

March 13, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Sources:

- **Bodenhamer, David and Robert G. Barrows, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (1994)**
- **Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, editor, *Women Public Speakers in the United States, 1800-1925: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook***
- **City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women**
(https://bloomington.in.gov/documents/viewDocument.php?document_id=7134)
- **Debs, Eugene V., *Labor and Freedom: The Voice and Pen of Eugene V. Debs***
- **Harper, Ida Husted, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony, Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many from Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years* (1898)**

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

Several people worked tirelessly in Indiana during the Suffrage Movement. Indianapolis resident, May Wright Sewall, established the Indianapolis Equal Suffrage Society in 1878. In 1894, Helen Gougar attempted to vote in the November elections, subsequently arguing her case before the Indiana Supreme Court. National suffragists traveled the country, making stops in Indiana while giving speeches, circulating petitions and organizing local women's rights organizations.

Susan B. Anthony was one of those national suffragists who visited Indiana several times. Among her travels, she visited Bloomington, Indianapolis, Lafayette and Terre Haute. In 1897, she asked a joint session of the Indiana General Assembly to request a women's suffrage amendment to the United States Constitution. Indiana writer, Ida Husted Harper, who later became Anthony's biographer and documented her life in *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony, Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many from Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years* (1898), writes that there was recognition of Anthony's high purpose, intellectual ability and clear comprehension of all issues of the day, which is illustrated from an excerpt from the *Terre Haute Express* (12 February 1879):

Miss Anthony's lecture was full of fine passages and strong appeals, and replete with well-stated facts in support of her arguments. She has a wonderful command of language, and her speech at times flows with such rapidity that no reporter could do her justice or catch a tithe of the brilliance of her sayings. Moreover, there are not half of our public men who are nearly so well posted in the political affairs of our country as she, or who, knowing them, could frame them so solidly in argument. If the women of the nation were half so high-minded or even half so earnest, their title to the franchise might soon be granted.

However, Susan B. Anthony was not without her critics. American union leader, Eugene V. Debs wrote of his first meeting with Susan B. Anthony when she arrived in Terre Haute in 1880:

I can still see the aversion so unfeelingly expressed for this magnificent woman. Even my friends were disgusted with me for piloting such an "undesirable citizen" into the community. It is hard to understand, after all these years, how bitter and implacable the people were, especially the women, toward the leaders of this movement.

Susan B. Anthony died March 13, 1906. She was not able to see her life's mission completed. It would take another fourteen years before women were granted the right to vote when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. However, she is recognized for her pivotal role in the women's suffrage movement.

In November 2012, a historical marker commemorating the 125th anniversary of her speaking engagement in Bloomington was placed where the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church once stood on the east side of the Courthouse Square. The church was located where the Redmen Building currently sits; and, the plaque can be seen on the wall of the building between Athena and Williams Brothers Jewelry. In the press announcement, Regina Moore, City of Bloomington Clerk, said of the dedication:

It's exciting to know that Susan B. Anthony, an important figure in American history, was here in Bloomington. I am glad that we are able to recognize our local connection with such a pivotal chapter in our nation's civil rights history.