

▲ A woman working at a Pittsburgh cigar factory in 1909

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Women at Work

As the Progressive Movement wore on, many reformers took up causes that affected women. Although women spearheaded a number of Progressive reforms, they did not have the right to vote in national elections. In workplaces like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, women endured the awful conditions described by one worker:

“It was a world of greed; the human being didn’t mean anything. The hours were from 7:30 in the morning to 6:30 at night when it wasn’t busy. When the season was on we worked until 9:00. No overtime pay, not even supper money. . . . When you were told Saturday afternoon, through a sign on the elevator, ‘If you don’t come in on Sunday, you needn’t come in on Monday,’ what choice did you have? You had no choice.”

—Pauline Newman, organizer of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union

▲ A week’s wages—only \$1.50!

Women Make Progress

Objectives

- Analyze the impact of changes in women’s education on women’s roles in society.
- Explain what women did to win workers’ rights and to improve family life.
- Evaluate the tactics women used to win passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Terms and People

Florence Kelley	suffrage
NCL	Carrie Chapman Catt
temperance movement	NAWSA
Margaret Sanger	Alice Paul
Ida B. Wells	Nineteenth Amendment

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas As you read this section, complete an outline like the one below to capture the main ideas.

- | |
|-------------------------|
| I. Women Expand Reforms |
| A. Hardships for women |
| 1. |
| 2. |
| B. |

Why It Matters In the early 1900s, a growing number of women were no longer content to have a limited role in society. Women activists helped bring about Progressive reforms and won the right to vote. In the years ahead, women would continue the struggle to expand their roles and rights. **Section Focus Question: How did women of the Progressive Era make progress and win the right to vote?**

Progressive Women Expand Reforms

In the early 1900s, a growing number of women wanted to do more than fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. They were ready to move beyond raising children, cooking meals, keeping the home tidy, and caring for family members. They wanted to expand their role in the community.

Education helped women achieve their goals. By the 1890s, a growing number of women’s colleges prepared them for careers as teachers or nurses. Some, such as Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and the School of Social Work in New York, trained them to lead the new organizations working for social reform. Armed with education and modern ideas, many middle-class white women began to tackle problems they saw in society.

Working Women Face Hardships For most women, however, working outside the home meant difficult jobs, with long hours and dangerous conditions. And these women were usually expected to

hand over their wages to their husbands, fathers, or brothers. Many women labored in factories that made cigars or clothing. Others toiled as laundresses or servants. Immigrants, African Americans, and women from rural areas filled these jobs, and most of them had little or no education. As a result, they could easily be cheated or bullied by their employers. Without being able to vote, women had little influence on the politicians who could expand their rights and look after their interests.

Reformers Champion Working Women's Rights A key goal of women reformers was to limit the number of work hours. They succeeded in several states. For example, a 1903 Oregon law capped women's workdays at ten hours. Five years later, in *Muller v. Oregon*, the Supreme Court reviewed that law. Lawyer Louis D. Brandeis argued that long working hours harmed working women and their families.

The Supreme Court agreed with Brandeis. Based on their role as mothers, it said, women could be "properly placed in a class" by themselves. As a result, laws could limit their work hours, even if similar laws would not be allowed for men. At the time, Progressives viewed this decision as a victory for women workers. In later years, however, this ruling was used to justify paying women less than men for the same job.

Florence Kelley believed that women were hurt by the unfair prices of goods they had to buy to run their homes. In 1899, she helped found the **National Consumers League (NCL)**, which is still active today. The NCL gave special labels to "goods produced under fair, safe, and healthy working conditions" and urged women to buy them and avoid products that did not have these labels. The NCL pushed for other reforms as well. It backed laws calling for the government to inspect meatpacking plants, to make workplaces safer, and to make payments to the unemployed.

Florence Kelley also helped form the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), another group that tried to improve conditions for female factory workers. It was one of the few groups in which upper-class and working-class women served together as leaders. The WTUL pushed for federal laws that set a minimum wage and an eight-hour workday. It also created the first workers' strike fund, which could be used to help support families who refused to work in unsafe or unfair conditions.

Women Work for Changes in Family Life A main goal of Progressive women was to improve family life. They pushed for laws that could help mothers keep families healthy and safe. One focus of this effort was the **temperance movement** led by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). This group promoted temperance, the practice of never drinking alcohol. Members felt that alcohol often led men to spend their earnings on liquor, neglect their families, and abuse their wives. Formed in the 1870s, the WCTU gained strength during the Progressive Era. Their work led to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, which outlawed the production and sale of alcohol.


Nurse **Margaret Sanger** thought that family life and women's health would improve if mothers had fewer children. In 1916, Sanger, herself one of 11 children, opened the country's first birth-control clinic. Sanger was jailed several times as a "public nuisance." But federal courts eventually said doctors could give out information about family planning. In 1921, Sanger founded the American Birth Control League to make this information available to more women.

Women Campaign for Temperance

Minnesota women march to ban alcohol. The temperance movement gained a victory when Congress passed the 18th Amendment in 1917.



African American women also worked for social change. In 1896, **Ida B. Wells**, a black teacher, helped form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). The group aimed to help families strive for success and to assist those who were less fortunate. With money raised from educated black women, the NACW set up day-care centers to protect and educate black children while their parents went to work.

 **Checkpoint** What steps did women take to win workers' rights?

Women Fight for the Right to Vote

One of the boldest goals of Progressive women was **suffrage**—the right to vote. They argued that this was the only way to make sure that the government would protect children, foster education, and support family life. As Jane Addams explained, women needed the vote because political issues reached inside people's homes.

Primary Source “If the street is not cleaned by

the city authorities no amount of private sweeping will keep the tenement free from grime; if the garbage is not properly collected and destroyed a tenement-house mother may see her children sicken and die of diseases from which she alone is powerless to shield them, although her tenderness and devotion are unbounded. She cannot even secure untainted meat for her household, . . . unless the meat has been inspected by city officials.”

—Jane Addams, *Ladies Home Journal*, 1910

Since the 1860s, reformers such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had tirelessly struggled for the right for women to have a voice in political issues. They failed at the federal level, but by the end of the 1890s women in western states, such as Wyoming and Colorado, had won the right to vote.

Catt Takes Charge of the Movement In the 1890s, the national suffrage effort was reenergized by **Carrie Chapman Catt**. Catt had studied law and worked as one of the country's first female school superintendents. A captivating speaker, Catt traveled around the country urging women to join the **National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)**. In 1900, she became the president of the NAWSA. Catt promoted what became known as her “winning plan,” which called for action on two fronts. Some teams of women lobbied Congress to pass a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote. Meanwhile, other teams used the new referendum process to try to pass state suffrage laws. By 1918, this **strategy** had helped women win the right to vote in New York, Michigan, and Oklahoma.

Catt introduced a “society plan” to recruit wealthy, well-educated women. She and her army of workers signed on women from all levels of society, including African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Jewish immigrants. All these women, called “suffragettes,” helped promote suffrage in their own areas.

While the suffrage movement gained ground, some women worked against it. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) believed that the effort to win the vote would take women's attention away from family and volunteer work that benefited society in many ways. But as the pressure for women's suffrage grew stronger, the NAOWS faded away.

HISTORY MAKERS

Ida B. Wells (1862–1931)

Wells had gained fame for her campaign against the lynching of African Americans. But she was also a tireless worker for women's suffrage and joined in the famous 1913 march for universal suffrage that took place in Washington, D.C. Not able to tolerate injustice of any kind, Ida B. Wells, along with Jane Addams, successfully blocked the establishment of segregated schools in Chicago. In 1930, she ran for the Illinois State legislature, which made her one of the first black women to run for public office in the United States.



Vocabulary Builder

strategy—(STRAT uh jee) *n.* plan or an action based on a plan

Activists Carry on the Struggle Some women, known as social activists, grew more daring in their strategies to win the vote. **Alice Paul**, their best-known leader, was raised in a Quaker home where she was encouraged to be independent. Paul attended a Quaker college and the New York School of Social Work before earning a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1912. She believed that drastic steps were needed to win the vote. By 1913, she was organizing women to recruit others across the nation. They drew in women of many backgrounds, from Maud Younger, known as the “millionaire waitress” because she organized California’s first waitresses’ union, to Nina Otero-Warren, a Hispanic who headed New Mexico’s State Board of Health.

By 1917, Paul formed the National Woman’s Party (NWP), which used public protest marches. The NWP became the first group to march with picket signs

Events That Changed America



AUDIO

SUFFRAGISTS WIN THE VOTE

The National Woman’s Party began picketing the White House, urging President Wilson to back the woman’s suffrage amendment. Susan B. Anthony had introduced the amendment nearly 40 years earlier, but the Senate had rejected it twice. So when America entered World War I, and Wilson proclaimed, “The world must be made safe for democracy,” the weary suffragists were astounded. They wondered how could America be a democracy if women could not vote?

Then, when envoys from Russia visited Wilson in June, Alice Paul and her activists saw a golden opportunity. The Russians had just overthrown the czar, established a republic, and granted women the right to vote. As the envoys neared the White House, the suffragists stunned and embarrassed Wilson by unveiling a new banner that claimed America was not a democracy. The women set in motion a series of events that would change America.



- ▲ **“America is Not a Democracy”**
An angry mob shredded protestors’ banners. The police warned the women not to return.

Suffrage Poster ►

In marches on Washington, D.C., women urged Congress to vote for suffrage.



outside the White House. Hundreds of women were arrested in these protests. Some went on hunger strikes, refusing to eat until they could vote. The NWP methods angered many people, including women in other suffrage groups. Nevertheless, they did help win women the right to vote, because the NWP's actions made less-radical groups like the NAWSA look tame by comparison.

The Nineteenth Amendment Becomes Law When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Carrie Catt and Florence Kelley led the NAWSA to support the war effort. Their actions and those of the NWP convinced a growing number of legislators to support a women's suffrage amendment. In June 1919, Congress approved the **Nineteenth Amendment**, which stated that the right to vote "shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex." On August 18, 1920, the



▲ **Civil Disobedience and Arrests**

Alice Paul continued to lead protests in front of the White House. She and 168 others were arrested and jailed.

Suffering for the Cause ►

The jailed women went on hunger strikes. They endured forced-feedings, beatings, disease, and poor medical treatment.



◄ **Spreading the Word**

The suffragists traveled the country, telling their story. They kept attention focused on women's suffrage when the issue might otherwise have been eclipsed by World War I.

Why It Matters

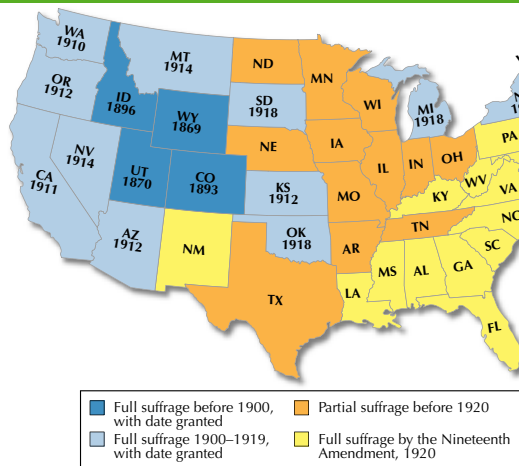
The efforts of these women swayed public opinion and helped the Susan B. Anthony Amendment become law. The House passed the amendment in 1918. Then the Senate passed it by one vote in 1919. Finally, in 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment. At long last, women in every state of the nation could vote. America had changed.

Thinking Critically

Why was the banner that was unveiled when the Russians visited Wilson so effective in stirring public opinion?



Passage of Women's Suffrage



Women's Suffrage

What pattern do you see in the passage of suffrage at the state level?

Tennessee State House of Representatives passed the amendment by one vote. With Tennessee's ratification, enough states had passed the amendment that it became official.

Alice Paul and Carrie Catt both claimed responsibility for the victory. In fact, according to historian Nancy Cott, "neither the shocking militancy of the National Women's Party nor the ladylike moderation of NAWSA was so solely responsible for victory as each group publicly claimed." The rival groups both contributed to the triumph of the women's suffrage movement. As a result, on November 2, 1920, Catt, Paul, and millions of other American women voted for the first time in a U.S. presidential election.



Checkpoint What tactics did Progressive women use to win the right to vote?

SECTION 2 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-0404

Comprehension

- 1. People** Explain how each of the following people changed the lives of women.
 - Florence Kelley
 - Margaret Sanger
 - Ida B. Wells
 - Carrie Chapman Catt
 - Alice Paul

2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

Identify Main Idea Use your outline to answer the Section Focus Question: How did women of the Progressive Era make progress and win the right to vote?

Writing About History

3. Quick Write: Communicate

Perspective Look at the map on the passage of women's suffrage in this section. In one paragraph, describe the map from the perspective of a supporter of suffrage for women. In a second paragraph, describe the map as viewed by a suffrage opponent.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Draw Conclusions** Why would education have led middle-class women to address societal problems?
- 5. Solve Problems** Choose one specific social problem and explain how Progressive women reformers proposed to solve that problem.
- 6. Analyze Effects** How did suffragists' efforts at the state level affect their effort to win the right to vote at the national level?