

# Expansion of an American Revolutionary Ideal: Woman Suffrage in Kansas

By Patrick G. O'Brien

**T**he Bicentennial forcefully confirmed that the continuous transmission and expansion of American Revolutionary philosophy is the critical theme in American history. Government based upon the consent of the governed was an inviolate premise of the Declaration of Independence, but the authors who protested against British despotism themselves allowed only one-half of the society to vote. An unabashed Abigail Adams chided males for the inconsistency between their professed beliefs and practice of sexual injustice. Because "all Men would be tyrants if they could," she proposed to curb their "unlimited power" with the threat that American women would evade "Laws in which we have no voice or Representation" and "foment a Rebellion."

The historical struggle of Abigail Adam's philosophical heirs in behalf of woman suffrage concluded with the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It fulfilled an American Revolutionary ideal with the terse injunction that "the right . . . to vote shall not be denied . . . on account of sex." The woman suffrage crusade had infinite and complex currents throughout all dimensions and levels of politics and government. The states which adopted woman suffrage prior to ratification of the 19th Amendment (1920) provided suffragists with enclaves of influence which sustained their faith during the extended conflict. Kansas was a suffrage center which contributed to the success of the woman's rights movement; its suffrage struggle is a pivotal phase of both Kansas and American history.

The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention in New York, identified as the genesis of the woman suffrage movement, corresponded with the exodus to the Kansas Territory. Historian Eleanor Flexner concluded that "It was no accident that the first round of the political struggle to win women the vote should have taken place in . . . Kansas. During the violence . . . of its territorial period in the 1850's, many women had come . . . to make Kansas 'free soil,' bringing with them the ideas sown by . . . Lucy Stone. In the decade following

the Civil War . . . it was still close to the westward-moving frontier": Kansas has often been described as a reform crucible where migrants, with a revulsion for slavery and ingrained with feminist principles, had their philosophy reinforced by the raw frontier. Although it has been disputed that the frontier spirit was conducive to woman suffrage, the states closest to primitivism were the most receptive to the vote for women, and Kansas suffragists were often infused with the frontier spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Still, the simple existence of egalitarian ideological and frontier forces in Kansas failed to ensure the adoption of woman suffrage without an intense and protracted struggle. Powerful currents in the state militated against woman suffrage. Reform tenacity, suffragist activism, and fierce political conflicts were required to obtain the franchise. A lifetime passed before the limited suffrage provision written into the first Kansas constitution expanded into equal suffrage. Woman suffrage originated and developed in a volatile social and political context. Eclipsed by potent forces, meshed and confused with other causes, and considered in unpropitious circumstances, success eluded the equal suffrage forces until the twentieth century.

Had woman suffrage not clashed with the objective of statehood, Kansas may have been the first state to make women full political citizens. When Kansas was in its disruptive territorial stage, the 1859 Wyandotte convention wrote the state constitution to be submitted to the U.S. Congress upon application to the Union. The Kansas constitutional convention devoted appreciable attention to woman suffrage. Kansas feminists had spread the suffrage message throughout the territory before the Wyandotte convention and selected Clarina I. H. Nichols to present the woman's rights cause to the delegates. Nichols was an established newspaperwoman and active feminist in Vermont when she was lured to Kansas in 1854 because "it was a thousand times more difficult to procure the repeal of unjust laws in an old State than the adoption of just laws in the organization of a new State."<sup>6</sup> The Wyandotte delegates invited Nichols to attend convention sessions in an unofficial capacity and defend woman suffrage and legal equality between the sexes. Impressed with the feminist's cogent presentations, the delegates included advanced woman's rights provisions in the Kansas constitution which assigned property rights and equal guardianship of children to married women.

Most delegates recoiled from equal woman suffrage on the supposition that the U.S. Congress would use it to refuse statehood to Kansas. Yet, the convention approved the vote for women in district school elections over the duhious protest that it would both debase and encourage political chicanery in public education. Although the suffragists were acutely disappointed when the delegates excluded

equal suffrage from the state constitution, the public school franchise was not a perfunctory concession. Kansas was the first state to approve limited woman suffrage since Kentucky permitted widows to vote in school elections in 1838. The Wyandotte convention provided the background for the struggle which required two generations to extend the 1861 limited school vote to equal woman suffrage.

An outburst of suffrage activity followed the lull in the woman's rights crusade during the Civil War. The attention of America focused upon Kansas in 1867, when a mercurial legislator with dubious ethics, Samuel Newitt Wood, proposed an equal woman suffrage amendment to the state constitution which passed the legislature and was submitted to the male electorate in a referendum.<sup>5</sup> The amendment was embroiled in partianship, political expediency, and personal antipathies, and it could not be detached emotionally and politically from another constitutional amendment on the ballot to enfranchise black males. Massive public confusion existed from the murky political currents and there was conflict between woman and free-man suffragists over which constitutional amendment should have precedence. Official Republican subscription to the freedman's cause and neglect of woman's rights detracted markedly from the prospects of the equal suffrage amendment. Although well defined lines often existed between the factions, the referendum contest was also a conundrum in which Kansas disregarded logic and principle with genuine woman suffragists who acquiesced to the freedman's cause, critics of woman's rights who united with the feminists against freedman suffrage, and Republicans and Democrats who followed personal beliefs in disregard of party.

Kansas suffragists worked assiduously for the equal suffrage amendment, but most of the referendum publicity focused upon the outside suffragists who engulfed the state, including Olympia Brown, Henry Blackwell, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, George Francis Train, and Susan B. Anthony. When the woman's rights movement fragmented at the national level and the U.S. Congress proved recalcitrant on woman suffrage, influential feminists concluded they must concentrate upon the Kansas referendum to advance the suffrage cause. They committed themselves to the political maelstrom with faith that Kansas would not disappoint them.<sup>6</sup> The zealous feminists overcame insufficient finances, primitive transportation, public resentment, and indigestible food to lecture Kansans that the American democratic ideal would be unfulfilled until women possessed the vote.

Kansas impressed Susan B. Anthony in 1865 when she visited her brother, the Leavenworth mayor and newspaper publisher. Critics described Anthony as a cranky feminist, and she received more public abuse than any other feminist when she returned to campaign in the 1867 state referendum. Anthony visited the Emporia suffrage

headquarters to be driven by horse and buggy to speak in the smaller Lyon County communities, which provided her with less than a civil reception. After she was rotten-egged at one meeting, she continued to speak with authority and awed the detractors into respectful silence.<sup>7</sup> Anthony gradually impressed Kansans with her spirit and integrity, if not her beliefs.

At the inception of the referendum campaign, the suffragists surmised that the male electors would decisively ratify woman suffrage. If an electoral majority once supported the amendment, (a conclusion incapable of verification in the absence of reliable public opinion data), its support dissipated in the campaign. Only one-third of the electorate finally voted for equal woman suffrage. Uncertainties in the referendum campaign prevent the vote from being described as an unimpeachable gauge of Kansas attitudes toward woman suffrage. It was virtually impossible to exclude partisanship, factionalism, and personal vendettas from the campaign to elicit public response solely on the merits of equal franchise for women. Although the belief that even defeat contributed to the woman's rights cause compensated for the feminists' disappointment in the Kansas referendum, Flexner's realistic speculation is that "The campaigners were not as cast down as they might have been had they realized that the struggle they had just undergone was to be only the first in fifty-six such state referendum campaigns which would take place between 1867 and 1918."<sup>8</sup>

The 1867 seismic defeat paralyzed the Kansas suffrage forces until the organization of the State Equal Suffrage Association in 1884. Acutely conscious of the political perils in a public referendum, the suffragists proposed a limited expansion of the franchise to be enacted by the state legislature. A municipal woman suffrage bill was introduced in the 1886 legislative session, but it was defeated on a procedural vote from political expediency. The bill was virtually a Republican measure, and the party members voted to remove it from the legislative calendar when they concluded its passage could be a political liability in the next state election.<sup>9</sup>

The State Woman's Christian Temperance Union united with the Equal Suffrage Association to pass municipal suffrage in the next legislature. They staged municipal conventions throughout Kansas to arouse the suffrage forces and impress the legislators. With Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, Anna Howard Shaw, and Julia Ward Howe present, the massive and influential American Woman Suffrage Association had its 1887 annual conference in Topeka to provide the Kansas suffragists with a well-publicized and effective municipal suffrage forum. The Equal Suffrage Association postponed its 1886 convention until 1887 when it convened in Topeka to enable the organization to influence the state legislature when it was in session. Laura M. Johns, a capable organizer, impressive speaker, and able

writer, was elected president of the Equal Suffrage Association to lead the municipal suffrage struggle.

Judge R. W. Blue introduced the municipal suffrage bill in the Kansas Senate and General T. T. Taylor managed it in the House. The bill passed both houses decisively with strident but inconsequential opposition. Kansas became the first state to make women legal voters in municipal elections when the bill was signed into law on February 15, 1887. The adoption of municipal suffrage reflected the political acumen of the female activists. The Equal Suffrage Association and WCTU were politically astute to expand the suffrage through the legislative process, which obviated an expensive state campaign filled with imponderable political forces, and they demonstrated acute comprehension of legislative procedure and practical politics to guide the bill through the legislature. It should have been an instructive episode to the critics of woman suffrage who thought that women lacked political aptitude.<sup>10</sup>

With the acquisition of the municipal franchise, the State Equal Suffrage Association concentrated upon the final objective of unlimited suffrage. When Republican and Populist state legislators responded to the suffragists to approve and submit an equal suffrage amendment to the electors in 1894, the deceptive impression was that the Kansas suffrage cause was close to fulfillment. Woman suffrage, however, was to be mired in the fierce dispute between Republicans and Populists for political hegemony of Kansas. Suffragist cohesion was ruptured when the officers of the expansive and powerful National American Woman Suffrage Association criticized the Kansas women as excessively partisan. Laura M. Johns, president of both the State Equal Suffrage Association and the Republican Woman's Association, was chastized when she acquiesced to the Republican hierarchy's opposition to an equal suffrage amendment endorsement in the party platform. NAWSA insisted that an unequivocal commitment to woman suffrage be incorporated into both the Republican and Populist platforms. Kansas suffragists submitted to NAWSA when it threatened to withdraw aid to the state organization.<sup>11</sup>

Republican and Populist subscription to woman suffrage would have been tantamount to adoption, but neither party was willing to base election hopes upon a publicly stated doctrine that civilization was dependent upon woman suffrage. Although receptive to woman suffrage in the past, the Republicans eschewed reference to the equal suffrage amendment in the platform which enabled politicians to practice expedience or comply with conscience in the campaign. The Populists were bitterly divided on the amendment and the impasse was ended with the inclusion of woman suffrage in the platform with an evasive proviso that commitment to it was not a test of party loyalty. Kansans increasingly responded to the amendment on partisan

lines. Although some Republicans defended woman suffrage and party women formed an amendment organization, the equal suffrage amendment was not readily identified with the Republican party. The Populists were not irrevocably attached to the amendment, but Kansas voters equated woman suffrage with Populism, an impression encouraged by Republicans and seemingly confirmed by the Populists when they defrayed Susan B. Anthony's expenses to campaign for the amendment throughout the state.

Kansas women and even suffragists were not immune to partisanship in violation of NAWSA's non-partisan philosophy. Even the Republican women's amendment organization seemed less committed to woman suffrage than to the party. The harsh conclusion of Eleanor Flexner is that "the Kansas women stuck to their party rather than to the measure aimed at enfranchising them, and thereby sealed its doom."<sup>12</sup> Yet, it is moot whether the non-partisan policy of NAWSA was applicable to Kansas in the 1894 referendum, and the perceived affinity between NAWSA and the Populist party may have been a decisive liability to the woman suffrage amendment. Although the suffrage cause seemed virtually futile as the campaign progressively degenerated, the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association attempted to run an active, non-partisan, and independent campaign.

Lyon County was a microcosm of the state in the 1894 referendum. County women organized the Amendment Club, and its members "went out like disciples of old, without purse or script" to preach equal suffrage.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. H. L. Keyes and Miss Edith Conard, with a "splendid horse and comfortable buggy—both furnished by friends of the cause," distributed literature, gave suffrage speeches, and arranged suffrage meetings while they lived and traveled for two weeks in Lyon County's outer perimeters.<sup>14</sup> Rural school houses were filled at 30 suffrage meetings where Emporia ministers defended woman suffrage with the axiom "that the true theory of this Republic is that taxation and representation are inseparable."<sup>15</sup>

State Equal Suffrage Association officers visited the county to encourage the local suffrage forces and attract followers to the cause. Laura M. Johns raised the spirits of the Lyon County suffragists with the prediction that "The amendment will carry with a good majority."<sup>16</sup> An audience in the county court house, "which was packed from top to bottom," listened two hours while the "gifted woman poured out fact and argument in choice diction and eloquent utterance which charmed and held them to the end." It was opined that the speech "for strong argument put in winsome, persuasive form . . . would be hard to beat."<sup>17</sup>

Although vexed with the Kansans, NAWSA was highly visible in the amendment campaign. Anthony was among the few original fem-

inists still active, and her speeches throughout the state demonstrated that age had impaired neither her mental powers nor zeal for the cause of female equality. A new generation of NAWSA suffragists participated in the 1894 Kansas struggle, including Anna Howard Shaw, an ordained minister and physician, and Carrie Chapman Catt, a former newspaperwoman and teacher. Shaw's impressive oratorical ability was made available to local suffragists while Catt contributed organizational acumen.<sup>14</sup> Both women would subsequently preside over NAWSA, and "Big Boss" Catt would adeptly guide the 19th Amendment through murky political currents to fruition.

Democrats, German-Americans, Roman Catholics, blue-collar workers, and anti-prohibitionists were usually identified in the forces opposed to woman suffrage, whereas its defenders most often included prohibitionists, Protestants, middle-class professionals, especially educators and ministers, and Republicans and Populists.<sup>15</sup> Although these classifications are generally valid, amendment opponents and defenders evade simple classification by sex, party, religion, class, ethnic membership, or attitudes toward the use of alcohol. With the variegation of the forces, neither side had fully consistent and uniform rationales on woman suffrage. Kansans with antithetical backgrounds often united on woman suffrage for widely divergent reasons whereas Kansans with identical backgrounds often adopted diametrically opposed positions.

Kansans' response to the equal suffrage amendment stemmed both from impressions of women's mental, moral, and emotional chemistry and the practical political effects of woman suffrage. The intellectual and philosophical postulates on woman suffrage had crystallized in the generation prior to the 1894 referendum, and cursory examination of newspaper editorials confirms that they were only embellished and adapted to the Kansas milieu. Original partisan commentary was generated, however, during the referendum on the influence of woman suffrage on state politics. The editorial content of two Kansas newspapers is surveyed herein to identify the suppositions and rhetoric used to influence the electors in the campaign.

The *Emporia Daily Gazette* diligently defended woman suffrage, refuted misrepresentations of the equal suffrage amendment, and disabused readers of misconceptions about women. When amendment opponents asserted that women's intellectual and emotional liabilities would make them incompetent voters, and made ominous political predictions should the weaker sex with its frailties be allowed to vote, it evoked a rejoinder from the *Emporia Daily Gazette*. A reprinted editorial states, in defense of women and derision of Populism, that "If any set of women ever went off on a craze so wild, or made such infernal fools of themselves, as a majority of the men of Kansas did two years ago, we would like to be informed of it."<sup>16</sup>

That woman suffrage would purify politics and raise the moral standards of society was the most salient *Emporia Daily Gazette* theme. It protested that "Beer, boodle, and bummers seem to be controlling things" with politics largely confined to men. The electors were colloquially encouraged to "Give woman a chance and she don't sort of clean things up it will be the first thing she has ever mixed in which she didn't make smell sweeter and look cleaner."<sup>21</sup> To conclude that women would reform politics and raise the level of virtue in the society originated in the premise that the sexes had divergent moral precepts. The suffragists believed that women had nearly an instinct and compulsion to be virtuous. Without excessive humility, they professed that "The great body of American women know what is right and and range themselves on the right side. They will be found opposing whatever has a debasing tendency, whatever is antagonistic to the peace and welfare of the home and of society."<sup>22</sup>

The distinctive moral aptitude of women would enable a complementary division of political responsibility. An *Emporia Daily Gazette* editorial stated that men were less attentive and proficient than women in "those matters of humanity and good morals with which governments everywhere have to deal." Women would make "government strong on the humane and moral side where it is now weak. The women would have no dead letters in our statute books against gambling, rum-selling, and prostitution. They will stop the importation of rum among the savages in Africa and . . . make government do right and act vigorously in carrying out all humane and moral measures."<sup>23</sup> The pacifistic impulses of women would contribute to global peace. Men still possessed predatory instincts that caused them to "imitate the . . . tiger" when a "war cloud comes in sight," but "women are especially adverse to war" and would "incline the nations to peace."<sup>24</sup>

Allan Grimes has asserted that woman suffrage "was not so much to broaden the base of political power as to change its locus. This may be seen by noting the close relationship in the West of woman suffrage, prohibition, and immigration restriction."<sup>25</sup> Although the assertion is not fully applicable to Kansas, woman suffrage was defended as a policy to increase the volume of virtuous voters and thereby relatively decrease the proportion of unsavory electors. The *Emporia Daily Gazette* thought woman suffrage "would double the vote from the homes while the floating vote would remain the same. It is the floating vote which does the most to vitiate politics . . . Woman suffrage . . . can double the conservative and sober franchise that has the home behind it," and thereby the "floating vote will be made comparatively harmless."<sup>26</sup> The principle, according to the *Emporia Daily Gazette*, applied to prohibition. "Every ex-saloon keeper, every



jointist, every man who thinks more of his whiskey than he does of his family is against the amendment," but woman suffrage would "mean the enforcement of prohibition in Kansas."<sup>27</sup> Although puritan values were pronounced in the suffrage rhetoric, puritan should not be narrowly defined in the woman suffrage context as only an obsession to regulate personal morality. The puritan attitude among the suffragists was secondary to the spirit to encourage public morality from a more humane vision toward society.

Virtually every defense of the equal suffrage amendment was disputed in the *Emporia Daily Republican*, which was owned and edited by former Kansas governor C. V. Eskridge. It could not accept the premise that woman suffrage would purify Kansas politics when the Populist suffragists and "filthy reformers" had "turned nearly all the state institutions into Chinese stinkpots." Only a deluded public could believe women could reform politics when "the suffragists are depending for success upon this rascally Populist outfit which is the most unprincipled political party ever organized on the face of the earth."<sup>28</sup> Although the newspaper pronounced Susan B. Anthony a "great and good . . . high minded woman" to whom affiliation with the Populist "disreputable gang" must be "extremely unpleasant," it was "what woman suffrage leads to and Miss Anthony is simply the victim of her own folly."<sup>29</sup>

The *Emporia Daily Republican* invoked partisanship against the equal suffrage amendment on the dubious premise that its adoption would increase the Populist constituency at Republican expense. An editorial rebuked those "Republicans who can't understand that they are working in the interests of the Populists when they support the fad."<sup>30</sup> The editorial omitted references to past Republican contributions to woman suffrage and the large number of Kansas women loyal to the party. The *Emporia Daily Gazette*, as fiercely Republican as the *Emporia Daily Republican*, believed woman suffrage would expand the Republican political base and increase the protection against Populist radicalism and demagoguery. A personally bitter critic of woman suffrage, C. V. Eskridge was simply manipulating partisan spirits against a measure which was personal anathema.

A chronic suffragist complaint was that women themselves were politically apathetic and tepid toward suffrage. The anti-suffragists adopted the complaint and used it against the equal suffrage amendment with the contention that it was illogical to enfranchise members of society who had not actively solicited the vote and would be negligent in the responsibilities of citizenship. Female disinterest in equal suffrage was explicable to the *Emporia Daily Republican* as women could influence society "as effectively without the ballot as with it. In fact . . . their power is even greater without the ballot than it would be with it."<sup>31</sup>

The *Emporia Daily Republican* usually based its truculent opposition to the equal suffrage amendment on solicitude of womanhood. Politics were unsavory and would make women as coarse as men. When Mary Ellen Lease, the Populist orator who advised Kansas farmers to "raise less corn and more hell," stated that women in politics would demonstrate the same strident style as men, the *Emporia Daily Republican* rhetorically inquired: "Do the men of Kansas want to rob their mothers, wives and sisters of all the genuine attributes of femininity and the homes of the glad sunlight of their lives?"<sup>32</sup>

An *Emporia Daily Republican* editorial transposed the usual premise when it stated that the anti-suffragists wanted to protect women while the "suffragists . . . are proposing to oppress the women. They are proposing to confer upon them . . . a great and burdensome duty which . . . they should not be called upon to bear. Their duties are already as great or greater than the men and it is the business of the anti-suffragists to save them from the weaklings among the men who are self-confessed failures . . . and who want to divide the responsibility with them."<sup>33</sup> Impressed with its cogency and version of truth, the newspaper predicted that the amendment "will be buried so deep there will be no resurrection for it and Kansas will no longer be regarded as an experimental state for every fad that may have a few new followers."<sup>34</sup>

The *Emporia Daily Republican* prediction that the amendment would be "buried" was confirmed when it received approval from only two-fifths of the Kansas electorate. Yet the 1894 defeat cannot be interpreted as the definitive expression of the electors toward woman suffrage. The political clash between the Republicans and Populists prevented an uncomplicated mandate on the equal suffrage amendment, and the women themselves contributed to its defeat when they neglected woman suffrage to concentrate upon partisan objectives. Although the prediction that the equal suffrage amendment would not be "resurrected" proved incorrect, the cataclysmic rebuff crushed the suffragists until the twentieth century.

Forces with divergent origins often unite in history to fulfill complementary ends. The suffrage cause meshed with progressivism, the reform impulse which enveloped society in the early twentieth century. Political practitioners of progressivism included Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Progressives were committed to increased public participation in the political system, regulation of concentrated economic power, and expanded government assistance and protection of citizens. Woman suffrage was consistent with the progressive belief in an expanded political base and broad citizen participation in politics, and the progressives also accepted the suffragist premise that women possessed an expansive social conscience consistent with the progressive vision to reform society. Whereas

women had made the home moral enclaves, the progressives professed that woman suffrage would enable them to make society moral. Progressivism was a powerful force in Kansas, and it contributed to the suffrage crusade.<sup>35</sup>

The State Equal Suffrage Association patiently eschewed another public referendum until success was virtually certain. An equal suffrage amendment received massive majorities in both houses of the state legislature and it was included on the ballot in the 1912 election. Mrs. William A. Johnston, president of the State Equal Suffrage Association, organized the machinery and defined the suffrage policy to be used in the referendum.<sup>36</sup> State Equal Suffrage Association committees and departments were delegated explicit campaign responsibilities: the press department was to inundate newspapers throughout Kansas with suffrage materials; the education department was to distribute literature, solicit amendment endorsements from educational organizations, and conduct essay contests and debates in the schools; and the membership committee was to institute an aggressive campaign to attract new members.

Kansas was to be fully organized in a vertical and cohesive suffrage structure. The State Equal Suffrage Association divided the state into districts with presidents, who were on the state board, to organize each county in their districts, and an officer in each county to unite the suffrage forces down to the precinct level. District president Matie E. Kimball, president of the Kansas Women's Press Club and wife of C. A. Kimball, editor of the *Manhattan Mercury*, organized the first county (Riley) in the campaign and subsequently all ten counties in the 5th District.<sup>37</sup> One-third of the state was organized when the suffragists began to campaign actively in January 1912.

Insufficient budget had impaired the previous suffrage campaigns, and suffragists gave appreciable attention to the practical activity of fund raising in 1912.<sup>38</sup> The State Equal Suffrage Association received substantial financial assistance from its own officers and from the contributions of both individual suffragists and organizations from other states. Local Kansas suffrage organizations raised funds from ice cream festivals, suffrage teas, and performances of the play *How the Vote Was Won*. Upper-class women did their own house work to contribute the saved servants' wages to the cause, and less affluent women donated eggs, butter, and crab apples. Finance was a chronic campaign problem; the State Equal Suffrage Association was solvent enough to conduct an expansive campaign only because women worked without compensation and often paid their own expenses.

The State Equal Suffrage Association's objective was that "Every town and city will hear of the advantages of equal suffrage."<sup>39</sup> Increased mobility from the use of the car to campaign made it a realistic commitment and the Kansas suffragists were highly original

when they adapted the car to the referendum campaign. The state organization instructed "Workers . . . to make auto trips to every part of their county . . . to take speakers, music, literature and suffrage banners, and to speak in the open air or wherever there was an opportunity."<sup>40</sup> An unprecedented car tour with state officers and Laura Clay, the Kentucky suffragist, spoke in ten counties and 40 towns to inform 10,000 people that "Equal suffrage is democracy true to itself."<sup>41</sup>

Woman suffrage was dependent upon the conversion of Kansas males to the cause, and committed men worked more actively in 1912 than in previous referendum campaigns to influence male electors. Forceful defenders of woman suffrage included Governor William R. Stubbs, Kansas Chief Justice W. A. Johnston, Dr. Charles Sheldon, and Judge Frank Doster. Influential Kansans were organized to speak in behalf of the equal suffrage amendment under the aegis of the Kansas Men's Equal Suffrage Association League, which reported that "responses from the appeal for funds . . . have been generous, and the league has enough money . . . to send out a large number of speakers."<sup>42</sup>

Prominent Kansans defended woman suffrage during a Topeka suffrage forum. "It was the restriction of the rights and privileges to men which inspired the Boston Tea Party," John MacDonald professed and that "The suffrage movement on foot today is only another such tea party, expressed in a different way." Judge Frank Doster, a perennial and voluble defender of woman suffrage, stated that adoption of the equal suffrage amendment "means nothing more than an addition to the sum of liberties to the race. The history of the world shows that every enlargement of the sphere of human liberty is an addition to the sum of human rights and adds to the betterment of the human race." And George Hughes protested that "only half of the people in our country are yet allowed to come directly in touch with the social business of that country. There is a wall which divides the people and cuts off half of them from serving to bring about a betterment of the social chaos in which we live. This is the wall we seek to destroy."<sup>43</sup> Kansas men increasingly adopted and expounded the political and social precepts used by early feminists in their futile struggles to be enfranchised.

The state suffragists, as in past referendum struggles, relied upon women of national and international repute to assist in the 1912 campaign. Jane Addams, an articulate reformer and originator of Hull House, impressed Kansans on her state visit. She attracted massive and responsive crowds where she spoke on the equal suffrage amendment. The repetitive theme of her speeches was that "Women need the ballot to fight political graft in its encroachment on humanitarian work."<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, proselytized throughout Kansas for woman suffrage, and received an effusive reception in Emporia. Grady's Women's Band attracted the public to the intersection of 5th and Commercial Streets, where Shaw spoke from an open car. The crowd followed her to Whitley Opera House where "every seat in the parquet, the boxes and the balcony and every bit of standing room . . . was filled to hear . . . Shaw's talk." In "A Great Suffrage Talk," pronounced to be the "best address given on any subject in Emporia this year," Shaw spoke for two hours, "setting forth an array of fact and argument . . . The address . . . scintillated with rare wit and telling good natured sarcasm." The Whitley Opera House crowd roared its approval when Shaw concluded that "We never have been a republic, we are not now a republic, and we will never be until women are given equal rights with men."<sup>44</sup>

The daughter of the anti-slavery leaders Cassius Clay and the president of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, Laura Clay, worked six weeks in the Kansas campaign. She made a suffrage address in Emporia to a filled public hall. After Mrs. Charles Harris sang the suffrage songs *Kansas Must Not Fail* and *Just As Well As He* to introduce the program, Clay "gave many reasons why women should have the ballot," and "not one could be objected to by any reasonable person. She didn't rant and scold, and she wasn't hysterical. She presented her arguments, and marshalled her facts, interspersing them with telling hits that brought frequent applause" from an "appreciative" crowd.<sup>46</sup>

Addams, Shaw, and Clay made valuable contributions in the 1912 referendum, but the bulk of work and responsibility was borne by the Kansas women and their male assistants. Success was dependent upon the ability and zeal of suffragists in the community, precincts, and county to apply the policy defined in the high suffrage circles. The woman suffrage cause would have been futile without the commitment and resourcefulness of the largely obscure women at the core of the movement.

Lyon County was identified as a thoroughly organized and strong suffrage enclave which was expected to generate a decisive majority for the equal suffrage amendment.<sup>47</sup> An examination of Lyon County provides a guide to the nature of suffrage activities and bases of support throughout Kansas. Suffrage forces received assistance from the *Emporia Gazette*, which gave its full encouragement to the equal suffrage amendment with editorials in defense of woman suffrage, publicity on suffrage activities, and information on the status of women and their contributions to the society. The *Emporia Gazette* concentrated its defense of woman suffrage upon women's ability and the obligation to end sexual inequality which crushed women and debilitated the social system.

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The daughter of the anti-slavery leaders Cassius Clay and the president of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, Laura Clay, worked six weeks in the Kansas campaign. She made a suffrage address in Emporia to a filled public hall. After Mrs. Charles Harris sang the suffrage songs *Kansas Must Not Fail* and *Just As Well As He* to introduce the program, Clay "gave many reasons why women should have the ballot," and "not one could be objected to by any reasonable person. She didn't rant and scold, and she wasn't hysterical. She presented her arguments, and marshalled her facts, interspersing them with telling hits that brought frequent applause" from an "appreciative" crowd.<sup>47</sup>

Addams, Shaw, and Clay made valuable contributions in the 1912 referendum, but the bulk of work and responsibility was borne by the Kansas women and their male assistants. Success was dependent upon the ability and zeal of suffragists in the community, precincts, and county to apply the policy defined in the high suffrage circles. The woman suffrage cause would have been futile without the commitment and resourcefulness of the largely obscure women at the core of the movement.

Lyon County was identified as a thoroughly organized and strong suffrage enclave which was expected to generate a decisive majority for the equal suffrage amendment.<sup>48</sup> An examination of Lyon County provides a guide to the nature of suffrage activities and bases of support throughout Kansas. Suffrage forces received assistance from the *Emporia Gazette*, which gave its full encouragement to the equal suffrage amendment with editorials in defense of woman suffrage, publicity on suffrage activities, and information on the status of women and their contributions to the society. The *Emporia Gazette* concentrated its defense of woman suffrage upon women's ability and the obligation to end sexual inequality which crushed women and debilitated the social system.

An *Emporia Gazette* editorial stated that suffrage would make women "a part of the world movement for human betterment. They will see that it is . . . justice that the world needs, and that the . . . eternal pasting up of the torn fabric of society with makeshifts will not do. We must make it strong and whole and of a new pattern. So, in our progress we need the intuitions of women, the hearts of women, love of women . . . gentility of women. All these we need and need sadly in our progress. But more . . . we men need . . . the partnership and association of women who feel these big world movements. We need partners and friends . . . and not just housekeepers or mistresses or wranglers. And so long as the world is moving and we men are in it, we must take our women with us or the race will suffer . . . We need votes for women more for what the votes will do for the women than for what women will do with the votes."<sup>48</sup>

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was a consistent proponent of woman suffrage and it united with the Equal Suffrage Association in 1912 at every organizational level in the state. The Emporia Chapter of the W.C.T.U. worked diligently for the equal suffrage amendment with Mrs. Persis Felter as president and Mrs. Marianna Hill the franchise department superintendent. Suffrage papers, Bible readings, and songs were standard activities at W.C.T.U. meetings, and the 4th Congressional District W.C.T.U. Conference at Emporia resolved that "the W.C.T.U. should do all in its power to win Kansas for woman suffrage."<sup>49</sup>

Suffragism was especially pronounced within Kansas education with college and university faculty members and administrators in the core of the suffrage movement. Large suffrage associations existed at the College of Emporia, a private Presbyterian affiliated institution, and the Kansas State Normal School. With two-thirds of its students women and a substantial number of female instructors, the Normal was close to unanimity on the merit of the equal suffrage amendment.<sup>50</sup> The Normal staff and their spouses often joined and worked with community suffrage forces. The Lyon County colleges had suffrage programs and provided forums to suffrage speakers, and the "big body of students was enthusiastic" at the State Normal chapel hour when W. Y. Morgan announced that "it is up to the voters to put Kansas in the lead of the procession of suffrage states."<sup>51</sup>

The *Emporia Gazette* published the opinions of community ministers, business and professional men, and Normal School faculty during the week prior to the election. The men interviewed were nearly all for the equal suffrage amendment. A representative opinion of the Emporia ministers was expressed by Dr. W. C. Templeton, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who stated, "I believe in it, will vote for it, and will preach for it." Almost all the business and professional men agreed with the judgment of Ralph Bailey that "I think they ought

to vote. Sure. The average woman in Emporia is as intelligent as the man. I'll tell you that." The *Emporia Gazette* survey demonstrated that attitude toward the equal suffrage amendment was often not based on sex when J. R. Patterson said "I'm for it, but my wife isn't."<sup>52</sup> The survey provided graphic evidence that woman suffrage was a middle-class reform in a preponderantly middle-class state.

The Lyon County Suffrage Association worked assiduously and resourcefully for the equal suffrage amendment. Although Mrs. I. E. Perley was chosen county president because of her active participation in the 1867 and 1894 referendum contests, the primary responsibility to organize the county fell to Mrs. John H. Wiggam. She arranged dozens of suffrage programs at homes, churches, schools, reunions, and fairs in Lyon County. From one to six members of the county association would join her on programs to sing suffrage songs, give readings, or make short talks on the virtue of woman suffrage.<sup>53</sup>

The closer the election came, the more active were the suffragists. In the week prior to the election, a huge banner with the words "Vote for the Woman Suffrage Amendment" was hung across Commercial Street in the 500 block. Window cards soliciting votes for the amendment were displayed profusely in business establishments in the community. Cards with the same message were posted at every crossroad in Lyon County and distributed to all the towns near Emporia.<sup>54</sup> The campaign continued through election day when suffragists surrounded the polls to make their final appeal to male voters for the amendment.<sup>55</sup> "There have been suffrage campaigns in Kansas before," the *Emporia Gazette* concluded, "but the one that will close this week has eclipsed them all."<sup>56</sup>

The diligence, faith, patience, and work of the suffragists was finally compensated when Lyon County and Kansas approved the equal suffrage amendment in the 1912 referendum and women became equal political citizens in the state. An ideal of the American Revolution had come to fruition in Kansas. Woman suffrage had come gradually against tenacious opposition, but its acceptance was a demonstration of the power of the political ideals transmitted from the Declaration of Independence which have governed the American society to the Bicentennial.

#### NOTES

1. Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776. L. H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, and Mary-Jo Kline (eds.), *The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 121.

2. Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 156.

3. Alan P. Grimes, *The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3-26, states that "frontier equititarianism as an explanation for the coming of woman suffrage in the West is inadequate."



4. Clarina F. H. Nichols to *Woman's Journal*, July 27, 1879. Joseph G. Gambone (ed.), "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina F. H. Nichols, 1854-1885," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* XI (Autumn, 1974), 438. The feminist's edited papers are presented in eight parts in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* during 1973-1974. A summary of Nichols' activities at the Wendellite convention, and its deliberations on woman's rights is in *Ibid.*, XXXIX (Spring, 1973), 22-25.

5. Sister Jeanne McKenna, "With the Help of God and Lucy Stone," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (Spring, 1970), 17-26, is a valuable study of the Kansas referendum.

6. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage (eds.), *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. II, 1861-1878 (Kohler, Charles Mann, 1887), 229-269, is a useful reference on the national suffragists' activities and impressions of the referendum. Whereas standard suffrage histories summarize the Kansas referendum in the national suffrage context, the Kansas perspective is pronounced in Wilda Maxine Smith, "The Struggle for Woman Suffrage in Kansas," unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1957; Sandra A. Madson, *The 1867 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Kansas: A Study in Rhetorical Situation* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1977) analyzes referendum rhetoric in a historical context. The defeat of the amendment is imputed to Republican indifference and hostility and the proponents' inept rhetoric.

7. Laura M. French, *History of Emporia and Lyon County* (Emporia: Emporia Gazette Print, 1929), 38-39. Participation of the generation's most influential feminists in the Kansas struggle is briefly described in Alma Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony: Rebel Crusader Humanitarian* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 127-137, and *Created Equal: A Biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1815-1902* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974), 145-154.

8. Flexner, p. 147.

9. A brief history of Kansas municipal suffrage is in Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper (eds.), *The History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. IV, 1881-1900 (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), 638-640, 649-651. The Kansas chapter in the volume was contributed by three presidents of the Equal Suffrage Association, Laura M. Johns, Anna C. Watts, and Annie L. Diggs, who was also the Kansas State Librarian.

10. Susanna Madora Salter was elected the first woman mayor in America as the consequence of municipal suffrage. Although feminists interpret Salter's election as a sign of the ineluctable advance toward political equality, she was actually elected to punish some local political "franksters." She presided over the town council for one year and withdrew from politics. An attractive college educated woman, Salter was interested in politics and active in the church throughout her life, but she eschewed the feminist movement to whom she was a heroine and symbol of women's political future. Monroe Billington, "Susanna Madora Salter: First Woman Mayor," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXI (Autumn, 1954), 173-183.

11. The political dimension of the 1894 referendum is summarized in Flexner, p. 223, Anthony and Harper, pp. 643-647; and Smith, pp. 85-114.

12. Flexner, p. 223.

13. *Emporia Daily Gazette*, November 5, 1894.

14. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1894, and October 10, 1894.

15. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1894.

16. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1894.

17. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1894.

18. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1894.

19. The suffragists themselves often indicated that the above alignments existed on woman suffrage and their impressions are confirmed in Smith, pp. 19-25, 72-100.

20. *Ibid.*, September 20, 1894.

21. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1894.

22. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1894.

23. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1894.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Crimes, p. 120.

26. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1894.

27. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1894.

28. *Emporia Daily Republican*, September 24, 1894.

29. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1894.

30. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1894.

31. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1894.

32. *Ibid.*, September 10, 1894.

33. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1894.

34. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1894.

35. The affinity between woman suffrage and progressive reform is examined in Andrew Sinclair, *The Better Half: The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 316-329.

36. Martha B. Caldwell, "The Woman Suffrage Campaign of 1912," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* XII (August, 1943), 300-318. Is a valuable description of the referendum. A brief and less useful summary is in Ida Husted Harper (ed.), *The History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. VI, 1900-1920 (New York: T. J. Little and Ives Company, 1922), 193-206.

37. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 1, 1912.

38. Caldwell, pp. 302-303.

39. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1912.

40. Caldwell, p. 317.

41. *Emporia Gazette*, September 21, 1912.

- 42 *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 7, 1912
- 43 *Ibid.*, September 25, 1912
- 44 *Emporia Gazette*, October 23, 1912
- 45 *Ibid.*, October 26, 1912
- 46 *Ibid.*, October 7, 1912
- 47 *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 27, 1912
- 48 *Emporia Gazette*, November 2, 1912
- 49 *Ibid.*, September 19, 1912
- 50 This conclusion is based upon a survey of Normal student and faculty opinion published in the *State Normal Bulletin* XII (No. 8), October 29, 1912
- 51 *Emporia Gazette*, October 17, 1912
- 52 *Emporia Gazette*, October 28, 1912
- 53 *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 27, 1912
- 54 *Emporia Gazette*, October 26, 1912
- 55 *Ibid.*, November 5, 1912
- 56 *Ibid.*, October 28, 1912