



The Colorado History Gazette

Volume 29

Denver, November 7, 1893

COLORADO PASSES SUFFRAGE LEGISLATION

COLORADO HAS MADE HISTORY AS THE FIRST STATE TO PASS WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE LEGISLATION BY STATE REFERENDUM. OF COURSE, WYOMING, IN 1869, WAS THE FIRST TERRITORY TO GIVE WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. IT WAS QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY THE UTAH TERRITORY IN 1870 AND WASHINGTON TERRITORY IN 1883.

IN COLORADO, THE WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT HAS HAD A LONG AND DIFFICULT PAST. AS EARLY AS 1868, EX-GOVERNOR JOHN EVANS WITH D. M. RICHARDS ATTEMPTED TO INTRODUCE WOMAN SUFFRAGE LEGISLATION. ALTHOUGH THE WOMEN IN COLORADO FOUGHT FOR THE ISSUE, THE LEGISLATORS WEREN'T READY.

LATER, ON JANUARY 3, 1870, TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR EDWARD MCCOOK RECOMMENDED COLORADO FOLLOW THE WYOMING TERRITORY AND OFFER AN EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE TO WOMEN. ONCE AGAIN, OUR LEGISLATORS REJECTED THE NOTION.

NOT WILLING TO GIVE UP, DURING THE CONVENTION IN DENVER ON FEBRUARY 15, 1868, AS THE STATE CONSTITUTION WAS BEING WORKED ON (ANTICIPATING STATEHOOD), MCCOOK PROPOSED A SECTION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION.



Molly Brown

"SECTION 2, ARTICLE 7. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAY, AT ANY TIME, EXTEND BY LAW, THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE TO PERSONS NOT HEREINAFTER ENUMERATED, BUT NO SUCH LAW SHALL TAKE EFFECT OR BE IN FORCE UNTIL THE SAME SHALL HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO A VOTE OF THE PEOPLE AT A GENERAL

ELECTION AND APPROVED BY A MAJORITY OF THE VOTES CAST FOR OR AGAINST SUCH LAW."

THE SECTION WAS ADOPTED AS PART OF THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION, WHICH BECAME THE 38TH STATE OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1877.

IN 1877, THE WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGNED FOR THIS NEW LAW, BUT THEIR PROPOSITION WAS DEFEATED BY A VOTE OF TEN THOUSAND FOR, TO TWENTY THOUSAND AGAINST. AS A CONSOLATION, WOMEN WERE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN SCHOOL ELECTIONS.

DISCOURAGED, THE FIGHT CONTINUED AND IN 1891 AN EFFORT WAS MADE TO EXPUNGE THE WORD "MALE" FROM THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION, BUT THAT TOO FAILED.

FINALLY, IN 1983, THE QUESTION OF WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE WAS AGAIN SUBMITTED FOR A VOTE. THIS TIME, THE FIGHT WAS TAKEN UP BY THE COLORADO NON-PARTISAN EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION, INCLUDING SEVERAL NOTABLE WOMEN LIKE SUSAN B. ANTHONY AND MOLLY BROWN. THE POPULAR VOTE ENDED WITH 35,689 VOTES FOR AND 29,461 VOTES AGAINST.

THE PEOPLE HAD SPOKEN, NOW IT WAS TIME FOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT. THE

LEGISLATURE SUBMITTED LEGISLATION AND THE VOTE IN THE HOUSE WAS DEMOCRATS 1 AYE, 3 NAYS; REPUBLICANS 11 AYES, 21 NAYS; AND POPULISTS 22 AYES, 3 NAYS. IN THE SENATE DEMOCRATS HAD 1 AYE, 3 NAYS; REPUBLICANS 8 AYES, 4 NAYS; AND POPULISTS 21 AYES AND 1 NAY.

FINALLY, AFTER A LONG AND HARD FIGHT, ON NOVEMBER 7, 1893, WOMEN WON THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN COLORADO. NOW THE BATTLE MOVES ON TO FEDERAL LEGISLATION.



Susan B Anthony

1. Byers, William N., Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado: History of Colorado, Volume 1, The Century Publishing and Engraving Company, Chicago, 1901, pp 141-142.
2. Women's Suffrage Movement, Colorado Encyclopedia at:
<https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/image/unsinkable-molly-brown>