

## Lesson #5

Commemorating the Centennial  
Of the 19th Amendment



**Designed for Grades 9-12**

**6 Lesson Unit/Each Lesson 2 Days**

**Based on Iowa Social Studies Standards**

# Iowa's Role in the Suffrage Movement

*Unit Question: What is the 19th Amendment, and how has it influenced the United States?*

*Supporting Question: How was Iowa involved in the promotion of and passage of the 19th Amendment?*

**Lesson Overview** The lesson will highlight suffrage leaders with Iowa ties and events in the state leading up to the passage of the 19th Amendment.

## Lesson Objectives and Targets

Students will...

1. take note of key events in Iowa's path to achieve women's enfranchisement.
2. read provided biographical entries on selected Iowa suffrage leaders.
3. read and review the University of Iowa Library Archives selections on suffrage, selections from the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics website, and the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame coverage about Iowa suffragists and contemporary Iowa women leaders..

## Useful Terms and Background

- Iowa Organizations - Iowa Woman Suffrage Association (IWSA), Iowa Equal Suffrage Association (IESA) along with several local and state clubs of support
- National suffrage leaders with Iowa roots - Amelia Jenks Bloomer & Carrie Chapman Catt
- Noted Iowa suffragists included in the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame
- Suffrage activities throughout the state
- Early state attempts for amendments along with Iowa ratification of the 19th Amendment

## Lesson Procedure

### Day 1

#### Teacher Notes for Day 1

1. Point out that lesson materials have been selected from three unique Iowa sources: the University of Iowa Library Archives and the websites for Iowa State University's Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics and the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.
2. Select reading material for students to fit class needs, from the provided brief summaries and sites.

#### Student Activities - Day 1

1. Read selected material on Iowa suffrage leaders and organizations.
2. Extend study of Carrie Chapman Catt and the establishment of the Catt Center at Iowa State University.
3. Follow early attempts to pass enfranchisement amendments at the state level and then the eventual state ratification of the 19th amendment.

## TWO NATIONAL SUFFRAGE LEADERS WITH IOWA TIES

**Amelia Jenks Bloomer** (1818-1894) ended up living in Council Bluffs and is buried there. A Council Bluffs elementary school is named after her. She was one of the earliest speakers promoting women's suffrage, traveling around Iowa and the country, starting even before the Civil War. Bloomer also published a newspaper for women suffragists, *The Lily*. Probably the first thing most people associate with Bloomer is her promotion of comfortable pantaloons-like trousers worn under a tunic-style dress which were considered practical in travel and less restrictive than typical long dresses of the era. Even though she didn't design them, these trousers eventually were nicknamed bloomers after her. She was a serious promoter of women's rights and the suffrage cause, and she eventually discontinued wearing the comfortable and practical clothing style because they attracted too much negative attention. Bloomer participated in rallies, conventions, and marches like many present-day socially conscious activists. (Dodson, A. P. (2019). *Remember the ladies: Celebrating those who fought for freedom at the ballot box*. New York: Center Street.)

Read more about Bloomer In:

"Amelia Bloomer Didn't Mean to Start a Fashion Revolution, But Her Name Became Synonymous with Trousers"

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/amelia-bloomer-didn't-mean-start-fashion-revolution-her-name-became-synonymous-trousers>

**Carrie Chapman Catt** (1859-1947) is probably the best known Iowa suffragist along with one of the best known national leaders. Her Iowa roots started in Charles City. Carrie Lane (her maiden name) attended Iowa Agricultural College, now Iowa State University. She was the only woman in her graduating class of 1880. She was a law clerk, teacher, principal, school superintendent, freelance writer, and professional lecturer before becoming involved in the women's suffrage movement. Her first husband, Leo Chapman, died in 1886 in San Francisco, shortly before Catt arrived to join him. Catt returned to Charles City in 1887. She later married George Catt, also an Iowa State alumnus, in 1890, and they eventually settled in New York. While in Iowa, she was part of Iowa suffrage groups and eventually became a national leader in the National American Woman Suffrage Association, serving two terms (1900-04 and 1915-20) as president. She was famous for her speaking and organizational skills, and her eventual "Winning Plan," which divided up states into categories needing different strategies to promote voting for enfranchisement with an overall focus on a federal constitutional suffrage amendment. She was influential in gaining eventual support from President Woodrow Wilson and was president of NAWSA when the 19th Amendment passed in both houses of Congress in 1919 and ratified by the states in 1920. Catt proposed the formation of the League of Women Voters to carry on the work begun by NAWSA. In her ongoing activism, Catt supported the proposed establishment of a League of Nations after WWI and the formation of the United Nations after WWII. For a full biography of Catt, go to the website <https://cattcenter.iastate.edu>.

To honor Catt and her legacy, Iowa State University established the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics in 1992. The Center's primary mission is to educate voters and involve citizens - particularly women - in the political process. The Catt Center's website <https://cattcenter.iastate.edu> includes an extensive biographical article and timeline about Catt as well as the Center's mission statement, civic engagement programs, research on Iowa women in politics, and an Archives of Women's Political Communication, including speeches and other publications by Catt.

## IOWA SUFFRAGE LEADERS

In 1975 the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women established an Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. Iowa women from all walks of life have been inducted into this honorary group, including contemporary leaders in business, education, science, the arts, civil rights, and volunteerism, along with early leaders in the Suffrage Movement.

Some of the recent inductees include:

- Governor Kim Reynolds
- U.S. Senator Joni Ernst

- Astronaut Peggy Whitson
- Former Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack
- Des Moines City Councilwoman Christine Hensley
- Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, gynecological oncologist

Iowa Suffrage Leaders who are named in the Hall of Fame include:

- Mary Jane Coggeshall - nicknamed “The Mother of Woman’s Suffrage in Iowa” by Carrie Chapman Catt, editor of the journal, *The Woman’s Standard*, and president of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association
- Anna B. Lawther - an advocate for voting rights and women’s education
- Mary Newbury Adams - founder of the Northern Iowa Suffrage Association and Iowa Federation of Women’s Clubs
- Arabella Mansfield - first female lawyer in the United States and active suffragist
- Amelia Jenks Bloomer and Carrie Chapman Catt are also honored in the Iowa Women’s Hall of Fame

A full list of honorees can be found at the Iowa Department of Human Rights website <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/iowa-womens-hall-fame-inductees-year>

In 2013 a pedestrian bridge in Des Moines was designated the “Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge.” This structure links the east side and west side of Des Moines as part of the Principal Riverwalk. At this time, seven names of honored women appear on the bridge, including pioneer women of achievement, civil rights proponents, and current leaders in the state.

Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge.

- Carrie Chapman Catt
- Louise Noun
- Sister Bernadine Pieper
- Gertrude Durden Rush
- Theresa “Billie” Davis
- Willie Stevenson Glanton
- Ola Babcock Miller

Many local memorials can be found throughout the state, displayed to honor outstanding Iowa women.

## LOCAL AND STATE SUFFRAGE ORGANIZATIONS IN IOWA

The University of Iowa Library Archives states that Iowa citizens became active in many organizations in the 1800s, including those promoting women’s enfranchisement.

“Progressive social movements including child welfare, abolition, black suffrage, and temperance were sweeping the nation in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and Iowa women were becoming actively involved.” Many local organizations called themselves “Political Equality Clubs;” they could be found all across the state.

Some of Iowa’s key suffrage organizations included:

- Iowa Woman Suffrage Association / name later changed to Iowa Equal Suffrage Association
- The Iowa Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, the Des Moines Suffrage Club, and the Mary Church Terrell Club.
- Des Moines’ Men’s League for Woman Suffrage.

## EARLY ATTEMPTS TO PASS STATE SUFFRAGE AMENDMENTS

Iowa attempted to pass its own state-wide legislation to allow for women’s enfranchisement even before the 19th Amendment was approved by both houses of the U.S. Congress in 1919. In the late 1870s, Iowa suffrage groups began sending petitions to the Iowa General Assembly promoting an enfranchisement amendment. Iowa required the approval of two assemblies in a row to carry this out; an early vote in 1898 was defeated. In both 1913 and again in 1915 the Iowa legislature passed a measure calling to strike the word “male” from Article II, Section 1 of Iowa’s constitution. A special election bill was held on June 5, 1916. Suffrage groups covered the state giving lectures, holding rallies, and handing out brochures. Unfortunately, the election did not pass even with the backing of Carrie Chapman Catt and leaders she sent into the state. (A picture of a billboard promoting this 1916 vote appears at the end of this lesson.)

Iowa eventually voted to ratify the national 19th Amendment on July 2, 1919. Iowa was the 10th state to do so.

### Exit Ticket Day 1

On a note card, write down one event done specifically by Iowans to promote the Suffrage cause.

### Day 2

#### Examination of two University of Iowa Library Archives sites

1. With a partner read through “Women’s Suffrage in Iowa” (the more recent Suffrage site in the archives.) OR This could be projected for the entire class to view together.

<http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/suffrage/IAWomenSuffrage.pdf>

A. Note details recognized from the readings on Day 1.

B. Find related sections to answer the following questions:

- What was Mary Jane Whiteley Coggleshall's nickname?
- What is "modern" about the flyer titled "On the Road"?
- Who was Dorothy Mills and how did she take part in the Suffrage Movement?
- What were some of the possible reasons given for the failure to pass the state referendum vote on June 5, 1916?

2. Individually or with a partner look at the second University of Iowa Library Archives site, "Women's Suffrage in Iowa, an online exhibit." This is designed as a scrapbook.

<http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/suffrage/>

A. Explore several tabs looking for unique activities or items, especially:

- Home tab "Why Women Should Vote" flyer & suffrage pin
- .1854-1869 tab Timeline for Amelia Jenks Bloomer
- 1870-1890 tab Scandal about Victoria Woodhull
- 1890-1915 tab Automobile Tours & Boone Suffrage Parade
- 1916-1919 tab Suffrage Songbook & Supporters during WWI

B. With your partner or in class, discuss how some of these activities would have been persuasive in promoting suffrage issues.

## Exit Ticket - Day 2

On a note card, describe another unique activity or item which caught your eye as you looked through the "scrapbook".

## Resources Needed

### Selected Readings

Two University of Iowa Library Archives Sites

- "Women's Suffrage in Iowa"  
<http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/suffrage/IAwomenSuffrage.pdf>
- "Women's Suffrage in Iowa - An Online Exhibit" (Earlier site - Scrapbook format)  
<http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/suffrage/>
- Article on Iowan Amelia Jenks Bloomer and the Bloomer Fashion Trend  
"Amelia Bloomer Didn't Mean to Start a Fashion Revolution ..."

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/amelia-bloomer-didnt-mean-start-fashion-revolution-her-name-became-synonymous-trousers>

- Biography and Related Material in the Carrie Chapman Catt Center Website  
<https://cattcenter.iastate.edu>
- Resources on Iowa Women's Hall of Fame  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw/events-recognition/iowa-womens-hall-fame>

## Iowa Core in Social Studies Standards

**SS.9-12.7** Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

**SS-Gov.9-12.19** Evaluate the effectiveness of political action in changing government and policy, such as voting, debate, contacting officials, campaign contributions, protest, civil disobedience, and any alternative methods to participation.

**SS-Gov.9-12.22** Identify and evaluate the contributions of Iowans who have played a role in promoting civic and democratic principles.

**SS-US.9-12.27** Evaluate Iowans or groups of Iowans who have influenced U.S. History.

**SS-Gov.9-12.28** Identify local and state issues in Iowa and evaluate formal or informal courses of action used to affect policy.

## Assessments

### Formative

Read the mission statement and timeline in the Carrie Chapman Catt Center's website <https://cattcenter.iastate.edu>. Write your observations on how Iowa benefitted from Catt's activism in her era and continues to do so today.

### Summative

Compare the style and activism of the suffragists with the political activism found in Iowa leading up to the recent presidential caucuses held every four years. What methods are still being used and what have been discarded for being out of date? What gimmicks or strategies, old and new, tend to work to gain attention and encourage ongoing support? Think about the use of buttons, bumper stickers, photo opportunities at state fairs, and many more innovations.

### Extension Option

Stage a discussion held between Amelia Jenks Bloomer and Carrie Chapman Catt about their involvement in the Suffrage Movement. Choose a time that they both would have been active in the movement, maybe in the late 1880s. Have both women comment on their shared Iowa backgrounds. Include cultural references along with social topics. Do you think they would be wearing bloomers?

### Extension Option

Make a list of contemporary women leaders from the state of Iowa, both in government and other walks of life. Comment on how these women are continuing in their leadership roles similar to those studied in this lesson. See how many women you can come up with on your own, then maybe compare names with those in the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame or on the Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge mentioned earlier in the lesson.

### Visual

#### **Billboard Urging Iowans to Vote "Yes" for Women's Suffrage, 1916**



State Historical Society of Iowa. (n.d.). Billboard Urging Women to Vote "Yes" for Women's Suffrage, 1916 [Digital image]. Retrieved from

<https://iowaculture.gov/sites/default/files/primary-sources/images/history-education-pss-vote-billboard-source.jpg>