

RECOGNIZING  
WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE  
IN NEW YORK STATE

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“Tell Every Man You Know You Want to Vote”

SUFFRAGE LEADERS ENCOURAGED THEIR COHORTS TO FIND EVERY WAY POSSIBLE TO DISSEMINATE THE SUFFRAGE MESSAGE AS BROADLY AS POSSIBLE. They made stationery and envelopes, often in the favored yellow of the suffrage movement, available to members so that every letter they wrote and every bill they paid had the potential of swaying a male voter. Members told as many men as they could that they wanted the right to vote, because, of course, only men could cast

ballots. They had to tell their automobile driver, their butcher, their grocer, their repairman, and any man they did business with to support woman suffrage. They mailed suffrage-themed postcards to their friends and acquaintances. Every holiday and special occasion warranted a plug for suffrage. Valentine's Day was one of the most common holidays for greeting card messages. Anti-suffragists, who often appropriated suffrage ideas for their own campaign, eventually caught on to the power of the U.S. postal service to

distribute their “no votes for women” message, commissioning their own anti-suffrage greeting cards and postcards, and distributing pink stationery and envelopes to their members for their use.



Pop Culture Suffrage

SUFFRAGISTS DISPLAYED BRILLIANCE WHEN IT CAME TO PROMOTING THEIR CAUSE—they used traditional ways of promoting events related to their cause (such as distributing broadsides) and more unique methods, as well. The idea of packaging their suffrage message in consumer goods gained far greater acceptance after 1900. Enterprising suffragists exploited new ways of getting their message out: to women who would then influence men who would support women's enfranchisement at the upcoming referendum. Suffragists knocked on the doors of their neighbors to talk about women's voting rights. Pairs of women would go into the streets to get their message out to passersby. One woman would stand on a soap box while the other would pass out woman suffrage novelties such as fans, playing cards, radiator caps, games, and other items, printed with “votes for women” or a similar slogan. Activists mailed suffrage postcards and greeting cards, participated in parades and pageants, appeared in and watched silent movies and theater performances, all to promote votes for women. They wrote songs (set to familiar music), plays, commissioned posters and political cartoons, and distributed convenient printing plates promoting suffrage to newspapers.

Parades

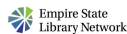
SUFFRAGISTS ORGANIZED PARADES DURING THE FINAL TWO DECADES OF THE MOVEMENT. The parades symbolized greater confidence in the righteousness of the goals of the suffrage movement, solidarity with like-minded women, and a willingness to expose oneself to public critique. Parades drew large crowds, with many men jeering at the women for their boldness in publicly displaying themselves. Beginning in 1913, women annually organized huge parades in New York State, at first in New York City along

Fifth Avenue. The idea came from Harriot Stanton Blatch, a daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who observed similar displays during her years living in England where the suffrage movement was a great deal more radical. Women coordinated their garments, hats, and sashes and marched in contingents of professions such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers, often accompanied by bands playing music. Parades became very popular, and thousands of people came to watch the women marching.



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