

LIZZIE CROZIER FRENCH

This is a chapter of Through a Woman's Voice,
a public radio series, originally funded by
the Tennessee Humanities Council and
the Middle Tennessee State University
Department of Recording Industry.

Many thanks to Dr. Carole Bucy,
the author of the essay,
and to Wanda Sobieski,
for the use of many of the images shown here.

Citings for all of the images
are available upon request
candace@candacecorrigan.com

IBOOK

Lizzie Crozier French

Woman's Rights Activist and Educator

b.1851. d. 1926

"If you ask my occupation... I am a suffragist."

-L. Crozier French

In 1912, when Lizzie Crozier French became the first woman to address the Tennessee State Bar Association, the laws of Tennessee denied women the most basic rights.

An ardent supporter of the reform movement, she was known as an energetic, popular lecturer and a tireless suffragist. She founded the Ossoli Circle, of Knoxville TN, the oldest women's literary club in the South. Through Lizzie's insistence the club became devoted to community service, a legacy that Ossoli Circle has continued since 1886.



Lizzie Crozier French portrait by Vija Doks © 2020

<https://vimeo.com/323317298>

Twenty years before Tennessee became a state, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John, who was then in Philadelphia as a member of the Continental Congress and admonished him to as she put it...



Abigail Adams by Benjamin Blythe, 1766

"Remember the Ladies." she wrote, ".. in the new code of laws., I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

Abigail Adams



Smoky Mountains

Women who crossed the mountains with their families and settled Tennessee did not enjoy the same rights and freedoms that the men enjoyed when Tennessee became a state in 1796. They did not have that which Abigail Adams demanded: a voice in the making of the laws they were obliged to obey. Although the Declaration of Independence stated that "all men are created equal", women had no guaranteed political rights. One of the chief rights denied to women was the right to vote. Only white adult men who owned property could vote after the American Revolution. After the American Revolution, the Constitution gave the states the right to decide who could vote. The states gradually abolished the requirement that men must own property to vote, but still did not give women the right to vote. Abigail Adams' husband, John became the second President of the United States, but she could not vote for her husband when he ran for the office of President. Neither could Tennesseans Rachel Jackson, Sarah Polk, nor Eliza Johnson.



Rachel Donelson Jackson



Sarah Childress Polk

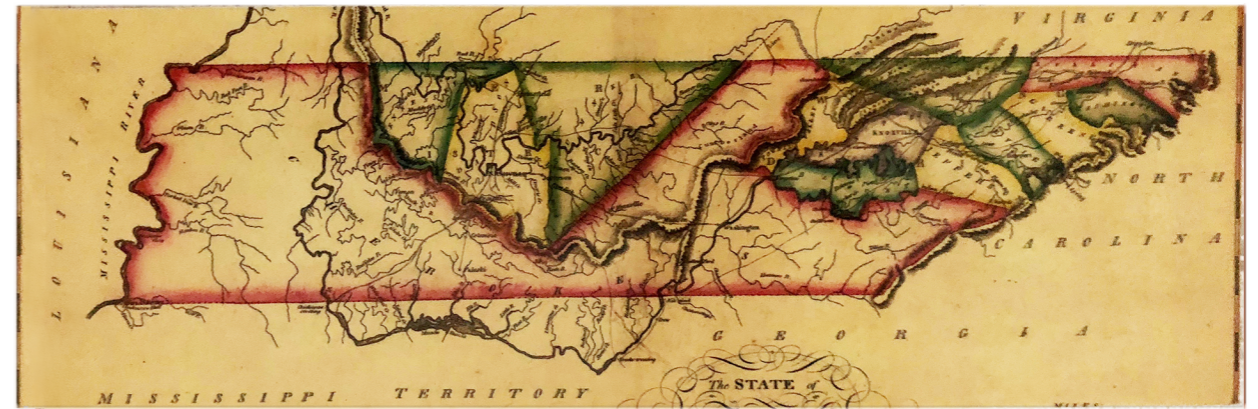


Eliza McCardle Johnson

Women came across the mountains to establish homes and settled Tennessee as partners with their husbands. Like Native-American women who were already living in Tennessee, these women had many responsibilities. Pioneer women worked on farms and took care of their families. Women often taught their own children to read and write when there was no school available. Women worked at home.



18th century re-enactor



*Map of Tennessee c. 1800 showing routes taken by settlers
image courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives*



Cherokee re-enactors

As cities and town developed in Tennessee, men began to work in occupations in these urban areas. The women continued to work at home, but the status of the woman of a family generally declined as husbands began to earn wages in trades. Women were responsible the food for the family and prepared all meals. Women made clothing for the members of their families and took great pride in their skill with thread and needle.



Re-enactor with daughter



log cabin with spinning wheel



Dutch style American needlework table cover 1789

Women provided care and assistance to help the needy in their communities as towns developed in Tennessee. As early as 1817, the women of Nashville had organized the Female Bible and Charitable Society of Nashville, which was the city's first welfare organization. These women provided services for the sick and the needy of Nashville. Similar groups began to organize in cities across the state. Women from individual religious congregations formed organizations to minister to those in need. In the 1850's, Jewish women of Memphis formed the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society to provide social services for the poor of the city. Still, these women could not vote.



illustration of women at political meeting in 1880's



Elizabeth Avery Meriwether

In Memphis, in 1876, years before any state suffrage organizations were formed in Tennessee, Elizabeth Avery Meriwether rented the Memphis Theater and held a public meeting to discuss women's rights. More than 500 women attended. She led a delegation of women to ask the Memphis School board to give women teachers the same pay for teaching as male teachers. She believed that women should have "equal pay for equal work." Although Elizabeth Meriwether moved away from Memphis, her ideas spread across the state in a variety of ways.



Photo c. 1908 by Lewis Wickes Hines

By 1900, women made up one-fifth of the work force of Tennessee. Many worked as domestics in private homes and many worked in the textile mills that were built in small towns across the state after the Civil War. The jobs in the mills were "sex segregated" with women hired only for the most unskilled jobs. Women and children worked as spoolers, feeding yarn into a high-powered, quick-whirling machine, and retrieving it once it had been wound. Some mills hired entire families - mothers, fathers, and children - who together could earn just enough to keep them working. Married women who worked in the mills had a second full-time job. In addition to working in the mills, they cooked, cared for children, and maintained their individual households. Often these women worked 10 to 12 hour days in the mills where working conditions were dirty and dangerous.

Studies of working women at the turn of the century show that women received one-half to one-third the wages of working men. A seamstress in a mill might earn \$6.00 per week, compared to a male cutter's \$16.00. Even when men and women performed the same job, women were paid considerably less. Employers justified unequal pay, claiming that the salaries of women were a second or supplementary income in their households.



Photo c. 1908 by Lewis Wickes Hines

<https://vimeo.com/353153956> *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls*

Middle and upper class women in Tennessee followed the efforts of women in the Northeast and created an extraordinary number of socially conscious, all-female organizations. The first women's club in Tennessee was the Ossoli Circle founded in Knoxville in 1885. The women present at Mrs. Lizzie Crozier French's first meeting of the group determined that the group should not be called a club since the term "club" could be interpreted to be exclusive. They preferred to use the term, "circle", which they believed to be more inclusive and less threatening to the men.



Ossoli Circle emblem

The Query Club of Nashville followed that same year. By 1890, Memphis had two women's clubs, the 19th Century Club and the Women's Club of Memphis and in 1892, Kosmos was founded in Chattanooga. By the turn of the century these women's clubs were appearing in every town across Tennessee. Their activities ranged from study and sociability to larger national reform organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Young Women's Christian Association.

These groups had different purposes and different constituencies, but they were alike in that they were free of male control and were assertive about women's capacity to do more than men expected of them. They developed techniques for encouraging women to gain wider interests and new skills. Eventually these new skills involved politics.



WCTU silk embroidered banner c. 1900

The WCTU, for example, concentrated on anti-liquor laws and municipal reform. They emphasized the necessity of political action to eliminate the evils of alcohol and clean up corruption in government. It followed, fairly logically, that to really make a difference, women needed the vote.



Elizabeth Lyle Saxon

Another Memphis woman, Elizabeth Lyle Saxon (1832-1915), an ardent suffragist, became vice-president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890, but suffrage organizations in Tennessee were unable to continue. Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt visited Memphis in 1895 and spoke in the lecture hall of the Young Men's Hebrew Association. During the early years of the 20th century, Memphis was the only city in Tennessee that could sustain a suffrage organization.



*Memphis Suffrage Parade photo courtesy of Memphis and Shelby County Room
Memphis Public Libraries- image has been altered from the original*

When Nashville women founded a suffrage club in 1911, attention to the movement grew and the number of suffrage leagues rose across the state from 5 to 75. The Tennessee suffragists created a statewide organization and worked to increase public awareness on the issue.



Program cover for the National Suffrage Convention, 1914



“If you give yourself to a noble Cause, give yourself while you can.”

Dr. Anna Howard Shaw

<https://vimeo.com/409354710>

The coalition of women supporting suffrage was a fragile one. The state organization split into two separate organizations in 1914 over a disagreement as to whether the national convention should be held in Nashville or in Chattanooga. It was held in Nashville at the Ryman Auditorium with Anna Howard Shaw presiding and Jane Addams in attendance. Pro-suffrage speakers drew large crowds.

When the United States entered World War I, Tennessee suffragists temporarily abandoned their efforts for suffrage and focused their energies and organizational skills on the war effort. They organized themselves across Tennessee through the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense selling bonds, saving food, and providing support for the troops. In Nashville, women worked at the Old Hickory Powder Plant which later became the DuPont Plant of Old Hickory.

With women already in the work force, World War I created new opportunities. As in the Civil War when the men of Tennessee had left to serve in the army, women took their places in the labor force. Women worked during the war in Tennessee factories supporting the war by assembling explosives, armaments, machine tools, and automobile and airplane parts. Many additional women were hired in the textile mills to produce uniforms for soldiers.

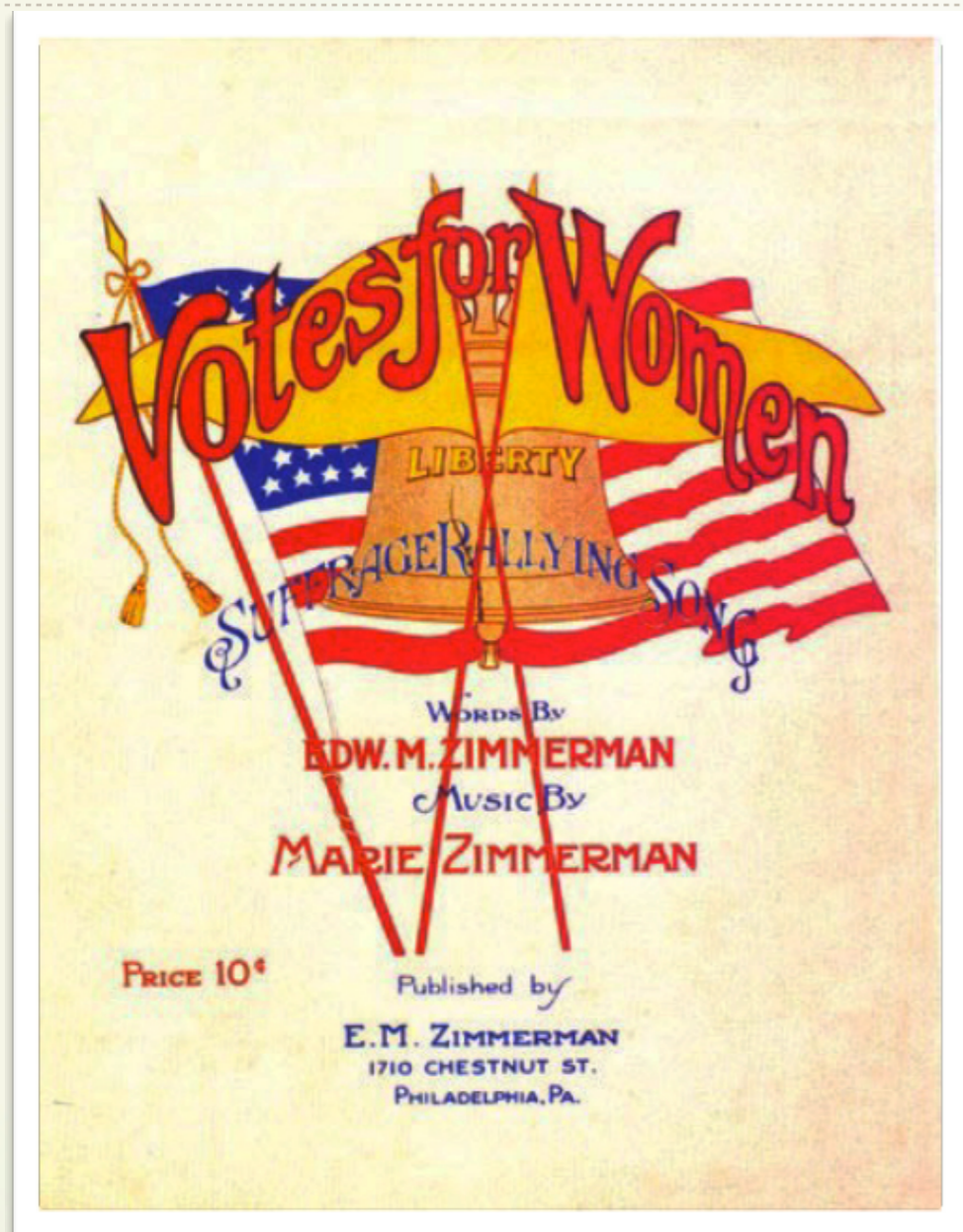


World War I poster



World War I poster "The Three Suffrage Graces"

"Every man who loves and reveres his mother and his country should idolize, if he worships at all, the three graces - Suffrage, Preparedness and Americanism"- Nell Brinkley



Sheet Music cover "Votes for Women"

<https://vimeo.com/409594621>

The two groups worked separately for four years, and reunited in 1918 under different leadership at the end of the war. Actually, the split did not hurt the cause. The two organizations competed heavily and the numbers within each group grew dramatically. Women who wanted to vote as well as women who opposed voting held rallies, printed pamphlets, and wrote strong editorials for Tennessee's newspapers.

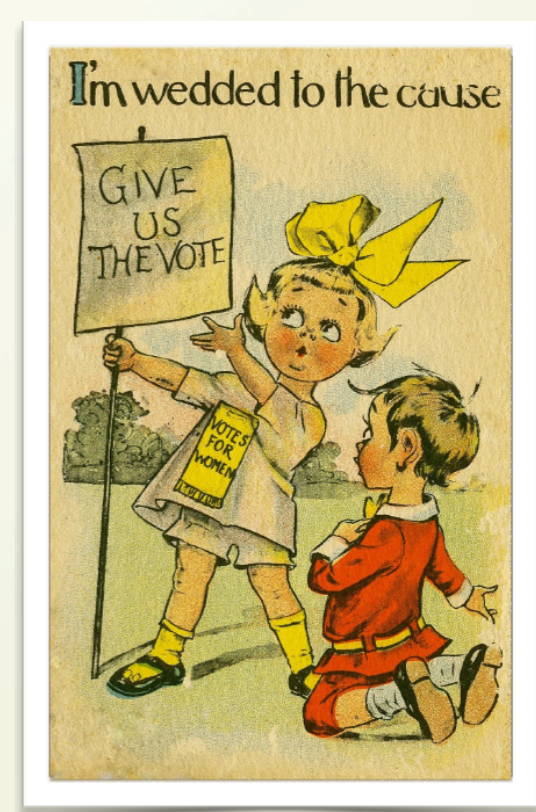
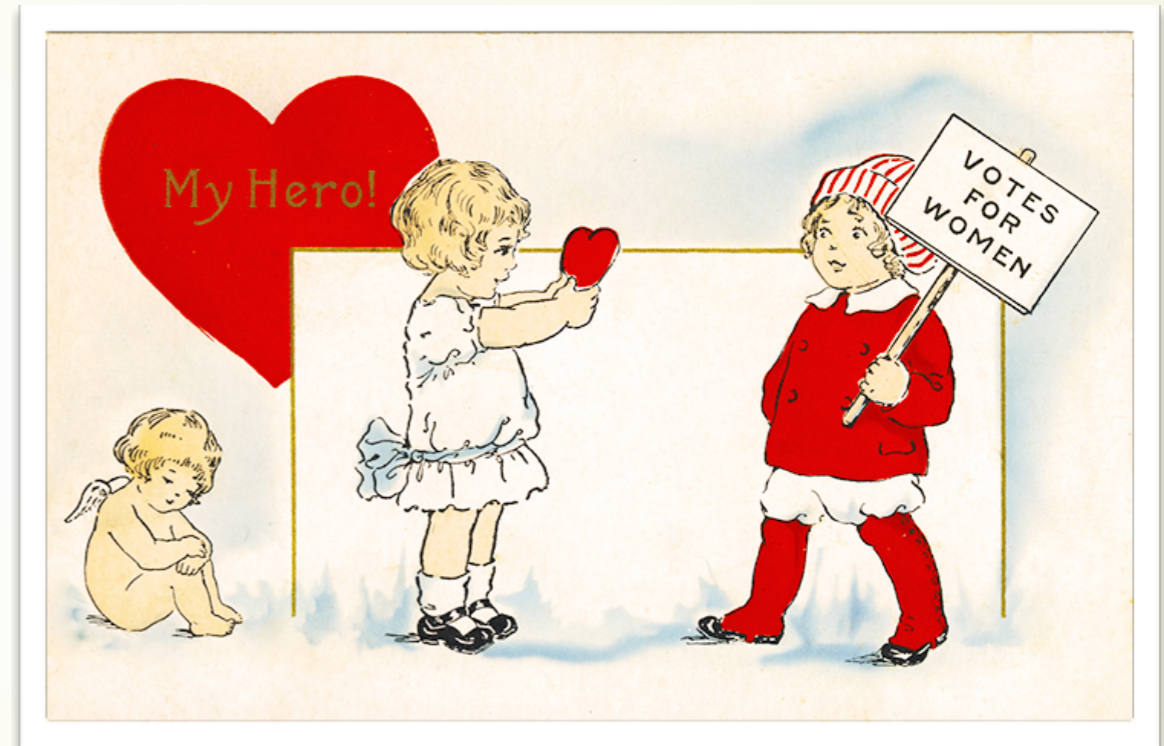
In the years that followed World War I, women began to work together for equality. Women realized that real, substantive change in society would only occur when everyone participated in the political process. When women came to realize how society could be changed, every county of Tennessee became organized for suffrage.



Signing up voters

"Votes for Women" and "No Taxation without Representation" were heard across the state from Memphis to Nashville and from Knoxville to Chattanooga.

Suffrage cartoons used as postcards



Fannie Moran Ezzell described the women of Tennessee who were the suffragists:

"Like most Southern women, I was born and bred in the briar patch of politics. From childhood, we women of the South breathe an atmosphere of political interest, more or less intense....No shirkers or slackers among the suffragists of Tennessee! When we asked a hundred women to the capitol, 200 came, then more and more...."



Fannie Moran Ezzell

*Used with permission from the collection of
Nathan and Mary Moran*



Suffrage Parade in Nashville



Carrie Chapman Catt

On the national level, Carrie Chapman Catt, who had worked with Susan B. Anthony, assumed the leadership of NAWSA in 1916. Catt was a take-charge person and she had a “winning plan for suffrage”, which she launched with a great deal of fanfare. It was a tightly centralized, coordinated effort to put pressure on legislators to secure the suffrage state by state.



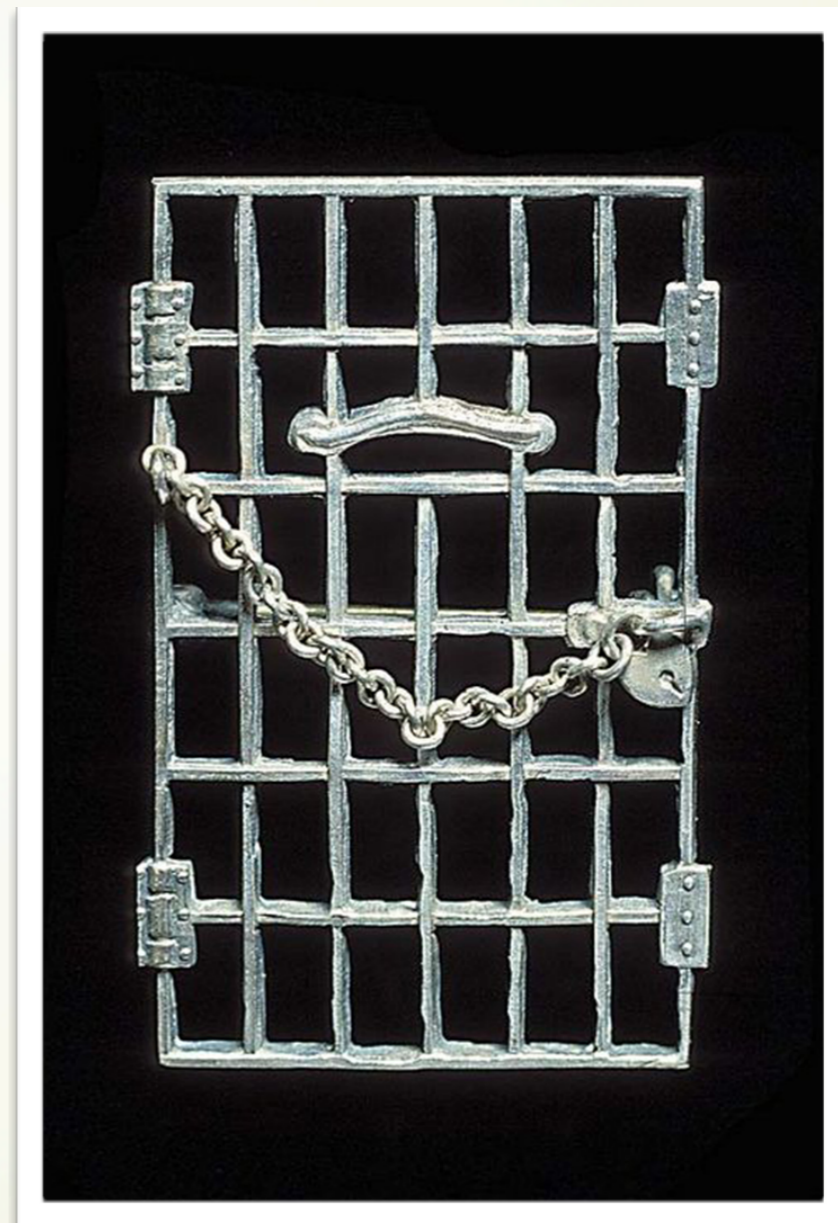
Alice Paul

Another band of women, smaller and more militant, led by Alice Paul, broke off from NAWSA to form the National Women’s Party. They decided that too much time was being wasted on state efforts. A more effective policy, they thought, was to focus on Washington and a constitutional amendment. Alice Paul had been to Great Britain to participate in their woman’s suffrage campaign, and she adopted their aggressive, confrontational techniques. It was necessary, Paul argued, to get people’s attention - she did that very well.



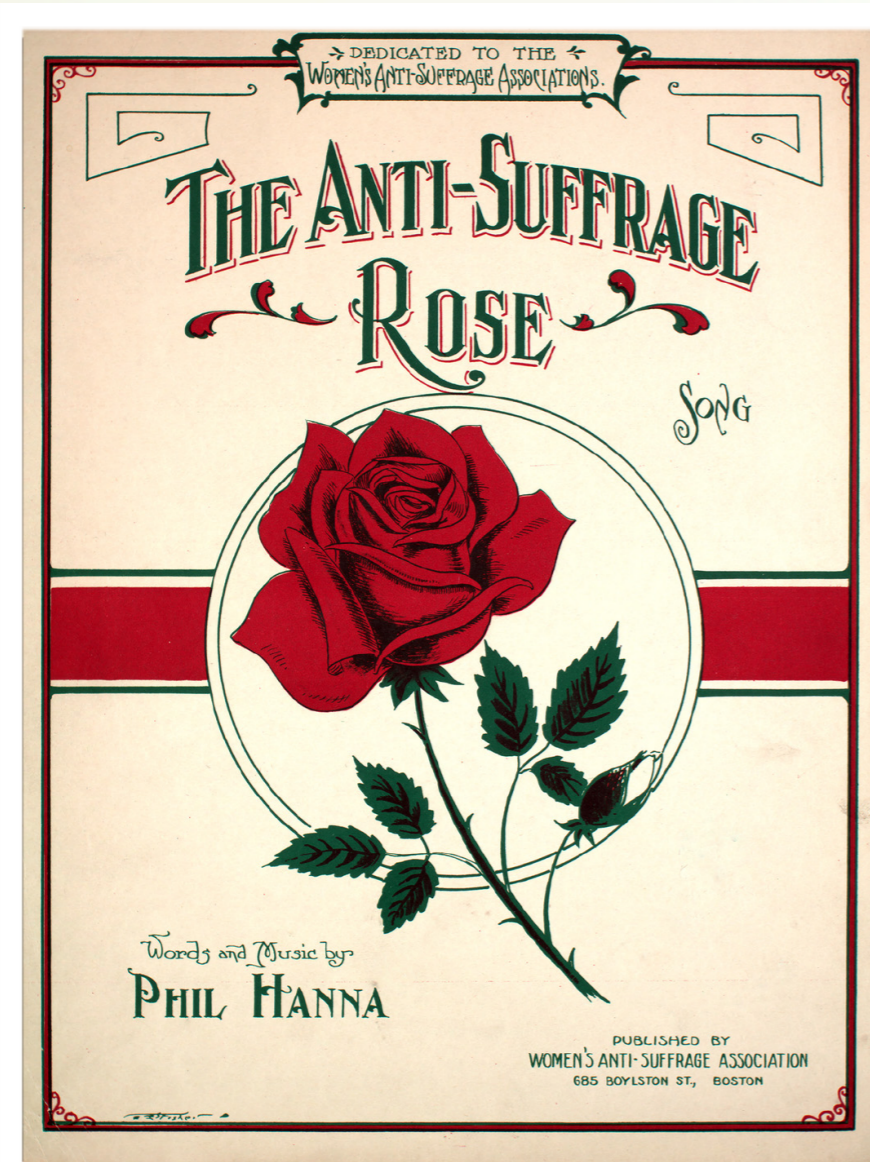
Sue Sheldon White

The National Woman's Party, which included Tennessean Sue Shelton White, chained themselves to the White House fence and burned effigies of political leaders. They were hauled to jail where they went on hunger strikes. Their arrests and stories of their treatment certainly attracted attention, and some sympathy. At the same time, they also attracted the anger of more conservative women who considered them unladylike and provocative.



Pin given by Alice Paul to all National Woman's Party activists who were arrested and jailed for protesting in favor women's rights to vote.

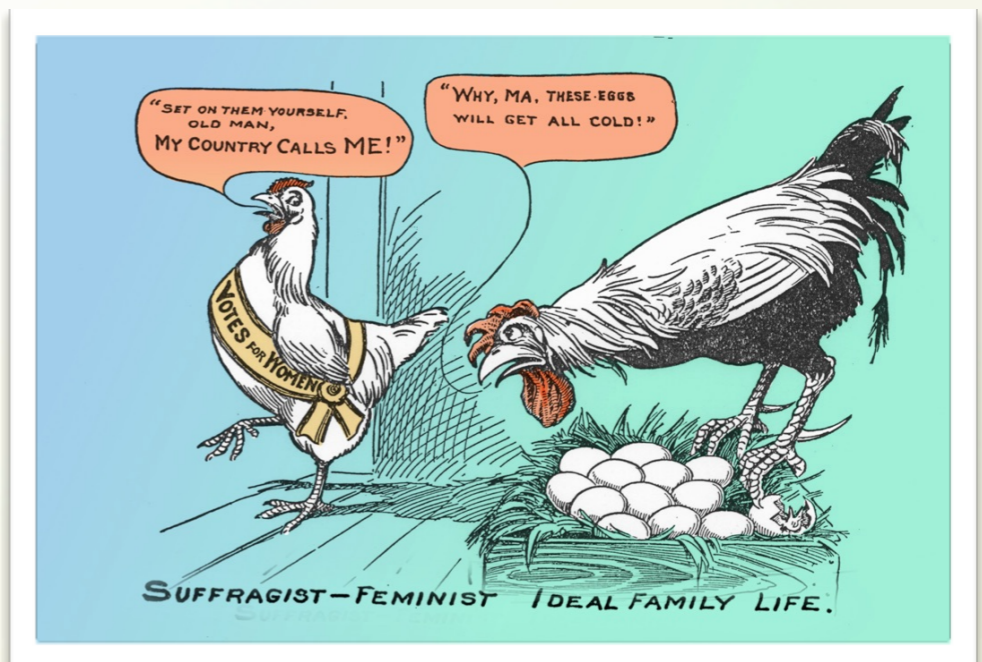
The radicalism of Alice Paul and her associates made the President and the Congress nervous about what they might do next. In comparison, Mrs. Catt's suffragists suddenly looked much more reasonable to government leaders.



Anti-Suffrage music 1915

<https://vimeo.com/396819470>

It is important to note that some women, as well as men, did not want the right to vote. These women held traditional beliefs about the differences between men and women and the superiority of women's moral "influence" over political power, as well as fears for traditional family life and male authority. Anti-suffrage sentiments ran the gamut from self-serving to highly moral.



Anti-Suffrage cartoons

From the start, the suffragists fought the widespread fear that women voting would destroy family life. Newspaper editors portrayed "suffs" as spinsters and "she-males" with hen-pecked husbands. Cartoons with unflattering caricatures of the suffragists appeared in newspapers across the country.

**“Three Deadly Principles lurk in the 19th Amendment
One: The abolition of States Rights
Two: Negro Woman Suffrage**

This will lead to third Evil : Racial Equality ”

Quote from Anti Suffrage Pamphlet c. 1920

**Mass Meeting
TONIGHT**

**Ryman Auditorium
8 O’CLOCK**

TO SAVE THE SOUTH

FROM THE SUSAN B. ANTHONY AMENDMENT
AND FEDERAL SUFFRAGE FORCE BILLS

EVERYBODY INVITED

Nashville Poster in July 1920

The race issue was a complex problem for suffragists and anti-suffragists alike. The anti-suffragists openly opposed giving women the right to vote because it would give black women the right to vote as well. The prospect of black women's enfranchisement threatened to upset racial segregation and disfranchisement of black male voters.



Ida B Wells

Suffrage had the potential to lead to demands for racial equality that most white Tennesseans were not willing to consider at this time. The race issue divided white and African-American suffragists from each other. Ida B. Wells of Memphis became a national leader and was well known around the country.

What was known about the suffragists, was that they were committed to issues such as health, education, and the protection of mothers and children. They would not have the same party loyalty that males did. Women were interested in reform.



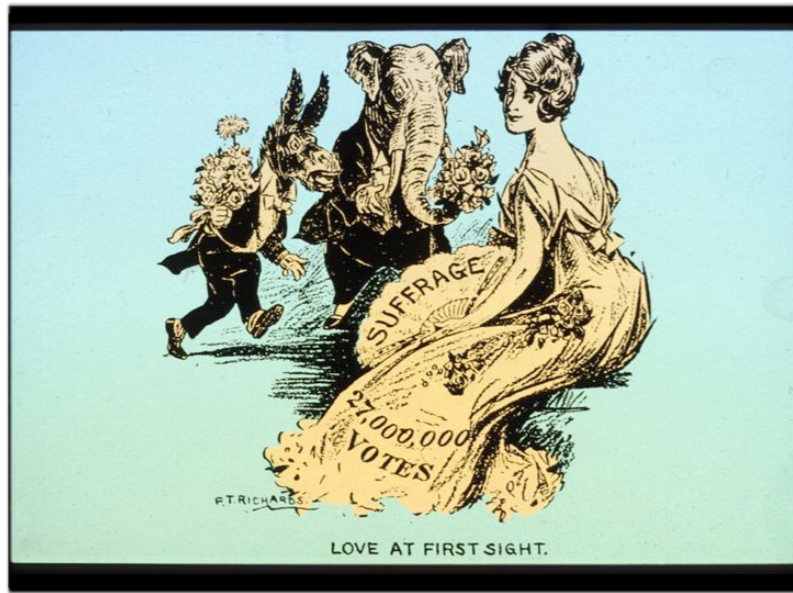
Political cartoon in Nashville paper c. 1913

When the war ended, Mrs. Catt seized the moment to petition President Wilson to support woman suffrage on the reasonable argument that women deserved a reward for their service in the recent war. President Woodrow Wilson urged Congress to pass a woman suffrage amendment with that same rationale, that women had been vital to winning the war.



Suffrage Cartoon w. Woodrow Wilson's endorsement

It proved to be a winning argument. By June 1919, the amendment had passed both houses of Congress and was ready to go to the state legislatures for ratification. In order for women to vote, 36 of the 48 state legislatures had to ratify the amendment. Thirty-six separate state legislatures had to be convinced - once again- to vote in favor of woman suffrage.



Political cartoons 1920

Fortunately, many of these states had groups of highly organized women poised for the battle. They began sending out telegrams urging governors to call special sessions to ratify the 19th amendment. By this time, it was summer and most had adjourned. The suffragists thought it was imperative to secure passage as quickly as possible. By Susan B. Anthony's birthday, February, 1920, 32 states had ratified. Then Oklahoma, West Virginia and the state of Washington ratified. Where was number 36?



Political cartoons 1920

Now six states, all southern, had already rejected the amendment. Only seven states had not yet acted. Tennessee was among the seven, but Tennessee was a question mark. A border state, Tennessee had close southern ties, but she had also previously granted women voters partial suffrage - allowing them to vote in presidential and municipal elections - it was the first of the old Confederacy states to do so. It was at this point that a voice could be heard in Tennessee, "Let us be the Perfect 36".

Lizzie Crozier French, Knoxville - (1851-1926)

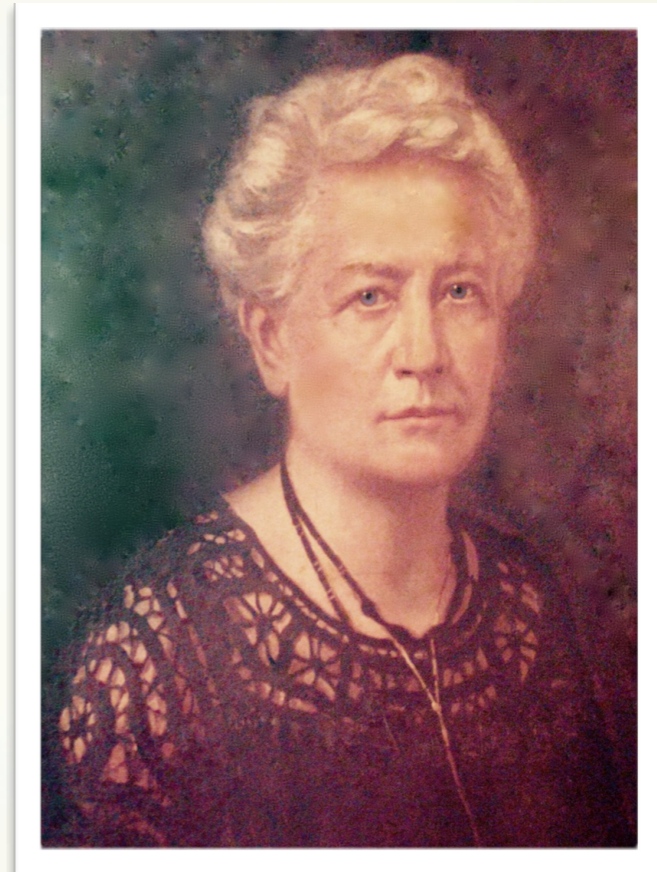


Lizzie Crozier French

Lizzie Crozier French had been married only two years when her husband died, leaving her to raise their infant son. With her sisters, she founded a girls' school in Knoxville, the East Tennessee Female Institute and she became involved in women's causes. After attending meetings of the Sorosis Club in New York City in 1885, Mrs. French returned to Knoxville, where she organized the Ossoli Circle (named after Margaret Fuller Ossoli), the first woman's club in Tennessee. In that club, she worked to provide educational opportunities for women of all ages.

Seventy one years old at the time of the passage of the amendment, she had already accomplished many "firsts" as a woman by the time the amendment passed. The first woman to address the Knoxville City Council appealing for the appointment of a police matron, a female police officer for women offenders, Mrs. French filled that position for several months until a permanent matron could be hired by the city. She was the first woman to address the Tennessee General Assembly speaking on behalf of efforts to establish a Reformatory for women and children in the state. Lizzie Crozier French spoke out for the rights of women in Tennessee prior to the organization of the suffrage organizations. As early as 1895, she was applauded for her work.

"She continues to promote, by her interest and labors, any movement tending to the elevation or advancement of women. She is a brilliant speaker and has a charming and dignified personality."



*Painting of Lizzie Crozier French c 1918
used with permission from The Ossoli Circle*

"The indifference today of many women of Tennessee to their right in an equal share of governmental control is due to the habit of submission. Such women seem to be able to sympathize with men in their love of freedom, but are as children when the great questions of liberty and equality are argued in connection with the female sex. This is shown to be one of the greatest injuries that disfranchisement has inflicted upon women. Lack of self-esteem, a tendency to be mean in spirit is a most detrimental influence to character building. The women of a race lay the foundations of character in the youth, and never will man be of the highest type possible to the human race until mothers learn the real meaning of freedom and enjoy it to the fullest extent in all its phases."

-Lizzie Crozier French

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Speaker in Market Square, Knoxville, Tennessee c.1890



Children's Suffrage Parade c 1910

Tennessee State Curriculum Standards & curriculum guides.

5.1.tpi.5. read an account describing the cultural changes in American society associated with the fight for and passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

5.4.spi.1 distinguish between the local, state, and federal levels of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the American government.

5.4.spi.3. recognize the rights established by the 13th, 14th, 15th and 19th amendments.

5.4.spi.4. recognize the differences between the Tennessee State Constitution and the United States Constitution.

5.4.spi.5. differentiate among the purposes stated in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

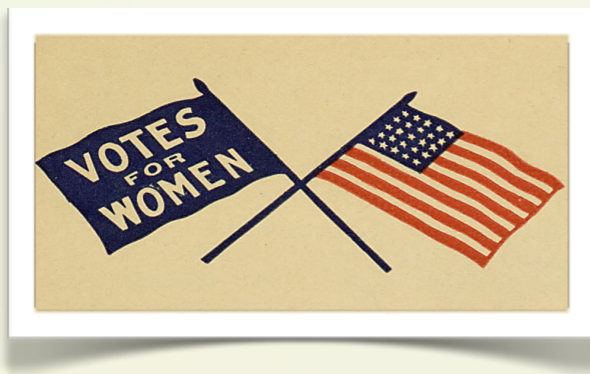
5.6.spi.1. recognize people who contributed to reform in Tennessee and American society (i.e., Samuel Gompers, Jane Addams, Martin Luther King Jr., Gov. Austin Peay, Anne Dallas Dudley).

5.6.tpi.9. assess the role and status of individuals and groups in Tennessee and the United States.

5.6.tpi.10. identify the similarities and differences within and among selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States.

5.6.tpi.11 research the women's rights movement, social reform, and science to demonstrate the impact of these movements on today's society.

8.4.spi.4. recognize the rights and responsibilities of individuals throughout the development of the United States.



Reading Standards (Skills – reading a timeline, a map, summarizing, compare-contrast, main idea, inference, drawing conclusions)

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to tell the story of the events that occurred in Tennessee in the summer of 1920 when the Tennessee General Assembly ratified the 19th amendment.
2. Students will understand the process for changing the United States Constitution.



Tennessee equal suffrage boaters c 1920

Guided Practice:

1. Have a class discussion on the meaning of Abigail Adams' words, "We are determined to foment a rebellion if the Constitution does not include women."
2. Make signs to encourage people to support women's rights to vote. What slogans would you use?
3. Hold a suffrage parade in your school.
4. Visit a polling place (many are in schools) on an election day.
5. Ask an adult woman to describe her feelings about voting to the class.
6. Hold a "mock" election for a present-day elected official (governor, mayor, etc.) allowing only the male students in the class to vote. Hold a second election with all members of the class voting. Lead students in a discussion of the results.
7. Lead your class in a discussion about how members of society can bring about changes in that society.
8. Invite a grandmother to come to your class and tell the class how the lives of women have changed since she was a little girl.
9. Discuss the arguments used by the anti-suffragists. How many of these arguments are still used today by those opposing women's rights?
10. For class discussion: Many of the women who were the earliest suffragists had been abolitionists and saw a similarity between slavery they had been fighting against and the situation of women. What were the similarities? What were the differences?
12. For class discussion: "A Woman's Place is in the House ... and in the Senate." Some have argued that women should not hold high public office because they are not strong enough to do a good job. Who are the women in politics today? Consider women in Tennessee who have been elected to public office. What adjectives do the media use to describe them? What issues are of prime concern for them? Write to a specific woman from your area on an issue of importance to you today, asking her advice on action you can take toward the ends you'd like to see achieved.

12. Read the Constitution of the United States and the Amendments. Where do you first find any reference to gender (male, female, men, women)? Discuss the divisions within Tennessee in 1920.

13. Discuss the divisions within the state today. What divisions exist within your school? What are the positive aspects of these divisions. What are the negative aspects of these divisions?

Independent Practice:

1. Write a letter to a member of the Tennessee General Assembly in 1920 telling him why women should be given the right to vote.
2. Write a letter to a present member of the Tennessee General Assembly supporting a particular bill.
3. Write a short story about a child your age whose mother has decided to become a suffragist.
4. Write a letter dated today thanking the men in the General Assembly in 1920 who voted for suffrage.
5. Write an editorial opposing suffrage.
6. Draw a political cartoon opposing suffrage.



Political cartoon 1920

Dedication

*Lizzie Crozier French is but one chapter in the collection entitled **Through a Woman's Voice**, a four-part radio series that was produced over 20 years ago at the University of Middle Tennessee's Recording Industry Studios by Cosette Collier.*

The essay is written by Dr. Carole Bucy. Her talent and dedication to the inclusion of women's stories in history is legendary. Many thanks for the scholarship and brilliance that she has shared over the years.

The opening portrait of Lizzie Crozier French is one of twelve portraits painted for this series by Vija Doks, a talented artist living in New York City.

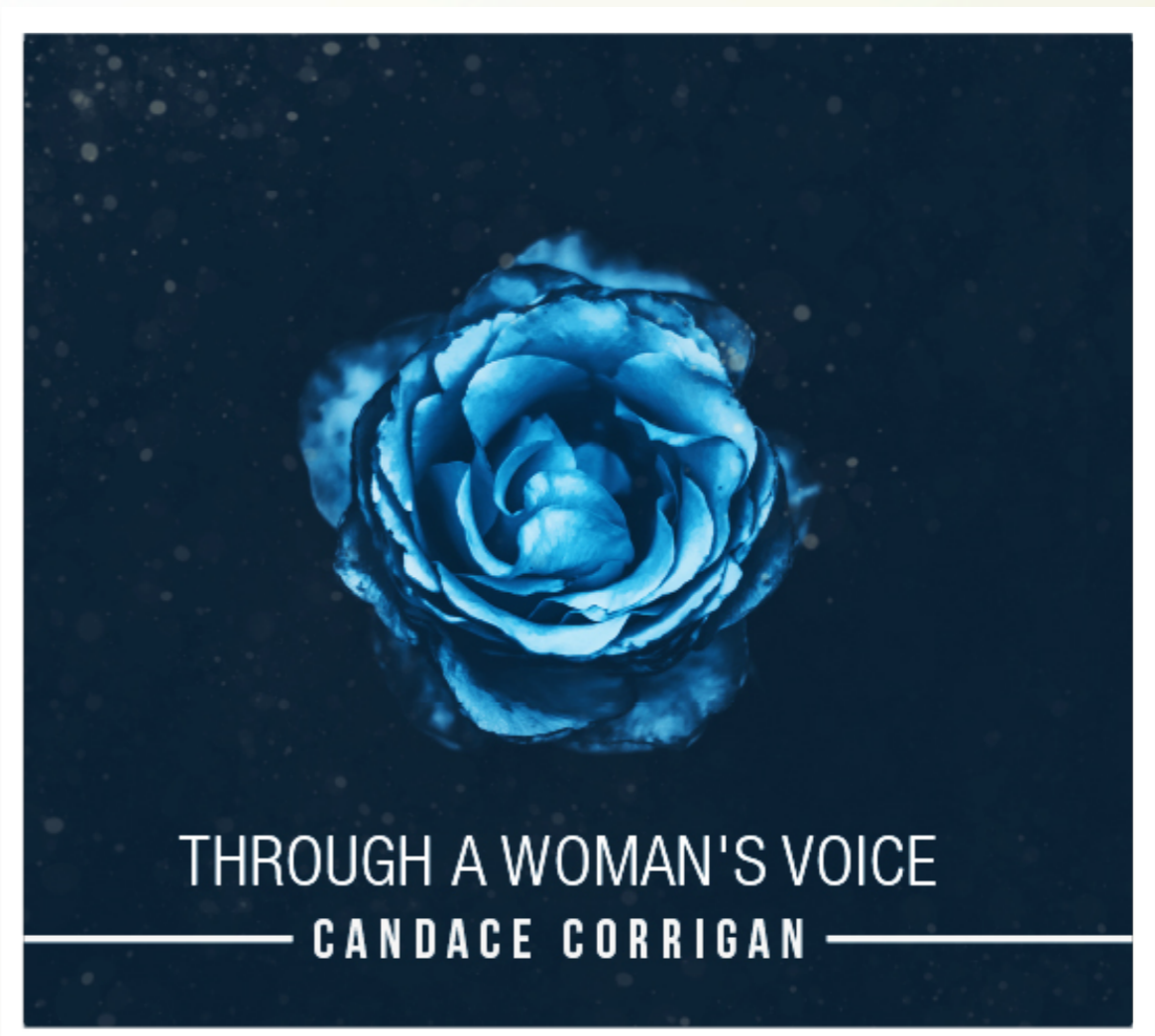
Many thanks to Ossoli Circle, for the use of their library and the use of the Lizzie Crozier French painting used in this guide.

*Many thanks to my friends who participated in the recordings and touring of this show, especially Janne Henshaw and Carol Levack. Both of them contributed greatly to the recordings in this chapter, as well as Sarah Wilfong- violin, Al Goll- dobro and Avent Lane- bass and Steve Peavy -guitar (Anna Howard Shaw recording). and Steve Holeman- vocals - **The Anti-Suffrage Rose**.*

Many thanks to Wanda Sobieski for the use of her extensive suffrage images collection and her continued support and friendship.

*Also thanks to the artistry of Jeannie Kahan, the original artistic director of **How Southern Women Won the Vote**, an hour long program for public television that is now a fundraiser for the Knoxville Woman Suffrage Memorials. Many of the images in this chapter have had the benefit of her talented colorization. Other colorizations are from the talented work of Abbey Battey. (fiverr.com), a talented artist living in Latvia.*

*The songs of **Through a Woman's Voice** are available at my website www.candacecorrigan.com. The recordings of the original series are also available by request at candace@cantacecorrigan.com*



*Cover of **Through a Woman's Voice** CD*