



A tablet located at the State Capitol honoring 31 Connecticut women pioneers in the struggle for women's suffrage.

*Read more about the Connecticut Suffrage Centennial at [votesforwomenct.com](http://votesforwomenct.com)*

## **Celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of the 19th Amendment**

This year marks the centennial celebration of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving millions of women the right to vote, the greatest expansion of democracy in American history. This year we recognize the decades of courage, persistence and dedication that was required from thousands of women—and men—over more than seven decades of activism both here in Connecticut and throughout the country, that allowed for the Nineteenth Amendment's final passage in 1920.

Following the groundbreaking Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, women were mobilized to fight for equality for women, and particularly for women's suffrage. The Convention was organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who authored the Declaration of Sentiments, where she asserted equality between men and women. This was a revolutionary notion at the time.

Many chapters ensued in the fight for equality over the next 75 years. In Connecticut, Frances Ellen Burr and Isabella Beecher Hooker founded the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association in the fall of 1869. This group became a local platform for women to stage demonstrations, advocate for the movement, and to persuade the Connecticut General Assembly to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, which finally won passage in the U.S. Congress on June 4, 1919 and was ratified on August 18, 1920. This is but one example of the actions taken by women in Connecticut, several of whom became national leaders in the movement for women's suffrage.

Thirty-six states were required to ratify the amendment for it to become an official amendment to the Constitution. By early 1920, the fate of the amendment hung in the balance, needing a 36th state to ratify. Connecticut had still not acted, and the Connecticut General Assembly was not in session at the time. Connecticut suffragists called on Connecticut Governor Marcus Holcomb to call the legislature into special emergency session, but he did not believe that the ratification warranted such action. Although Connecticut did ratify the amendment later that year, on September 14th, 1920, the delay meant that our state was not the deciding vote for ratification—that distinction went to the State of Tennessee.

Since that time, women have played an increasingly important role in the public and political life of the state. Ella Grasso, former Governor of Connecticut from 1975 until 1980, was the first female governor in the

United States elected in her own right. She has served as an inspiration to women and girls in Connecticut and around the country, symbolic of the potential for women to achieve great things that once seemed unattainable.

For women of color, voting became a critical part of exercising their voices in politics but continues to be an ongoing battle. In fact, women and men of color did not fully realize their right to vote until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which made real the promise of the 15th amendment guaranteeing the right to vote regardless of race. Women of color were very actively involved in winning the 19th amendment throughout the country. Here in Connecticut, a suffrage activist named Mary Townsend Seymour of Hartford ran for the Connecticut General Assembly in 1920, the first election in which women had the right to vote. While she did not win the seat, her candidacy was emblematic of progress and the idea that minorities could now take part in the political process.

Now we are left with the task of continuing to fight for progress and ensuring equal opportunity for future generations of women. It is my great pleasure to dedicate the 2020 State Register and Manual to the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. We honor both the women who fought for passage of the 19th Amendment, and the women who continue to fight for equality for all people.



Denise W. Merrill  
Secretary of the State

Josephine Bennett and daughters Frances and Katherine. Hartford, ca. 1916  
*Connecticut Woman's Suffrage Association, State Archives, Connecticut State Library*