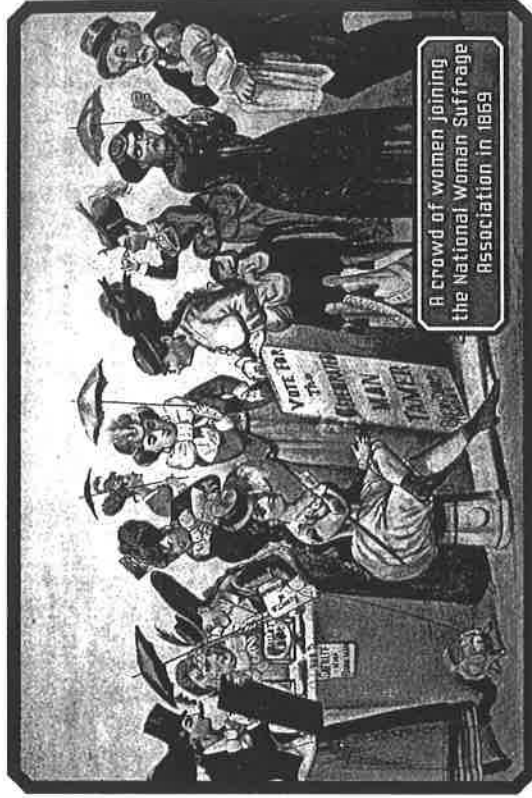


A woman wearing bloomers in the 1800s

Although Anthony appreciated the support, many women, like Stanton, were married with children and couldn't devote all their time to women's rights. Anthony was disappointed that her friends had families and other concerns. She felt marriage was a "defection" to the cause. She believed that fighting for women's rights should come ahead of anything else.

Anthony realized that Stanton had seven children and a busy household to run. She knew it was getting more difficult for her to balance her family duties and writing speeches, so Anthony pitched in and helped. After all, Stanton was her friend and a gifted writer and speaker. Anthony wanted to make sure she had time to do both.

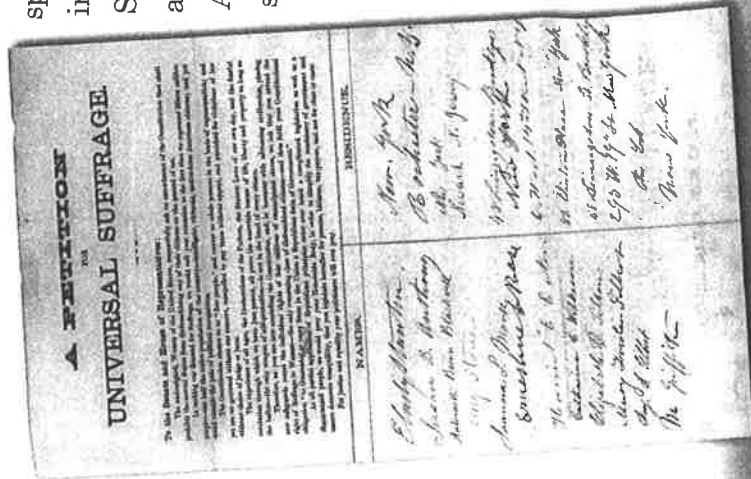
Stanton was a riveting speaker, but Stanton's and Anthony's views were often considered too radical, even within the women's rights movement. In 1859, Stanton spoke up at the National Women's Rights Convention, pushing not



just for equal rights and opportunities, but promoting her proposal that a woman should be free to divorce an alcoholic husband as well. The audience was shocked and disapproving. Many didn't want to deal with divorce-law reform. But Anthony agreed with her friend. It was important to change marriage and divorce laws if women were going to have any degree of equality. Anthony said that in marriage "man gains all—woman loses all."

CHANGE AND THE CIVIL WAR

On the eve of the Civil War in 1861, many who'd fought for equal rights for women changed their focus to fight for freedom for slaves. That year, although Anthony worked



hard to organize the annual National Women's Rights Convention, Stanton suggested they postpone the meeting until after the war. Stanton hoped that after slavery was abolished, it would be easier to convince men to grant women equal rights, too.

Anthony, who was a Quaker and against all war, didn't believe that would happen. She had little faith in "man's sense of justice." She was soon proven right. In 1862, the New York Legislature repealed a provision of the Married Women's Property Act, which gave mothers equal guardianship of their children. It was a step backward in the fight for women's rights.

And when the war ended in 1865, although many women had been hopeful that the cause of women's rights would be advanced along with the cause for freeing slaves, many men disagreed. They argued that granting blacks the right to vote through passing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments should be the only focus of everyone's attention.

Anthony and Stanton were deeply disappointed. Again their hopes were dashed. Again they were told to be patient and wait. But they were determined to keep the issue of women's rights at the forefront of people's minds. Anthony and Stanton gathered petitions and signatures demanding that women's suffrage be included in the Fifteenth

Amendment. Yet despite all the support they received, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments passed—but they only gave black *men* the vote. All women were excluded.

A REVOLUTIONARY MAGAZINE

Waiting until the end of the war to press for women's rights had come to nothing. The war was over, and still little had changed for women. Then in 1867, Anthony and Stanton met George Francis Train. Train had money, and he said he wanted to help women win the vote. Many in the women's movement were skeptical of his motives, but Anthony and Stanton were eager to find new ways to push their cause forward. Anthony crossed Kansas with Train to support women's rights. It was a strange, often uncomfortable trip. Train made awkward remarks about Anthony in public. She tried to ignore his behavior. After all, he even promised to back Anthony and Stanton with funds to start a magazine devoted to women's rights and issues.

To their disappointment, women were denied the vote in Kansas, but they were glad they were able to start their



Proclamation of Emancipation



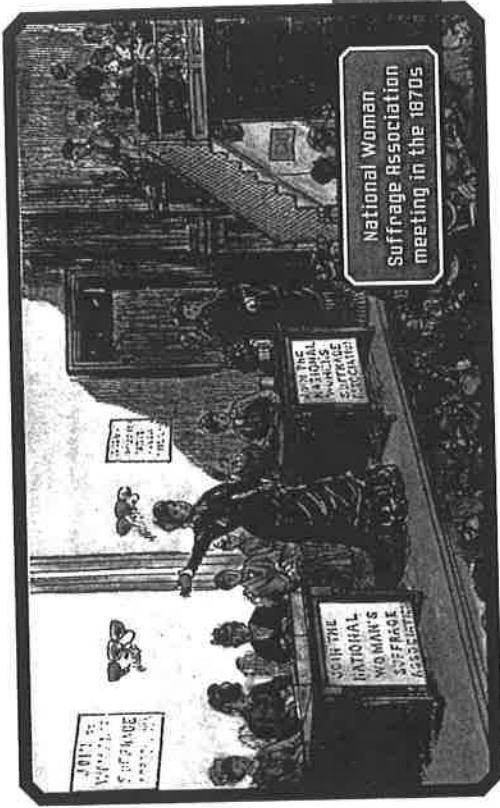
GEORGE
Francis Train

magazine. Anthony and Stanton called it *The Revolution*, but many of their friends in the women's rights movement found some of the ideas they advocated for to be too radical.

But when Anthony and Stanton refused to support the Fifteenth Amendment granting blacks the vote because it ignored women, there was even more controversy and greater dissension. Anthony and Stanton stuck by their position. They felt it wasn't fair to only grant men the vote. Why were women completely left out? Anthony and Stanton traveled out west campaigning against the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Instead, they supported a Sixteenth Amendment, which would give women the vote, too. Many people came to hear them but few agreed with their views.

ON THEIR OWN

Anthony and Stanton were battling against the views of old supporters and long-standing friends. Disappointed that their ideas were not being heard, they founded a new organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association.



They decided that men would not be allowed to participate in their group.

By the spring of 1870, *The Revolution*, no longer funded by George Francis Train, was going under. Anthony had poured her life's savings into keeping the magazine afloat and now she had little money left. She'd spent so much she was almost bankrupt. Stanton was growing weary of all the fighting within the women's movement and stopped attending most of the meetings. Instead she took off on a speaking tour. She wanted to make enough money to send her daughters to college. Anthony felt hurt, alone, and isolated.

But soon after, the friends traveled together from Illinois to California to give talks. For a while, all was



well between them. Then they reached San Francisco and Anthony spoke out in support of a woman who'd stabbed her abusive husband. It was a notorious case and had received a lot of publicity. The press slammed Anthony for her position. They accused her of condoning murder. Stanton said nothing in Anthony's defense. Anthony felt disappointed that her friend had not stood by her.

Soon Stanton returned east to help her ailing mother, while Anthony traveled on to Oregon and the Washington territories to keep spreading the word about women's rights. She also needed the money she'd earn from speaking engagements. She was still paying off her debts from the failed magazine.

It was hard and lonely traveling on rough roads, eating poor food, and enduring the hostility of local newspapers. It was even harder to bear the attacks from Jennett Blakeslee Frost, a woman and an anti-suffrage lecturer, who called Anthony an old maid who knew nothing about marriage and children, and had no right speaking about either. Yet despite all the criticism, the tough travel conditions, and

the loneliness of traveling, Anthony managed to enjoy her trip. She loved the freedom to visit new places and see the beautiful northwestern landscape.

JAILED!

When Anthony returned east in 1869, she heard about a St. Louis lawyer named Francis Minor and his wife, Virginia. They argued that women already had the right to vote. The Minors insisted that since women were citizens under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, they could vote. Their ideas were called the "New Departure," and Anthony was excited about their proposal. If it was adopted by the courts, women could just go ahead and vote! They wouldn't need a new amendment!

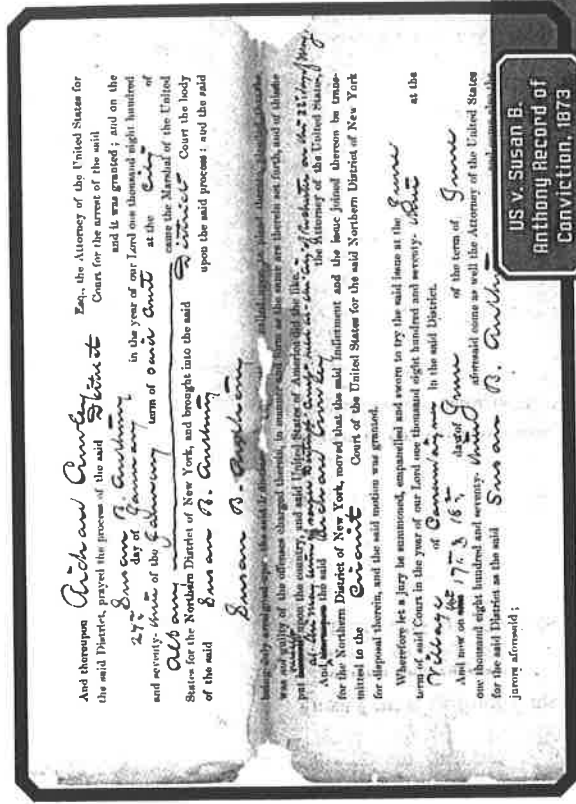
Anthony decided to lead the way and stand up for the Minors' proposal. On Friday, November 1, 1872, Anthony and her three sisters tried to register to vote. Two of the three young men in the registry office agreed to let them, and on Election Day, Anthony and thirteen women voted. Their daring action made headlines. For days, no one did anything more. Then on November 18, all the women who'd registered and the young men who'd allowed them to were arrested. They were fined \$500. Everyone paid the fine except Anthony. She was determined that her case be tried in the United States Supreme Court. But the U.S. district



judge in Albany, New York, refused her request and fined her \$1,000. Anthony refused to pay and announced that she'd rather go to jail. Her attorney was so dismayed, he put up the bail money for her. He said, "I could not see a lady I respected put in jail."

Anthony was out of jail, but she still had to face a trial. Before her case was set to go to court in June, she crossed the county speaking about her experiences. She asked, "Is it a crime for a citizen of the United States to vote?"

The trial, which took place on June 17, was stacked against Anthony from the beginning. The judge wanted to please his political cronies and wrote his opinion before a single piece of evidence was presented. He refused Anthony's request to testify for herself, stating that women were incompetent to testify and told the jury to find her guilty. When he asked Anthony if she had anything to say, she said, "You have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government." The judge then tried to stop



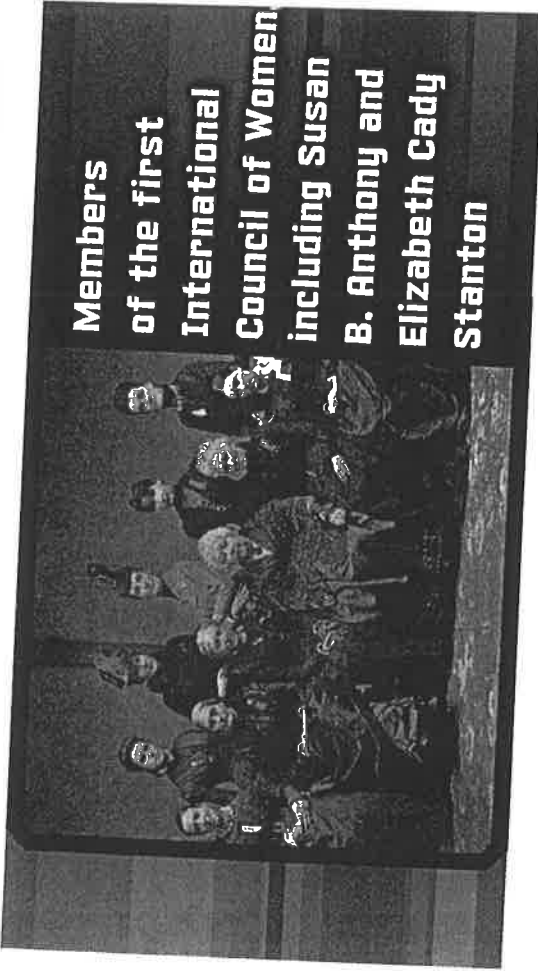
her from publicly saying anything more, but Anthony kept speaking out. She was outraged that women continued to be denied the basic right to vote.

Then she made sure that three thousand copies of her court transcript were distributed around the county. Although she was convinced that it would probably be impossible, at least in the near future, for women to be granted the vote through the United States courts, she was determined to keep stating the case. She wanted the public to keep thinking about women's rights. She refused to pay the \$100 fine the judge imposed. No further legal action was taken against her.

LATER YEARS

For the following ten years, Anthony, Stanton, and Matilda Joselyn Gage wrote the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*. It was painful to recall all that the friends had suffered to advance women's rights. Anthony wrote: "It makes me sad and tired to . . . see the terrible strain I was under every minute then, have been since, am now and shall be for the rest of my life."

But despite advancing age and worsening health, Anthony never stopped working for women's rights. The right to vote was the most important issue to her. She made sure that the National Woman Suffrage Association held its annual meetings in Washington, D.C., where the politicians



Members of the first International Council of Women including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

lived and worked. She continued to petition. She took every opportunity to remind the public and politicians about women's rights. She was persistent and passionate. She became a familiar figure in Washington, D.C., wearing her dark outfit brightened by a red shawl.

In 1888, she founded the International Council of Women, broadening the push for women's rights to other countries. She tirelessly raised funds for women to be admitted to the University of Rochester in 1900. She believed that "failure was impossible."

Susan B. Anthony died in 1906 of heart failure. At the time of her death, four western states—Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah—had granted women the vote.

The Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote in all of the United States was finally ratified in 1920.



Sculpture of Anthony and Stanton in the Capital Rotunda in Washington, D.C.