

Susan B. Anthony

On Election Day in 1872, Susan B. Anthony went to the polls in Rochester, New York, and voted. She wanted to challenge the law that barred women from voting. Several weeks later, deputy U.S. marshal E. J. Keeney came to her house and arrested her. At her trial, Judge Ward Hunt ruled that Anthony was guilty of breaking the voting laws. He fined her \$100.

Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, in Massachusetts. In 1826 her father moved his family to Battenville, New York, where he opened a large cotton mill. Anthony, who had a quick mind, attended Battenville's one-room schoolhouse. At this school, the boys sat in the front and the girls sat in the back. When Anthony asked to be taught long division, the teacher refused. Such skills, he believed, weren't important for girls to learn. Anthony's father disagreed. He hired a **competent** teacher and started a school for his children in his house.

When she was 20, Anthony accepted a teaching position in Center Falls, New York, for \$2.50 a week. The male teacher she replaced had been making \$10 a week. Unusually independent for a woman of her time, she turned down the proposals of marriage she received and continued to support herself by teaching.

Following her father's example, Anthony believed that all slaves should be freed and that the drinking of liquor should be stopped. In 1849 she moved to her parents' home in Rochester and began to devote her time to these two causes—the antislavery and temperance movements. In 1853 she became involved in the women's rights movement as well. Working closely with her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony set out to change a New York state law that gave married men ownership of their wives' earnings and property.

After the Civil War, Anthony focused her efforts on gaining passage of a constitutional amendment that would give voting rights to women. She was convinced that women needed suffrage (the right to vote) if they were to have an influence on social and political issues. In 1868 she started a weekly newspaper called *The Revolution*. The following year she and Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Anthony spent the rest of her life fighting for women's suffrage. She traveled tirelessly around the country giving lectures, attending conferences, and gathering signatures on petitions. When she presented these petitions to Congress, many of the senators laughed and treated her with **disdain**. Anthony gave her last public speech at a convention in February 1906. She died one month later at the age of 86. Shortly before her death she declared that failure to gain women's suffrage was impossible. She was right. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution became law, finally giving women the right to vote.



RCP #19