

This Day in History... February 15, 1820

Birth of Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, in Adams, Massachusetts. Born into a Quaker family that believed deeply in equality and moral responsibility, she would grow into one of the most persistent and recognizable leaders of the fight for women's voting rights in the United States.

Anthony grew up in a household shaped by Quaker values such as simplicity, education, and social justice. Her father, Daniel Anthony, encouraged his children to be disciplined, independent, and well educated. Anthony learned to read and write at a very young age and later attended a series of schools, including a boarding school near Philadelphia. She began teaching as a young adult and worked at a female academy in New York during the 1840s. While teaching, she noticed that women were paid far less than men doing similar work. This inequality helped shape her lifelong commitment to reform movements.



Commemorating 100 years of women's progress, this stamp pictures Elizabeth Stanton, Carrie C. Catt, and Lucretia Mott.

By the mid-1800s, Anthony's family had settled near Rochester, New York. Their home became a meeting place for reformers and abolitionists. During this time, Anthony met Frederick Douglass and other leading anti-slavery activists. She soon became involved in the abolitionist movement and later worked as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. She also became active in the temperance movement, which aimed to reduce or eliminate alcohol use. However, after she was denied the right to speak at a temperance meeting in 1852, she became more focused on women's rights, realizing that women needed political power to be treated equally.

A turning point in Anthony's life came when she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The two formed one of the most important partnerships in American reform history. Stanton often focused on writing and developing ideas, while Anthony traveled widely to give speeches and organize supporters. Together they pushed for equal rights for women in education, employment, property ownership, and especially voting.

After the Civil War, Anthony helped found the American Equal Rights Association in 1866. The group worked to secure equal rights, especially voting rights, regardless of race or sex. When disagreements divided reformers over how to expand voting rights after the war, Anthony and Stanton helped create the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. This organization focused mainly on winning a constitutional amendment that would give women the right to vote nationwide.

Anthony became famous nationwide after she voted in the 1872 presidential election in Rochester, New York, even though women were not legally allowed to vote. She argued that the Constitution already gave her that right as a citizen. She was arrested, tried, and fined \$100. She refused to pay the fine, and the government never forced payment. The event brought national attention to the women's suffrage movement and made Anthony one of its most recognized leaders.



Issued for the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

Anthony spent decades traveling across the country giving speeches, organizing meetings, and lobbying lawmakers. She sometimes delivered up to 100 speeches per year. She also helped found the International Council of Women and worked with reformers around the world. In 1892, she became president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, one of the largest suffrage organizations in the United States.

In 1878, Anthony and Stanton supported a proposed constitutional amendment that would guarantee women the right to vote. Although it failed at the time, the idea remained central to the movement for decades. Anthony continued her work well into old age, even meeting with political leaders, including President Theodore Roosevelt, to advocate for women's suffrage.

Susan B. Anthony died on March 13, 1906, in Rochester, New York. She did not live to see the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote nationwide. However, her decades of organizing, speaking, and political pressure helped lay the foundation for that achievement. In 1979, she became the first woman honored on a circulating United States coin, reflecting her lasting place in American history.



Stamp issued to honor the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.



This Anthony stamp was issued as part of the Liberty Series.

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