



Greater Grand Rapids
Women's History Council

Women's Suffrage Resource Guide



Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids Public Library

Created in 2020 to honor the centennial of the 19th Amendment, this resource guide can be used broadly by suffrage researchers, interested individuals, book clubs, youth group leaders, K -12 educators, home-schooling parents, and extended education programs.

For the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, www.ggrwhc.org
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Contents

- **Overview of the Suffrage Movement in the United States**
- **Women of Color and the Suffrage Movement**
- **Suffrage Movement in Michigan: State and Local Resources**
- **Michigan Places in Suffrage History**
- **Events Celebrating the 19th Amendment in 2020**
- **Contemporary Voting Laws and Issues**
- **Additional Resources**
- **Activities**
- **Test Yourself**

Definitions

“Suffrage” means “the right to vote.” The word “suffrage” comes from the Latin word “suffragium,” which means “support” or “aid.” Suffrage advocates in the U.S. movement called themselves “suffragists,” not “suffragettes.” The latter term was introduced to belittle suffragists. See, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/suffragistvssuffragette.htm>.

Overview of the Suffrage Movement in the United States

Many websites have information about the women’s suffrage movement. The following sites give a good overview of the movement, which stretched from before the 1848 Seneca Falls convention in New York to the enactment of the 19th Amendment in 1920. <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/19th-amendment-1>
<https://www.neh.gov/article/winning-vote-divided-movement-brought-about-nineteenth-amendment>
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/woman-suffrage>
<https://www.womensvote100.org/learn> (Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission)
<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xix/interps/145>

Suffragists used a variety of tactics to advocate for their cause, including circulating petitions, marching in parades, writing letters to newspapers and legislators, creating their own publications, and designing pins, banners, postcards, and posters. Learn about the many different ways that suffragists communicated their message. See: <http://www.crusadeforthethevote.org/creating-a-female-political-culture> (cartoons, posters, pins, suffrage colors, parade photo), <https://www.ggrwhc.org/suffrage-grand-rapids/>, and <https://grpl.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16055coll19> (images and artifacts from Michigan and Grand Rapids suffrage campaigns).

If you can travel to Washington, D.C. during 2020, visit the National Portrait Gallery, the Library of Congress, the Belmont-Paul National Monument, the National Archives, and other museums that are celebrating the suffrage centennial with exhibits. See: <https://washington.org/visit-dc/womens-suffrage-centennial-events>.

Women of Color and the Suffrage movement

Contributions of women of color to the suffrage movement have often been minimized or overlooked. In addition, many women of color continued to face barriers to voting even after the 19th Amendment granted women suffrage. These sources highlight the accomplishments of and challenges faced by women of color during and after the suffrage movement.

Between Two Worlds: Black Women and the Fight for Voting Rights:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/black-women-and-the-fight-for-voting-rights.htm>

African American Leaders in the Suffrage Movement:

<https://suffragistmemorial.org/african-american-women-leaders-in-the-suffrage-movement/>

Matter of Fact, with Soledad O'Brien: <https://youtu.be/YhgXsY4osvM> This short video identifies national leaders of the women's suffrage movement and examines continuing barriers to voting by black and American Indian women after the 19th Amendment was passed.

"A Resolution for Racial Equality": <https://www.ggrwhc.org/a-resolution-for-equality/> Bay City suffragist Lottie Wilson Jackson's call for suffragists to take a stand against racial discrimination.

Voting Rights for American Indians:

<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/elections/voting-rights-native-americans.html>

Suffrage Movement in Michigan: State and Local Resources

State and local suffrage organizations played a very important role in the suffrage movement. Until the 19th Amendment was adopted, each state's constitution defined women's voting rights differently. Michigan women were excluded from voting when the first Michigan constitution was adopted in 1835. Courts also ruled that, because women did not have the right to vote, they were barred from running for elected office.

Agitation for women's suffrage started as early as the 1840s in Michigan. In order to change the Michigan constitution, suffragists had first to convince male legislators to authorize a referendum (popular vote) on women's suffrage. Then they had to convince the eligible voters (all male) to vote in favor of the proposal. For information on amending the U.S. Constitution, see: <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/constitution> . The modern state referendum process is described at: https://ballotpedia.org/Amending_state_constitutions#Michigan .

In 1874, 1912, and 1913, Michigan suffragists waged hard-fought campaigns to convince voters to amend the Michigan constitution to give women the right to vote; but they were unsuccessful. The suffragists persisted, however, and in 1917 they won a partial victory when they convinced Michigan legislators to grant them presidential suffrage (the right to vote for president only). This limited type of suffrage was possible

without a constitutional amendment, because the U. S. Constitution gives each state legislature control over the process for choosing its own presidential electors. Finally, in 1918, Michigan women gained full suffrage when men in Michigan voted to change the state constitution to allow women to vote. As a result, Michigan women earned full voting rights almost two years before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution went into effect. The 19th Amendment gave women all across the country the right to vote.

An interesting aspect of the suffrage movement in Michigan is that it was among only a handful of states where women could vote in school elections long before they won full suffrage. Michigan women who owned taxable property had the right to vote in school elections beginning in 1867, and that right was extended to parents of school children in 1881. Women who were eligible to vote in school elections could also run for school board offices. Women took advantage of this right and started winning seats on school boards around the state as early as the 1880s. Sadly, many of these pioneers have been forgotten. Most local histories have focused only on the achievements of men.

Once women received full voting rights, some suffragists, including women who had already served on school boards, ran for other elected positions. In 1920, suffragist Eva McCall Hamilton, of Grand Rapids, became the first woman to be elected to the Michigan legislature.

Women who were active in the suffrage movement were typically very active in other civic reform efforts, especially in matters relating to the health, education, and welfare of women, families, and children. After women won full suffrage, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) voted to become the League of Women Voters; and suffragists turned their attention to educating female voters about their new right. Suffragists in Michigan and across the country formed local chapters of the League and joined in this effort. Today, the League of Women Voters still plays an important role in voter education, both for men and for women.

Many brave and determined women from across Michigan were involved in the suffrage movement. Honor them by learning more about them and uncovering and sharing the stories of suffragists in your own communities who may have been forgotten.

For more on the suffrage movement in Michigan, see:

Taking Center Stage: Women's Suffrage in Grand Rapids and Michigan:

<https://www.ggrwhc.org/suffrage-grand-rapids/> - This unique digital exhibit gives an overview of the suffrage movement in Michigan with an emphasis on Grand Rapids suffrage activities. It includes a collection of historical images and explains how local and state suffrage activities connected with the national movement through a comprehensive timeline of the suffrage movement. There is also a complete listing of officers of the major state-wide suffrage organizations – a great resource for those who want to learn more about suffragists from their communities.

Michigan/Women's Vote Centennial: <https://www.womensvote100.org/michigan> - Links to web pages and articles relating to the Michigan suffrage movement together with a listing of suffrage-related events and projects in Michigan.

Michigan Suffrage Quiz: Test your knowledge and view feedback highlighting Michigan suffrage history: <https://www.2020centennial.org/michigan-quiz>

Long Hard-Fought Battle for Women's Suffrage:

<https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/videos/news/local/capitol/2018/01/18/-long-hard-fought-battle-womens-suffrage/109571804/>

This brief video created by the *Lansing Journal* gives an outline of the women's suffrage movement in Michigan and includes historical photos from the movement.

Grand Rapids Public Library Suffrage Archive and Digital Suffrage Exhibit

Get an up-close look at the Michigan suffrage movement by visiting the library archives (see, <https://www.grpl.org/uploads/grhsc/127.pdf>) or viewing its online digital collection, <https://grpl.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16055coll19>, which includes copies of *The Michigan Suffragist*, the newsletter of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association from 1914-1917; images from the scrapbook of nationally-known Grand Rapids suffragists, Emily Burton Ketcham and Alde Louise Tuck Blake; and memorabilia from the suffrage era (pins, flyers, suffrage songs, etc.). Viewing this collection is a great way to immerse yourself in suffrage movement history.

***If you want to dig a little further, explore the GRPL's digital collection of nearly 23,000 cards filled out by Grand Rapids area women who registered to help with the war effort in 1918: <https://grpl.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16055coll5> . You may even find a family member listed!

Michigan Women Forward, Hall of Fame Timeline: <https://miwf.org/herstory/mi-womens-history-center/> - A number of the women who have been inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame were active in the women's suffrage movement. Explore the Hall of Fame website to identify suffragists from your area and to learn more about prominent Michigan women. (Suggestion: type the word "suffrage" in the timeline search box or search for your town or city.)

Bay-Journal Heritage Collection: <http://bay-journal.com/bay/1he/writings/mi-womens-suffrage-assoc.html> . This collection focuses on women from the Bay City area who were active in the women's suffrage movement.

Your local library or historical association – There were active suffrage associations in communities across Michigan. Check with your local library, history museum, or historical association to see what information they have about the suffrage movement in your area. Many local newspapers have been digitized and are available through local libraries. In addition, Central Michigan University has a gateway site that offers free access to digitized newspapers from across the state: <https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/Pages/Michigan-Digital-Newspaper-Portal.aspx>.

Michigan Places in Suffrage History

Susan B. Anthony and other national suffrage leaders traveled extensively in Michigan. Check with your local library/history associations to see if Susan B. Anthony or another

national suffrage leader visited your area. You can also read Susan B. Anthony's diaries online. Her 1874 diary is among others available at the Library of Congress: https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss11049.mss11049-002_00107_00307/?sp=1. Start with image 134 to see the Michigan towns and cities Anthony visited in Michigan as she spent a month crisscrossing the state by train, rallying public support during the 1874 suffrage campaign.

Anna Howard Shaw statue - Big Rapids- Anna Howard Shaw is perhaps Michigan's most famous suffrage leader. Shaw moved to Big Rapids when she was a young child and later attended Albion College, where she studied for the ministry. She served as the president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association from 1904 to 1915 and also led the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, a group formed by women to support the war effort during World War I. See: <https://www.nps.gov/people/anna-howard-shaw.htm>.

St. Cecilia Music Center, Grand Rapids (site of the National American Woman Suffrage Association convention in 1899): <https://www.ggrwhc.org/nawsa-comes-to-grand-rapids/>)

Events Celebrating the 19th Amendment in 2020

Events commemorating the suffrage centennial have been scheduled across Michigan. The Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council has an active schedule of events for the year. Dress up as suffragists and march with GGRWHC in the Ottawa Hills neighborhood Hollyhock Lane Parade on July 4, 2020. GGRWHC's centennial celebration of the 19th Amendment, "Her Voice: Her Vote," scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, 2020, in the historic St. Cecilia auditorium, has been postponed. See www.ggrwhc.org for updated information about upcoming events.

Contemporary Voting Laws and Issues

<https://www.usa.gov/voting-laws-history> (information on eligibility to vote, voter I.D. laws, and historical election results)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/> (statistics on voter turnout in the United States)

<https://www.carnegie.org/topics/topic-articles/11-barriers-voting/> (discussion of barriers to voting)

Additional Resources

National Women's History Project – www.nwhp.org

Rock the Vote – www.rockthevote.com

Smart Voter – www.smartvoter.org

League of Women Voters – www.lwv.org

The Federal Election Commission – www.fec.gov (has sample registration form)

Project Vote Smart – www.votesmart.org (candidates and their positions on issues)

Michigan Secretary of State - <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633---,00.html>

Activities

Learn about the suffrage movement and voting

- Read the 19th Amendment: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxix>. Learn about key people and events in the women's suffrage movement. Why did it take so long for women to gain the right to vote? What arguments were made for and against giving women the right to vote? Test your knowledge by taking the quiz at: <https://www.2020centennial.org/kids-quiz>
- Women in Michigan earned the right to vote in 1918 – two years before the 19th Amendment went into effect. Learn more about the campaign for the right to vote in Michigan. Test your knowledge by taking the quiz at: <https://www.2020centennial.org/michigan-quiz>
- Learn about Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, Emily Burton Ketcham, or another national, state, or local suffrage leader. Where was she from? What was her involvement in the movement? What did she do to inspire others?
- Leaders of the suffrage movement had a bitter disagreement about whether to support the 15th Amendment, which gave the right to vote to black men, but not to women. Learn more about this disagreement and ways in which women of color fought for women's suffrage and against discrimination within the movement.
- What are the requirements for being a voter in Michigan? How can a person register to vote? How can voters learn more about candidates and issues on the ballot? How does a registered voter actually go about voting at the polls or by absentee ballot?
- Learn about elected positions within your community. Who represents you and how can citizens express their opinions to elected officials? How many women represent your community at the national, state or local level?
- Suffragists fought to change the U.S. and state constitutions, so that women could vote. Learn more about the steps that must be taken to change the U.S. and Michigan constitutions. Learn about a current issue relating to changing the constitution, such as the effort to ratify the ERA.

Build on what you have learned

- Talk to members of your family to find out whether any of your ancestors participated in the suffrage movement or if they engaged with any group working for women's rights. Write their stories. Share with your family or other groups.
- Talk to family members and family friends who are registered to vote. Discuss with them why they vote and how they educate themselves on candidates and issues before voting.
- Create your own timeline, banner, or poster or other form of media related to the suffrage movement or voting. Share your work.
- Plan and carry out a mock debate or election relating to a current issue or candidate.
- Participate in a "Who Gets to Vote" simulation or similar activity. (See: <http://leg.wa.gov/CivicEd/Documents/Voting%20Rights%20Lesson%20Plan.pdf>) Discuss what you learned from the activity.

- Think of an historical figure from the women’s suffrage movement who reminds you of someone making a difference today. Write her a card, a letter, or a message on social media (with your parent/guardian’s permission, if necessary).
- Help to preserve the stories of women who have made history in your community. Who were the first women elected to public office in your school district or community? Learn more about them and find a way to share their stories in your community.
- Select a current issue relating to voting or voting rights and create a one-minute presentation and poster to educate others about it. Share your work with a public official or others.
- Run for an elected position in your school or community. Learn the responsibilities of the position, build a campaign team, plan and carry out your election campaign. Journal or blog about your election experience.
- Help others learn about the voting process. Show someone of voting age how to research candidates and issues, and help them make a plan for voting on election day. (See: <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633---,00.html> and <https://www.lwv.org/blog/make-your-election-day-plan>),

Explore other resources in your community

- Participate in an event celebrating the centennial of the 19th Amendment or plan and carry out your own activity honoring women who fought for suffrage. For one idea, see: <https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/honor-suffragist/>. Write about your experience to share what you have learned.
- Visit your local library or museum and see if they have local archives and/or books on women and the suffrage movement. Use these resources to learn more about local women who were active in the suffrage movement or in advocating for women’s rights. (Alternative: Explore a digital suffrage exhibit) Write and share a narrative article about one woman from your community who was active in either movement.
- Visit a local polling place on an election day. Before you go, examine a ballot (available at: <https://www.vote411.org/>) and learn more about the process of voting.
- Learn who your elected officials are and what they do. Connect with them and discuss current challenges and opportunities in your community.
- Attend a town hall meeting, coffee time, or other campaign event for a local candidate to learn about the candidate’s qualifications, reasons for running for office, positions on local issues; and to find out about opportunities to work on a candidate’s campaign.
- Visit a League of Women Voters meeting and learn more about the work of the League.

Test Yourself!

Constitutional Amendments

How is the United States Constitution changed or amended?

How is your state constitution changed or amended?

19th Amendment

Read the 19th Amendment out loud with a friend.

1. Think about and write down five reasons why voting is important to you.
2. Think about and write down three reasons why voting is important in each of these places:
 - neighborhood
 - city
 - state
 - country

In what year was the 19th Amendment passed?

- Find three arguments for women's suffrage.
- Find three arguments that were made against women's suffrage.
- Find three factors that delayed women's suffrage.

In what year did Michigan women earn the right to vote?

Who were some of the women who worked toward Michigan women's suffrage?

What were strategies used by the women who worked toward Michigan suffrage?

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

- What is the ERA? When was it first introduced in the US Congress?
- Why is the ERA important?
- What is the current status of the ERA?
- List three reasons why the ERA was not ratified by three-fourths of the states before the ratification deadline expired in 1979.
- List the three states that voted to pass it after the deadline.

Women's Suffrage Movement Leaders

For each woman listed below, research and answer the following questions:

1. Where was she from?
2. What is her birthdate? When did she die?
3. What was her involvement in the movement? In what ways was she active in the movement?
4. What were her major accomplishments? What tactics did she employ to inspire others?
 - Susan B. Anthony
 - Sojourner Truth
 - Emily Burton Ketcham

- Anna Howard Shaw
- Carrie Chapman Catt
- Alice Paul
- Ida B. Wells
- Clara Comstock Russell
- Alde Louise Tuck Blake

15th Amendment

Read the 15th Amendment out loud with a friend.

- What year was the 15th Amendment passed?
- Why was the 15th Amendment passed?
- Find and list three major effects of the 15th Amendment.

Race and the Suffrage Movement

1. Why did the women's suffrage movement split apart over the 15th Amendment?
When did the two groups get back together?
2. Find the names of women of color who were active in the national women's suffrage movement. What are some of the strategies that they used to fight for suffrage and equality?
3. Describe the discrimination women of color faced from inside the women's suffrage movement.

Voting

- List the qualifications for voting in your state.
- Where do citizens register to vote in your state?
- List three ways that citizens can learn about candidates and ballot issues.
- Where and how does voting happen in your state?

Elected Officials

Find and list the names of elected officials in your city, county, and state.

1. How do citizens contact elected officials in your city, county, and state? List email addresses and phone numbers for each elected official.
2. What is the percentage of women elected officials in your city, county, and state?