

Spring 2018

The Solid South: The Suffrage Campaign Revisited

Abby Lorraine Crenshaw

Western Kentucky University, abbycrenshaw@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Law and Gender Commons](#), [Legal Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Women's History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crenshaw, Abby Lorraine, "The Solid South: The Suffrage Campaign Revisited" (2018). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 2448.

<https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2448>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

THE SOLID SOUTH:
THE SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN REVISITED

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

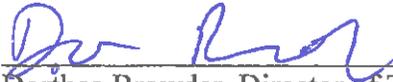
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

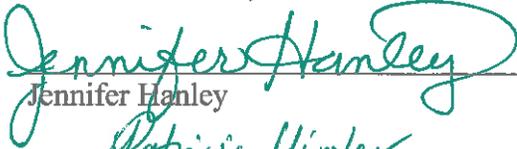
By
Abby Crenshaw

May 2018

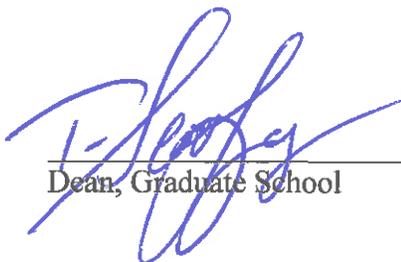
THE SOLID SOUTH:
THE SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN REVISITED

Date Recommended 4/3/18


Dorthea Browder, Director of Thesis


Jennifer Hanley


Patricia Minter


Dean, Graduate School

4/16/18
Date

To Dr. Michael Bertrand, for seeing what could be. And to my grandmother, Jo Ann
Carney, who never knew her own strength.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This body of work is due in large part to the reassurance and support from my graduate and committee advisors: Dr. Marco Dumancic and Dr. Beth Plummer; Dr. Dorteia Browder, Dr. Jennifer Hanley, and Dr. Patricia Minter. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for the patience and enthusiasm my advisors and committee has shown me throughout my journey at Western Kentucky University.

The completion of this project would not be possible without the enragement of my classmates, Lana and Wayne, as well as the wisdom and faith of my former undergraduate advisor, Dr. Michael Bertrand. Fox and Milla, my children, thank you for understanding that Mom needed to finish her homework. Thank you to my parents for recognizing all of my hard work and taking an interest in what mattered to me. And to my mother-in-law Susan, thank you for your countless hours of babysitting and understanding my constant absence from family plans.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Scott, for continuing to encourage my thirst for knowledge and women's history through this long, long journey. The road was tough and seemed never-ending, but you found a way to give me peace and quiet in order to finish every page. I am forever grateful of your support and love.

PREFACE

The suffrage movement has, and always will, remain a cornerstone of my entire college career. I examined other twentieth century American women and found their lives fascinating, but I kept asking more and more questions that brought me right back to southern suffrage movement. The more I read about white southern women and their varying degrees of activism for and against the suffrage question, the more I needed to understand what made them all so different and why.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	11
CHAPTER 2	27
CHAPTER 3	41
CHAPTER 4	53
CHAPTER 5	66
CONCLUSION.....	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	88

THE SOLID SOUTH:
THE SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN REVISITED

Abby Crenshaw

May 2018

92 Pages

Directed by: Dorothea Browder, Jennifer Hanley, and Patricia Minter

Department of History

Western Kentucky University

This examination of the southern suffrage campaign focuses the movement through the eyes of three prominent southern women within the political movement: Kate Gordon, Sue Shelton White, and Josephine Pearson. The merged National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) planned and organized a focus on the South during the second half of the suffrage campaign, which presented new challenges. The Nineteenth Amendment passed through Congress in 1918 and consequently set the stage for a raging political battle between suffragists and anti-suffragists. The suffrage campaign prompted women to question how the political platform of suffrage should be addressed. Women argued over the issue of suffrage and its application; a universal amendment, state legislation, or no suffrage rights at all. The question over appropriate political tactics often revealed the social and cultural prejudices of the campaign leaders.

The cornerstone of my research focuses on the history of the southern campaign and incorporates three southern women who shared distinct political views of woman suffrage. The bulk of my research focused on the primary documents from the Josephine Pearson Collection at the Tennessee State Library and Archives and the loaned papers of Sue Shelton White from Knoxville, Tennessee. I also used the Louisiana newspaper, the *Daily Picayune*, for information about Kate Gordon as well as her correspondence with Laura Clay.

Through this examination, a more direct focus is applied to the southern suffrage movement, which further complicates separate accounts of racial prejudice and exclusion in southern women's politics. Furthermore, my thesis will create a framework of southern culture by incorporating the national issue of suffrage from a regional perspective to expose commonalities and themes that muddles southern women's history and patriarchal loyalty in the South. Carefully analyzing the suffrage and anti-suffrage leadership in the South, particularly Tennessee, helps develop a well-defined understanding of the cultural and political factors influencing southern politics as well as assist in constructing a scholarly historiographic perspective on social and cultural influences of the southern campaign within the separate groups of suffragists and anti-suffragists.

INTRODUCTION

The clear and distinctive language of the Nineteenth Amendment written by Susan B. Anthony in 1878 was ratified in 1920 in its original language; “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”¹ The amendment’s original intent was plain: all women would be enfranchised and would face no discrimination on account of their sex or race. Yet not all white women felt the same about enfranchisement. Why was this so? By examining the southern suffrage campaign through the lives of Kate Gordon, Sue Shelton White, and Josephine Pearson, prominent southern women who stood on both sides of the issue, the following study will attempt to answer why suffrage was such a complicated issue in the South. I argue that southern white women are not easily classified as either a “suffragist” or “antisuffragist,” and simultaneously explore how white southern women were heavily influenced by prescribed gender roles, social/economic status, and traditional views of the southern womanhood in the new postwar South. The historical significance of examining three distinct white southern women and their positions adds a unique perspective on how class and generational differences shaped and influenced the entire southern suffrage movement.

This examination of the southern suffrage campaign focuses on the southern suffrage movement through case studies of three active southern women who involved themselves with suffrage issues within the political movement: Kate Gordon of New Orleans, Louisiana, Sue Shelton White of Jackson, Tennessee, and Josephine Pearson of Gallatin, Tennessee. To understand the complexity of southern suffrage debates, let us consider these white women who took different directions. All shared the position of

¹ U.S. Constitution amend. 19.

being a white woman in the post war South, but their backgrounds and experiences illustrate these discrete paths, ending in different positions.

Unfortunately, not all white southern women maintained the same progressive agenda for universal enfranchisement. Each of these women maintained dissimilar political strategies and ideologies about woman suffrage, which provokes questions into the existing academic scholarship of the comprehensive examination southern women's suffrage movement. This study challenges existing scholarship of the southern suffrage movement by examining the lives of three distinct southern women, analyzing three separate southern suffrage ideologies in detail. Only a small number of white southern suffragists were determined to keep the vote from African American women in order to restore white supremacy in the South. Louisiana's Kate Gordon, an educated elite white suffragist from old southern families, dedicated her activism to maintaining white supremacy, and ultimately fragmented southern support. As an early leader of the southern suffrage movement, Gordon represented the elite white southern class that counseled National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and other suffragists on how best to "win" the South by playing into southern attitudes of racial prejudice. She was one of the first southern suffragists to join the NAWSA and used her unique position to influence northern suffrage leaders during the early years of the southern campaign. Elite white southern women like Gordon stalled progress in the South because of their dedication to the Old South traditions, but not all white southern women followed Gordon's example. Additionally, my research considers the impact women like Josephine Pearson, an anti-suffragist, had on the movement during the final drive of the Nineteenth Amendment's campaign in Nashville, Tennessee. This perspective argues that

such women were influenced by traditional standards southern womanhood and ultimately used by white southern men in an attempt to control suffrage activity. The image of “southern womanhood,” according to Professor Anne Goodwyn Jones, was born in the “imagination of white slaveholding men” and “is designed to serve the needs of her secular lord and master.”² Tennessee’s Sue Shelton White challenged that image as a southern woman by emerging on the suffrage scene in the early twentieth century and arguing for universal woman suffrage by federal amendment. By examining three individual white southern women in this study, Kate Gordon, Josephine Pearson, and Sue Shelton White, my research illustrates the relationship of the Old South’s transition into the New South and its influence on southern women during the suffrage campaign.

My study of three white southern suffrage women, from various social and political backgrounds, incorporates the social, economic, and generational factors that are often overlooked. In addition, to firmly grasp the approaches and strategies used by white southern activists, this study begins with a comprehensive examination of white southern attitudes in the mid-1800s up through the end of the suffrage movement in 1920. Rather than dismissing behaviors of white southern activists as typical white southern conduct, the goal of this study is to demonstrate the cultural divisions of white southern women as they transitioned away from the traditional Old South towards modernized attitudes of the New South. The suffrage question prompted each of these women to act independently based on their own individual ideologies rather than a collective “southern” one that observed traditions of state sovereignty, patriarchy, and white supremacy. More specifically, this examination aims to recognize the presence of separate and distinct

² Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 6.

ideologies among white southern women rather than classifying white southern women as either a suffragist or antisuffragist during the American suffrage campaign.

My research considers the unique position of the South in the long and complicated history of suffrage movement and why further consideration of the southern campaign is needed. Suffrage presented a legal opportunity to combat inequalities faced in the workplace, public sphere, and in higher education as well as a challenge to existing sexual discrimination against them both in and out of the private sphere. Women activists organized conventions and proposed resolutions that were committed to destroying the social and political barriers that jeopardized financial independence, which restricted security by restricting a woman's ability to own, inherit, and secure real property. The majority of these committees grew out of abolitionist activism in the northern states while gradually expanding to western states and eventually, with much dismay, to the South. With the history of the women's rights movement in abolitionism, most white southerners viewed the movement as an enemy of Southern culture.³ Women's involvement in the movement also increased southern anxieties about ideas of feminism that would influence women to push away from traditional institutions of southern patriarchy. Southern democrats and advocates of the New South Creed only considered woman suffrage as a way to preserve white supremacy and racial inequality in society by further removing political rights from African Americans and keeping white men in power. Woman suffrage at its core interfered with the New South Creed's view of the celebrated "Southern Lady's indirect influence" on southern society.⁴

³ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16-17.

⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States*, 8, 11.

Opposing views and strategies further complicated the woman suffrage movement. Campaign struggles began after the Civil War and carried over on into the twentieth century. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony saw opportunities for women within the proposed verbiage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited federal and state governments to deny a citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous conditions of servitude. Stanton envisioned the amendment was a way to ultimately resolve suffrage conflicts for both African American men and all women. However, activists like Lucretia Mott and Wendell Phillips emphasized the importance of rights for African American men, as opposed to women. The conflict over gendered language within the Fifteenth Amendment was only the first of many divisions that separated activists.

Stanton and Mott eventually found middle ground and combined their campaign efforts toward the end of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, as more southern women joined the cause, the conflict of a collective agenda grew even more intense between suffragists. Overall, northern suffragists maintained stronger consistent support throughout the movement's entirety while southern women's activism wavered because of the influence of southern democrats and the slow demise of southern state sovereignty. A major shift of the southern campaign strategy was initiated during the last decade of the nineteenth century because southern suffrage leaders experienced conflict that was isolated south of the Mason-Dixon line; not surprisingly, the concerns of activists and opponents were divided between the national suffrage agenda and local issues and anxieties over racial prejudices and white supremacy that were more prevalent in the South.

The examination will begin by discussing three individual suffragists and the southern campaign. The purpose of providing an individual history for each suffragist is to cultivate an understanding of each suffragist's beginning and their introduction to the suffrage question. This study uses the framework and early beginnings of the southern campaign, established as a subset of the national suffrage movement, to argue the negative influences of northern campaign strategies implemented as a response to southern attitudes in the postwar South. As such, this study argues that women's roles in southern society made the suffrage question a very difficult and delicate political and social question to address. Additionally, this research will also contemplate social views on women's rights in a southern context by arguing that generational and social differences influenced traditional views of southern womanhood after the Civil War.

Scholarly examinations of the history of woman suffrage typically focus either on the advent of the woman suffrage question while glossing over the movement as a whole, or begin with the formation of a national campaign and only dissect the major events and strategies that led to the successful passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁵ Of the available scholarship aiming to address suffrage activism prior to the twentieth century, historians tend to focus on the two most popular suffrage organizations, National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) led by Lucy Stone, and their subsequent merger in 1890.

⁵ Several examples include, Jean H. Baker's *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, which compiles scholarship on the American suffrage campaign from various historians and includes one essay on the southern suffrage campaign, which focuses mainly on racism in the southern movement. Alexander Keyssar's *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* focuses on the entire history of suffrage and examines very little of the southern woman suffrage movement, highlighting the "many southerners" racial prejudices. Anne Firor Scott and Andrew Mackay Scott's *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* is a very brief history with supporting documents that focuses on the early years and the most successful years of the movement.

The foundation and strategies of these two organizations defined the suffrage movement at its core, as well as the attitudes of senior leadership who later elected to serve as committee chairs of the merged organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Additionally, few historians draw attention to any active southern suffrage interest that existed prior to the 1892 National Suffrage Convention, which promised to dedicate additional resources to the South, nor do they investigate early attitudes of white southern women on the suffrage question. The majority of suffrage scholarship is limited to either the northern women's national campaign or white southern women's arrival on the suffrage scene without ever addressing how each group of women may have interacted with or influenced one another. Several exceptions to this traditional examination of suffrage scholarship include Marjorie Spruill Wheeler's books on southern suffragists, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (1993) and the collection of essays in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (1995), which focuses on specific stages of the suffrage movement and dissects the various strategies for and against suffrage. Also, Elna C. Green's *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (1997) provides an in depth examination of the distinct suffrage and anti-suffrage groups that divided women in the South, paying particular attention to how each southern suffrage and anti-suffrage group responded to race relations. Unfortunately, these two historians are mostly alone in their efforts since very little scholarship, overall, dissects the uniqueness and complexity of the southern suffrage campaign. This study builds on the pioneering work of Marjorie Wheeler and Elna Green by diving deeper into

the lives of three white southern women to explore the complexities of suffrage debates in the South.

Another issue with mainstream suffrage scholarship is the approach of historians like Jean Baker's *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* that examines several elite white northern women of suffrage history. Baker dissects the lives and direct associations of these elite suffragists while also dividing the movement into generational waves. These generational overviews establish a historical summary of the emerging national suffrage campaign in the late nineteenth century and offer only a shell, or basic background, of woman suffrage history.⁶ Highlighting only prominent elite white women and the associations they participated in overshadows other white working class activists of the southern campaign. Approaching the southern campaign with such a high level overview promotes only the mainstream, standard version of suffrage history. Additionally, high-level examinations that typically focus solely on the elite white activists fail to address the individual challenges other white southern activists encountered from prejudiced views of other white women when the southern campaign was established.

Additionally, the impact that economic shifts and traditional ideas of southern womanhood had on the southern suffrage campaign is largely underdeveloped in suffrage scholarship. Few historians attempt to develop a southern narrative that explores the

⁶ Suffrage historians compile documents and published works from other historians to provide a documented history of the movement without deconstructing how the separate lives of southern suffragists were represented and influenced by the national campaign. See Jean Baker's *Sisters: The Lives of American Suffragists*, and *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, Marjorie Spruill Wheeler's *Votes for Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*, and *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott's *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*.

connection and influence of these strictly southern factors. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler and Elna C. Green are of the few that examine this changing southern environment from the Old South during the post war years as a regional phenomenon as well as the affect on the suffrage movement within it. Wheeler criticizes southern historians for neglecting a deeper study into the southern southern movement, suggesting the historical examination is probably viewed as insignificant due to how largely ineffective the early southern movement was. Wheeler also argues that a study of the Southern suffrage movement is essential to a firm understanding of the complete history of woman suffrage.⁷ Green's criticism of southern historians is similar, concluding that other historians fail to acknowledge the potential and various points of view a reexamination of the New South can procure.⁸ The majority of Green's work carefully examines the role of anti-suffragists in the South and breaks down the rhetoric, ideology, and the socio/economic characteristics of the participants. Green's focus on these southern elements establishes a deeper understanding into the powerful opposition that made up one sect of southern suffrage politics. Wheeler also focuses on the ideologies and activities of prominent southern leaders who guided the movement and were otherwise responsible for the "tone, tactics and strategy".⁹ Rather than comparing suffrage activists to their suffrage opponents like Green, Wheeler unpacks the philosophies and actions of southern suffragists throughout the southern movement. However, both Green and Wheeler agree that race combined with the changing status of southern women played a crucial role in defining the legacy of the southern suffrage movement.

⁷ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, xiv.

⁸ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xii.

⁹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, xiv –xv.

In short, this examination dives in to the complexities of the southern suffrage movement that are only understood through the eyes of individual southern white women living south of the Mason-Dixon line. The southern campaign must be examined through the eyes of southern white women, rather than a broad summary of the suffrage movement as a whole. Not all white southern ideologies were built on the same principles that the Old South once held so dear. The experiences of white southern women in the suffrage campaign go beyond the culture of the South. Kate Gordon, Sue Shelton White, and Josephine Pearson all experienced life in the South differently, which attributed to each of their unique positions in the suffrage campaign. This reexamination of the southern suffrage campaign through the lives of these three women unpacks preconceived ideas about the suffrage movement in the New South and establishes that not all white southern women were cut from the same cloth.

CHAPTER 1

- JOSEPHINE PEARSON: STRICTLY SOUTHERN PRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, women all across the United States rallied in campaigns together and demanded a voice in their government. Only several governing bodies in western territories, some of the first and few, allowed women a voice. It took several decades before the question of woman suffrage came to southern states. The overall history and appropriate way to break down woman suffrage is complicated, especially for the white women in the South. Understanding the suffrage question from all sides of the argument offers a much deeper insight into the political barriers that existed for women and the accomplishments gained as a result of their activism.

The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) fought in favor of suffrage, while other organizations strictly opposed the very idea of woman's enfranchisement. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS), formed in 1911, joined northern state antisuffragist organizations together on a national level. White women in the South also established antisuffrage organizations and banded together with the NAOWS. Josephine Pearson, one of those white southern women, argued that enfranchisement would level a "Southern woman's standards to the equality of men."¹ In the end, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment did not solve the disagreement between the divided suffrage groups, nor did all women agree on the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

White southern women that opposed woman suffrage entirely are commonly referred to as antisuffragists. White antisuffragists proclaimed women had no place in the

¹ Carrie Chapman Catt was president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1920. See Josephine Pearson, "President's Message, (Retiring from Anti-Suffrage Leadership of Tennessee)," in *Votes for Women!: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, ed. Jean H. Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 221.

political sphere with men. Many antisuffragists used religious references to argue against woman suffrage, maintaining that God decreed women's subordination in the book of Genesis.² Antisuffrage literature circulated materials that continued to negate a woman's claim to citizenship and enfranchisement through the word of God:

I wish to add that God, in making woman, implied her place in her physical constitution organic functions, and practical duties. These lines are drawn by the divine hand. Human hands may seek to obliterate these lines and succeed in obscuring them, but they cannot destroy them.³

Southern antisuffragists also claimed woman suffrage would disrupt longstanding admiration of southern womanhood and more or less destroy state sovereignty while encouraging "supremacy of the negro-race" in the South.⁴ The national platform for antisuffragists, even in the South, supported the belief that if women gained the ballot, the responsibility of the vote would ultimately hinder a woman's ability to participate in social work and reform organizations that separated women from politics for their own good.⁵ Southern antisuffragists, like Josephine Pearson, insisted the vote would level women's standards to that of men, weakening women physically, intellectually, and spiritually, and thus would destroy the highest coronation of women – motherhood.⁶

² Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 19.

³ Rev. Geo F. Seymour, "Bishop Seymour on the New Woman," *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Woman's Anti-suffrage Association of the Judicial District of the State of New York*, 1905.

⁴ Anastasia Sims, "Armageddon in Tennessee: The Final Battle Over the Nineteenth Amendment," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 334. See also Thomas P. Gailor to Josephine Pearson, 13 September 1920, Josephine Pearson Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archive, Nashville, TN.

⁵ Manuela Thurner, "Better Citizens Without the Ballot: American Anti-suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995), 210-211.

⁶ Josephine Pearson, "President's Message," Pearson Papers.

Some white southern women viewed woman suffrage as a menace to the South and stood against the merger of the private sphere with the public sphere. Pearson, for example, pressed for women's equality in a parallel domain, rather than insisting women's equality be realized within the same spaces as men, especially in politics. Originally from Sumner County Tennessee, Pearson made a pledge in 1915 to her dying mother, Amanda Caroline Pearson, to fight against woman suffrage should the issue come to Tennessee.⁷ Her mother spoke out against woman suffrage before she died, and Pearson, being a good southern lady, honored her mother's last request with every ounce of her being. This southern antisuffragist ideology, fueled by a combination of "theological, biological, sociological, racial, and states' rights principles," appealed to the older southern families like the Pearsons where the Old South remained a cornerstone of their traditional values.⁸

Josephine Anderson Pearson, born in 1869, lived near Gallatin in Sumner County Tennessee with her parents Reverend Phillip Anderson Pearson and Amanda Caroline Roscoe Pearson. Like southern suffragists Sue Shelton White and Kate Gordon, Pearson's parents encouraged education, independence, and her ability to be self-supporting. In regard to her family background, both of her parents had a strong line of southern ancestry, traced all the way back to the early colonial period in the Carolinas and Virginia.⁹ The presence of such an established southern ancestry provided Pearson

⁷ Josephine Pearson lived in Monteagle, Tennessee at the time of her suffrage involvement but was originally born in Sumner County. Josephine Anderson Pearson, "My Story: Of How and Why I Became an Antisuffrage Leader," April 20, 1939, Josephine Pearson Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archive, Nashville, TN.

⁸ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 80.

⁹ Pearson's southern ancestry held a special place in her life, which attributed to her dedication to southern values and the Old South culture. See "A Prominent Southern Educator, Writer and

with a deep sense of pride in her heritage as well as a strong devotion to the Old South and its traditions. Pearson insisted her background consisted of a “strictly ‘southern production,’” and thanking God her “linage, both maternal and paternal, stretch way back to colonial Carolinas and Virginia.”¹⁰ Built on long-standing traditions, the Old South developed a sense of an individual heritage and an obligation to protect *his* rights.¹¹ Ideas of southern nationalism emerged shortly before the Civil War were focused on a southern adaptation of a type of “cultural nationalism” with peoples of the same blood and lineage, shared experiences, customs, and traditions maintaining political power.¹² Pearson carried her southern pride and heritage with her throughout her lifetime and wore it as a badge of honor. Pearson maintained this strong sense of southern pride and also held very traditional views of southern womanhood, even though she remained very independent throughout her life.

The antisuffrage campaign appealed to older generations of women who firmly rooted themselves in their father’s ways. Pearson’s father practiced ministry until the Southern Church of the Tennessee Conference forced him from his Methodist church community because of the way another minister expressed feelings about Pearson’s mother. The Reverend R. K. Brown circulated a vile report against Pearson’s father in an

Leading Clubwoman, Josephine A. Person,” *Women’s Edition Memphis-News Section*, August 1907, Josephine Pearson Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archive, Nashville, TN.

¹⁰ Josephine Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, ii, Josephine Pearson Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archive, Nashville, TN.

¹¹ According to Thomas Nelson Page, “Assertion of the rights, privileges, and franchises of an individual was the cardinal doctrine of the South. The Southerner bore this with him as an inalienable heritage wherever he went. . . . The New Englander went to his meeting-house to receive instruction and to accept direction from the authorized powers, spiritual and temporal. The Southerner rode through trackless forests to argue questions as to their powers and their authority.” See Thomas Nelson Page, *The Old South: Essays Social and Political* (New York, New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1892), 260.

¹² Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 3.

attempt to “wreck his life” because he loved Pearson’s mother but was not promised her hand. Pearson reflected bitterly on how she could never return to the church that christened her as a child.¹³

Some of the earliest ventures into organizational activity for many southern white women stemmed from the church. Southern white women, like Pearson, found themselves drawn to church activities as a way to network and socialize under the direct supervision of the church, of which southern men approved. Most white southern women from rural areas of the South lived in a world where men controlled every aspect of family, church, and community.¹⁴ The dominating male presence in every aspect of their lives discouraged women from creating a separate type of “women’s culture” that is believed to have the potential to disrupt the traditional pillars of southern patriarchy, which is why the church became such an important part of southern women’s lives.¹⁵

Pearson began her education early on at Gallatin Female College. At twelve years old, in 1880, Pearson obtained a B.A. from Irving College in McMinnville, Tennessee. Six short years later, Pearson graduated with a Master of Arts from Cumberland College in Lebanon, Tennessee in 1886.¹⁶ As a highly educated woman of this period, Pearson made a choice very early in her life to either have her own career or a family. As an only

¹³ Pearson’s feelings about her father’s church shows that she cared deeply about the influence of the church in her life, which suggests that some of the appeal to antisuffragism may have stemmed from a religious influence. See Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, VII, 30-31.

¹⁴ Jean Friedman, *Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830 – 1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 6.

¹⁵ In *Southern Strategies*, Green summarizes the issue of “southern exceptionalism” that delayed southern women’s involvement in suffrage efforts by insisting that, “Even when women joined together in prayer circles or quilting bees, they were closely supervised by their ministers, husbands, or kin who guarded against the development of “bonds of womanhood” and the dangerous challenges to patriarchy that might spring from this separate women’s culture.” Green offered a summary of the central argument of “southern exceptionalism” from the work of Jean Friedman’s *Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830 – 1900*. See Green, *Southern Strategies*, 6.

¹⁶ “An Educational Review,” Pearson Papers.

child, Pearson knew she would one day have to care for her parents, seeing that her mother already suffered her own ailments which uprooted the Pearson's from middle Tennessee to the mountains; a more suitable climate for Amanda's condition. Keeping her parents at the forefront of her responsibilities, Pearson turned down several marriage proposals. She settled on a career in education that enabled her to support herself and her parents without having a family of her own to burden her or care for. Rather than the mark of a New Woman, Pearson's choice to remain unmarried can be understood as an acceptance of family responsibility and self-sacrifice expected of southern white daughters.

Amanda and Phillip Pearson did everything to ensure Pearson's success and establishment in society. The family moved to Monteagle, Tennessee hoping that the crisp mountain air would ease Amanda's failing health. At the time, Monteagle was a culturally diverse city, with the Sewanee college community mixing with the uneducated mountain population. The social diversity within the community allowed the Pearson's parents to rise to prominence, and they soon became one of the most distinguished families in Monteagle. Her parents established a small school with two other prominent families in the area and worked as educators. Pearson's social status and the position of her parents as educators paved the way for Josephine to study at Vanderbilt University prior to her first job, a privilege reserved for the socially elite and families with faculty connections. Pearson's memoir, *Fading Tapestries*, reiterates her own family privilege and boasts about her intellect and wit as a reoccurring theme:

This gives to me the liberty, first, to affirm to be well-born, with unusual, careful rearing by parents of marked genealogical distinction, of especial culture, and associations; also with no small amount of advantages¹⁷

Josephine landed her first job as the principal of McMinnville High School from 1890 – 1894, which included both boys and girls. Pearson continued to work in education for the next twenty years, even holding a Dean and chair position for the Philosophy of Christian College, which was an affiliate of the University of Missouri, from 1909 – 1914.¹⁸ The majority of Pearson’s reform efforts during her early career centered around an idea that women should expand their characteristics and interests beyond the private sphere because men desperately needed women’s help and influence in order to clean up society. In 1900, Pearson exercised her ability to influence reform measures without moving into the political realm by attempting to secure funds for a separate women’s annex at Vanderbilt University. Pearson’s unsuccessful attempts did not stop her; she nevertheless continued to work for women’s expanded role outside of the home, especially in education. Even though Pearson worked hard to expand her own private sphere, she never attempted to further expand her own rights or ever advocate for suffrage. In 1915, however, Pearson returned to Monteagle from her position at Christian College to take care of her ailing mother and also to make one final promise to stand against suffrage.

Pearson inherited the antisuffragist ideology from her mother’s side, very similar to Kate Gordon’s own suffrage background. In July of 1915, her ailing mother requested Josephine to fight the woman suffrage amendment should it ever come to Tennessee,

¹⁷ Pearson began chapters in her unpublished autobiography proclaiming her highborn status and privileged class. Several versions of *Fading Tapestries* exist at the Tennessee State Archives, both hand written and typed. See Pearson Papers.

¹⁸ “An Educational Review,” Pearson Papers.

“Daughter, when I’m gone – if the Susan B Anthony Amendment issue reaches Tennessee – promise me, you will take up opposition, in My Memory!” Pearson responded to her mother’s dying wish, “Yes! God Helping, I’ll keep the faith, My Mother!”¹⁹ After her mother’s death, Pearson held true to her promise by submitting antisuffrage letters to local newspapers in an attempt to bring awareness surrounding the “wickedness” of woman suffrage. Pearson also submitted a series of letters to the *Chattanooga Daily Times* defending antisuffrage opinions. Pearson’s letters countered “untrue statements” in a response to Miss Earnestine Noe’s accusation that antisuffragists allied with the Whiskey Element and the Red Light Districts.²⁰

Several years later in 1917, at the request of her father prior to his death, Pearson also advocated for good roads in the South. She became the President of the Dixie Highway Association’s Woman Auxiliary, which promoted the construction of a highway between Chattanooga and Nashville through the Cumberland Divide. Pearson argued that this new road through the mountain as “war work” and would assist in the transportation and organization of the troops and their supplies.²¹ The persuasion tactics Pearson used to get what she needed did not require the use of the vote, but rather, the creation of a separate but equal sphere that allowed educated elite women to influence politics and keeping their place at a man’s side. Pearson did not require the vote to

¹⁹ Pearson, “My Story,” in *Votes for Women!*, 229.

²⁰This public engagement in the *Chattanooga Times* that caught John Vertrees attention. Vertrees, a well-known Nashville lawyer accused of having ties to the liquor industry, and his wife Virginia recruited Pearson as the new president of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1917 after reading of her newspaper controversy that came to the defense of antisuffrage. Pearson, “My Story,” in *Votes for Women!*, 232.

²¹ Pearson bruised her foot while climbing the mountain for a better view of a boulder. While women typically did not climb mountains or get bruises, Pearson said the bruise “is one I’m never ashamed to acknowledge; as a “Mark of World War Service!” See Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, 7.

change the opinions of men; she merely needed just a little bit of their time and a dash of tactfulness.

Pearson displayed her mastery of this ‘separate but equal sphere’ by using her elitism and delicate feminine influence to literally change the landscape of her home in the Cumberland Divide, literally. The Dixie Highway Council was organized in the Pearson home with the help of Dr. Haskell Dubose and Tom Taggart. The first mass meeting of the council was called in the Monteagle Hotel Assembly Hall for all the citizens of the mountain area. Pearson’s father was set to address the meeting but due to his failing health, Josephine was asked to step in and speak on his behalf. The meeting was so successful and fueled with support that Pearson announced to the audience, “A good dinner would be served to every man on the mountain who gave a day of hard labor to the Highway; by all woman on the mountain!”²² Thus, her announcement upheld gendered labor distinctions and affirmed female domesticity. The behavior Pearson displayed while stepping into a spotlight at the request of the men around her showed that Pearson understood herself to be an exceptional and unique woman capable of handling her father’s work. In October of 1917, Pearson became the first woman ever to address the Good Roads Association on behalf of the citizens in Monteagle. Pearson succeeded in her efforts without disrupting any existing constructs of southern womanhood and patriarchy.²³

²² While stepping out into the spotlight as a request from her father, Pearson embraced her father’s request joyfully and maintained her role (and duty) as a southern lady by hosting teas and dinners. See Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, 5.

²³ When confiding to her father the details of her plan for the boulder that one highway engineer said could not be blasted, thus stopping road construction, Pearson recalled, “I could see in his eye, his real response to mine of approval!” See Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, 7.

Prior to Pearson's appointment as the President of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage (TSAOWS) she studied suffrage in the western states and offered a lecture series to discuss benefits of suffrage, if any. In 1916, an invitation was sent to Pearson when the NAOWS came to Tennessee, but still mourning the loss of her mother she declined. Although Pearson claims she committed herself to the antisuffrage fight at the request of her dying mother, her early activities prove she was no stranger to suffrage ideologies. When the position was offered to Pearson she was persuaded to accept the sacred honor but first wanted to speak with her father for his approval. Pearson's loyalty to her father displays a type of patriarchal devotion to men in her life, which suggests that she would continue the behavior of seeking approval from men even after she established her own voice in the antisuffrage campaign.²⁴ Pearson's father blessed her acceptance of the position partly to honor the memory of her mother. Additionally, he always encouraged her other social activities and reform work outside the home, which Pearson said pleased him greatly.

The public spheres that Pearson enjoying living in and sought to protect did not violate the South's traditional conservative ideals of southern womanhood; rather, it redefined chivalry and supported only the influence of elite educated white women on the government without disrupting the structure of southern patriarchy. John Vertrees, antisuffragist and Nashville attorney, recruited Josephine Pearson to replace his ailing wife as President for three reasons: First, she was a woman of "outstanding ability" with experience, second she was a Tennessee native from a good family, and finally, Vertrees called her "too brainy – as well as tactful to want to direct the strong alliance of the men

²⁴ Pearson confessed that after the death of her mother in 1915, her one and only desire was to give her entire self, time, and all her possessions to the declining years of her revered father. See Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, 2.

constituents.”²⁵ Vertrees also chose Pearson because she publicly displayed unyielding dedication to her southern pedigree and elitism, which created a separate space for her (and other southern white women like her) to have the same opportunities and political influence as men. She did not need the vote because she created a separate space that allowed her to influence the world of men without poisoning her femininity and innocence by stepping into a man’s realm. Finally, she supported the Lost Cause emphasis on the supposed violation of “states’ rights” that the federal amendment represented. Pearson also felt that the suffrage campaign for a federal amendment violated “the southern history of “States’ Rights” – the basic principle upon which the Democratic Party has long rested.”²⁶

In the early days of Pearson’s TSAOWS presidency in 1917, a referendum came to the Tennessee general assembly that would grant women the right to vote in local elections and for president. The limited-suffrage bill passed the Tennessee House of Representatives but still required a favorable vote from the Senate. In southern gentlemen fashion, attempting to block the bill, Vertrees entertained small groups of like-minded legislators to build a strong support for opposition to the proposal with Pearson in attendance.

One morning a telegram regarding the issue of woman suffrage arrived originally addressed to the Speaker of the Tennessee Senate but it somehow found its way to Pearson. She recalled that the telegram was from President Woodrow Wilson who advised the Tennessee Senate pass the Federal Amendment.²⁷ Vertrees spoke to Pearson

²⁵ Pearson, “My Story,” in *Votes for Women!*, 237.

²⁶ Pearson, “President’s Message”, in *Votes for Women!*, 217.

²⁷ There is speculation from Majorie Spruill Wheeler on the accuracy of Pearson’s recollection since the Federal Amendment was not sent to the states for ratification until 1919. The memoir

and forcefully suggesting that she reply to the Senate, providing some sort of instruction on how to answer the President's message, adding he was unaware the Speaker's urgent message was redirected to her. But Pearson did not want to "send instruction" to the Senate, she insisted that she would go before them in person and address them herself.

The unexpected rejection of Vertrees's implied directive startled him. Pearson recalled:

Then he added, with all his power of his masterful eloquence and logic, used every argument – including the fact that I had been so dignified [that] not once [had I] gone myself or desired any of my constituents to go to the capital – where the Suffrage forces had swarmed! Concluding – he impressed me with arguments [that had prevailed] for my appointment to the Presidency of the Opposition to Federal Suffrage in Tennessee....To all I agreed; all I respected – as I did this gallant, brainy, legal light facing me, whom I respected as I did few men.²⁸

Although she wanted to make a personal appeal to the Senate, Pearson respected the wishes of the southern gentleman John Vertrees more and wanted to honor his request, as all good southern ladies would. However, Vertrees' wife Virginia spoke, "John let Miss Pearson alone! If she wants to go to the Senate, let her use her judgment to go!"²⁹

Bowing, as a southern gentleman bowed to his wife's request, Vertrees compromised and asked that if Pearson *must go*, that she be escorted by a gentleman. Pearson recalled her backseat car ride to the capital with Vertrees as quiet and seemingly filled with restrained rage. Vertrees did not speak a word to Pearson until she was moments away from addressing the legislators in the Senate Chamber where he anxiously asked what she would do. Fatal telegram in hand, and not sure what she was going to say, Pearson addressed the Senate.

was written just 5 years before her death in 1939 – twenty years after the event occurred. Josephine Pearson, "My Story," in *Votes for Women!*, 234.

²⁸ Josephine Pearson, "My Story," in *Votes for Women!*, 234 -235.

²⁹ Josephine Pearson, "My Story," in *Votes for Women!*, 235.

Pearson's antisuffrage platform cited three deadly principles of the proposed Nineteenth Amendment: "1st, Surrender of state sovereignty. 2nd, Negro woman suffrage. 3rd, Race Equality."³⁰ The Senate ultimately voted down the suffrage referendum in the first of three suffrage campaigns Pearson spearheaded in Tennessee. After Pearson's victories at the Senate in Nashville, Pearson returned home to care for her ailing father and to carry on the Dixie Highway auxiliary to please him. Pearson only traveled back to Nashville once, as a formality, when the issue of suffrage came back around a second time. The suffrage issue "was so secure in its defeat in Tennessee" that Pearson did not spend her time as President devoted to strictly antisuffrage activity.

Her parent's death and continued spending on luxuries in their declining years left the once privileged Josephine Pearson almost penniless, forcing her to mortgage her last remaining piece of family property at a rate of 10 percent. She also opened her home to paying guests in an attempt to pay down her debts, which she actually quite enjoyed.³¹ However, Josephine Pearson was soon drawn back into the antisuffrage activity. In July 1920, happy and surrounded by pleasurable guests, Pearson was completely immersed in her new profitable venture until she received the message that Carrie Chatman Catt, the NAWSA president, arrived in Nashville for the suffrage amendment. Pearson interpreted Catt's arrival in Nashville as a call to action and left her home that afternoon for Nashville.

Albert Roberts, Governor of Tennessee, called an extra session of the legislature to vote on the proposed federal suffrage amendment. Suffragists wanted to solidify the

³⁰ Josephine Pearson sent out letters during the Nashville campaign for the anti-suffragists that referenced the "three deadly principles" within the Nineteenth Amendment. See Josephine Pearson to "Dear [Blank]," form letter, August 9, 1920, Josephine Pearson Papers, box folder 18, Tennessee State Library and Archive, Nashville, TN.

³¹ Josephine Pearson, "My Story," in *Votes for Women!*, 236.

victory in favor of *all* women while Anti-suffragists and suffragists who endorsed state legislated suffrage, like Kate Gordon of Louisiana. Gordon came to Tennessee to fight against the suffrage amendment with Pearson, a former adversary. Gordon, a former member of the NAWSA, now stood opposite of her long time suffrage associates because of her stern opposition to enfranchisement by federal amendment. Only a decade earlier, Gordon debated Alice Chittenden, chairman of the legislative committee of the society opposed to the further extension of suffrage to women, in place of Carrie Chapman Catt.³² Pearson rejoiced at the arrival of several suffragists who “entered the fray” to fight alongside antisuffragists; Laura Clay – “who for 20 years had fought [for] Equal suffrage – came at her own expense to remain the entire session – to fight Federal Suffrage; also in this line were the Misses [Kate and Jean] Gordon of New Orleans.”³³ Pearson was delighted at the unexpected support of former NAWSA members that joined her side in the name of the South and white supremacy.

Long-standing traditions of the Old South’s social hierarchies intertwined by race, gender, and class influenced the older generations of elite white southern activists; women like Josephine Pearson. George Fitzhugh, an influential American proslavery sociologist, criticized the free states’ support of women’s rights. He also regarded any man who would choose to emancipate a woman as her worst enemy because her “subservience and dependence on man is necessary to her very existence” and without man she is otherwise incapable of taking care of herself.³⁴ The interest of women’s rights

³² See *The General Federation Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 9: June 1910, 11. Note, Prior to June of 1910 the title of the monthly communication was *Federation Bulletin*, which was the official organ of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs.

³³ Josephine Pearson, “My Story,” in *Votes for Women!*, 237.

³⁴ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South: Or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: Morris, 1854), 216, 230.

in the North, he claimed, proved that their free society was approaching its inevitable collapse. In his pamphlet, Fitzhugh offered the following:

In truth, woman, like children, has but one right, and that is the right to protection. The right to protection involves the obligation to obey. A husband, a lord and master, whom she should love, honor and obey, nature designed for every woman, - for the number of males and females is the same. If she be obedient, she is in little danger of mal-treatment; if she stands upon her rights, is coarse and masculine, man loathes and despises her, and ends by abusing her. Law, however well intended, can do little in her behalf.³⁵

Historian Drew Gilpin Faust suggested that Fitzhugh might as well have said, “Just as nature had designed a master for every slave.”³⁶

For many older generations of southern women, challenging the rule of patriarchy presented a dangerous circumstance. Historian Gaines M. Foster suggests:

Finally, no significant movement for women’s rights developed in the South during Reconstruction to parallel agitation in the North. Failing to organize to fight for their rights, gaining little more economic independence, marrying more frequently than before the war, and embracing the returning soldiers, southern women surely launched no attack on the patriarchy and appeared to return happily to their status under the old code.³⁷

The New South uprooted social order of the Old South and provoked menacing recoil against any proposed change to what remained of southern white male supremacy.

Josephine Pearson adamantly opposed the very idea of women’s enfranchisement and vowed to keep the vote out of Tennessee. The dynamic of how white southern women’s approach to the suffrage question demonstrates how differently the culture of ‘southern

³⁵ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 214-215.

³⁶ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 6.

³⁷ Foster further explained, “The destruction and despair of defeat also discouraged the development of a women’s movement, for females had to join with males to solve more basic problems of survival. Therefore no attack on the patriarchy developed, women’s role changed very little, and male anxieties began to ease. But particularly because so many factors made revolt unlikely, its absence did not mean women were totally at ease with their accustomed role in society.” See Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 30 – 31.

whiteness' influenced individual women's political beliefs due to generational differences, experiences, and social networks. Alternatively, to pacify white southern men, suffragist Kate Gordon proposed woman suffrage in a way that did not appear to seek equality with white men, but rather, superiority to the newly enfranchised black man. The alignment of progressive views of woman suffrage with white supremacy rhetoric paid homage to the Old South's traditions of patriarchy which created a "paradoxical interplay of old and new in the postwar South."³⁸ However, some white southern women, like Pearson, still preferred the Old South's traditional view of patriarchy and southern womanhood above any and all suffrage arguments.

³⁸ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 4-5, 254.

CHAPTER 2

KATE GORDON AND THE ONLY HONORABLE SOLUTION OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE SOUTH

The white women of the south hold the balance of power. Their vote will eliminate the question of the negro in politics, and it will be a glad day for the south when the ballot box is placed in the hands of its intelligent, cultured, pure and womanhood...Between the negro vote and the vote of intelligent womanhood, the south, true to its traditions, will trust its women, and thus placing in their hands the balance of power, the negro as a disturbing element in politics will disappear.

- Kate Gordon
"Miss Kate Gordon Promoted to
National Leadership,"
Daily Picayune, July 7, 1901.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, northern women questioned ideas of traditional roles of gender and race while the South sat cut off from emerging ideas of feminism and racial equality prior to the Civil War. Because of this, southern white women experienced a generational lag, nearly fifty years worth, which hindered suffrage progress in many southern states. Southern white women were kept comfortable and protected in their privileged, yet subordinate status while patriarchy ruled southern households. After the War ended, however, white southern women filled with doubts about the reality of mending the shattered bonds of patriarchy. This "new woman" evolved from the social and economic changes brought on by the transition from farming to a more modern industrialized economy that occurred during the Gilded Age. After industrialization and urbanization shook up life in the post-Reconstruction period, challenges to traditional roles of southern womanhood pushed women outside of their

private sphere and into areas of social reform.¹ Women emerging out of this “New South” broke free of traditional views of southern womanhood and made attempts to be more like their northern sisters who experienced a very similar economic and social exodus towards an industrialized economy nearly half a century before.

As the southern suffrage movement took shape in the early twentieth century, elite white southern suffrage leaders offered proposals on how best to achieve “enfranchisement of the educated woman as the only honorable solution of the southern problem.”² Some white southern women remained skeptical of a federal suffrage amendment because it would force a law upon the southern states that did not pass through their legislatures, further overriding state sovereignty. Kate Gordon, a Louisiana suffragist, argued that the proposed suffrage amendment infringed on states’ rights and also led to “negro domination.” Soliciting the federal government for a suffrage amendment, rather than state governments, forced southern states to relive Reconstruction. Aware of the controversial implications of the suffrage movement, the NAWSA sought out women like Kate Gordon to help bring the movement onto southern soil.

Northern suffragists were not as accustomed to dealing with the fragile and bitter attitudes of southern politicians that, for a time, allowed southern white elite suffragists the opportunity to speak on behalf of the entire South by circulating pamphlets that presented the statistical of the white woman’s vote that could counteract the black vote.

¹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 70.

² Kate Gordon’s position as the National Corresponding Secretary promoted positions of limited suffrage on behalf of the South. Miss Hala Hammond Butte, president of the Mississippi State Association, gave a speech, “Education Suffrage the Only Solution to the Southern Problem.” See “The Woman Suffragists Conclude Their Convention,” during the same convention. See *Daily Picayune*, March 26, 1903.

Many of these southern voices championed white woman's enfranchisement as a way to counteract the black and ignorant male votes. The radical rhetoric of elite white southern suffragists like Kate Gordon remained the cornerstone of southern influence on the suffrage campaign for over a decade.

Gordon's directive on how to win the Solid South remained the cornerstone of southern suffrage campaigns until the early 1910s. She demanded that southern suffrage be limited to white women and men in order to preserve white supremacy and state sovereignty. Her radical, racist language however, did not withstand the test of time and failed to bring the support national leaders hoped for. Gordon's language and narrow-minded views alienated younger generations of white southern women. The push for a southern suffrage campaign stagnated and remained dormant until a younger generation revitalized the movement.

Born in 1861, Gordon was the daughter of a well-known Scottish educator, George Hume Gordon, who was the headmaster at a school for boys. Gordon's mother was a prominent southern lady of high social status, Margaret Galiece Gordon. Kate Gordon was raised in New Orleans and attended school locally at Miss Shaw's finishing school, a local private academy that accommodated "fashionable young ladies".³ As a young adult, Gordon spent a considerable amount of time traveling abroad throughout Europe but returned home to Louisiana to live with her family. Gordon and the antisuffragist Josephine Pearson compared favorably in several different ways. Pearson's father was an educator, like Kate Gordon's immigrant father, and both of their fathers encouraged their daughter's independence through a formal education. Although Gordon did not have the same faith based influence from her parents as Pearson, she attended

³ *Daily Picayune*, August 25, 1932.

church, the First Unitarian, like most southern girls and was from the more privileged class of the community.

Growing up, Gordon's family environment encouraged a "liberal interpretation of woman's proper activity" as both of her parents supported woman suffrage prior to the Civil War.⁴ Gordon insisted that suffrage activism came to her "through inheritance", especially from her mother's side,

It was way back in 1858 that her mother attended a suffrage meeting in New York, one of the first public meetings ever held, and there she became a convert to the cause. But she was a Louisiana girl living in a far-off southern state, and all she could do was impress upon her children, as they came to understanding, in later life, her interest in woman and her belief in inalienable rights... He [Mr. Gordon] believed that taxation without representation was wrong, and that women were created equal with men, and the educated woman and property holder had a right to vote.⁵

Gordon's family was of moderate wealth and social standing. Still, it was the reputation of her mother's family that solidified Gordon's future success among New Orleans society as well as the prominent women and families she associated herself with. Gordon built on her mother's reputation by maintaining and building on the social and political relationships she formed during her lifetime.

As progressive sentiment swept across the U.S. in late nineteenth century, a variety of women's clubs and activist organizations formed. As early as 1893, Gordon attended various women's reform meetings that soon organized local women into public reform bodies and took action on needed civic improvements. The first women's meeting Gordon was invited to attend was at a private home for the purpose of fund raising and establishing an "anti-toxine plant" in New Orleans.⁶ Gordon "became impressed" as she

⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 62.

⁵ *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1901.

⁶ *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1901.

had never been before “with the necessity of organization among women.”⁷ Through her work in various women’s clubs, Gordon was introduced to Caroline E. Merrick who established the Portia Club in 1892 as a supporting organization of the NAWSA. Merrick’s political attitude on woman suffrage intrigued Gordon enough to become a member of the Portia Club.⁸ Admittedly, Gordon recalled not feeling the activist call for woman suffrage until she heard a compelling lecture from Mary Carroll Craig Bradford given before members of the Portia Club in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1896.⁹ After hearing Bradford’s speech at her Church, which Gordon only referred to as a “great epoch” in her life, the second suffrage organization, Equal Rights for All Club (more secretly known as Era), formed. The Portia Club soon merged with the Era, in 1896, to form an official statewide movement.

White southern women Most early suffrage work in the South comprised of elite educated women, like Mississippi’s Belle Kearney, Kentucky’s Laura Clay, and Gordon herself, who had the time and money to dedicate free time to a women’s activist cause. Kearney argued that suffrage campaigning efforts fell short in organizing a solid operation. Kearney admitted that the “thought [of suffrage] is somewhat a new one to the masses” but suffrage lacked an audience because of the failed campaign efforts that

⁷ *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1901.

⁸ *Daily Picayune*, May 13, 1903.

⁹ In an interview with the *Daily Picayune*, Gordon confessed to being impressed after hearing Miss Anthony and Miss Catt speak in 1893, but declared that she was not deeply moved and compelled to act until she heard Mary C.C. Bradford’s “appeal to women to stand for women” but did not elaborate on what part of her speech provoked her. See *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1910. Gordon’s activism for woman suffrage stemmed from her involvement in the Era, which merged with the existing members of the Portia Club, established in 1896 in Louisiana. Mary C. C. Bradford addressed the members of the merged Era-Portia Club with two lectures given at the Unitarian church. See Susan B. Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. IV 1883 - 1900*, ed. Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, (Rochester, NY: Hollenbeck Press Indianapolis, 1902), 680.

resulted in a significant generational gap.¹⁰ During a suffrage convention in 1896, Clay pressed the NASAW leadership to make a move toward the South for suffrage work decoupled from other women's rights issues:

When we go through the South advocating woman suffrage, without attaching it to dress reform, or bicycling, or anything else, but asking the simple question why the principles of our forefathers should not go applied to women, we shall win. The South is ready for woman suffrage but it must be woman suffrage and nothing else.¹¹

Clay worked hard for suffrage in Kentucky and defended “the promising field” the South held for additional support and resources. Many southern states had no previous affiliation with the current national suffrage organization, which meant gaining new support for the NAWSA would be easier than absorbing it from a separate organization, if one even existed. Once the South became a primary target for finding new recruits for the suffrage campaign, the NAWSA moved forward with establishing a “Southern Committee” with Clay at the helm.¹²

In 1898, Gordon's first task as a suffrage activist brought her to the Louisiana constitutional convention where she and fellow Era committee members petitioned the convention to recognize suffrage for educated, tax-paying women. They also requested the NAWSA chairman Carrie Chapman Catt to formally address the assembled convention and speak on behalf of the National Association. Several prominent NAWSA

¹⁰ Historians like Elna Green now recognize Kearney's early observation of the delayed southern suffrage movement and are only now dissecting the effects this generation gap. See Green *Southern Strategies*, 6. Belle Kearney quoted prominent men from southern states saying, “We do not give them [women] the ballot because they [women] do not seem to desire it. Just as soon as they demand it they will get it.” See Belle Kearney, *Slaveholders Daughter*, (St. Louis, MO: The Abbey Press, 1900), 119.

¹¹ Rachel Foster Avery, ed., *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association held in Washington D.C., January 23rd to 28th, 1896* (Philadelphia: Press of Alfred J. Ferris, 1896), 76.

¹² Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 115 – 116.

members including Laura Clay, the director of the Southern suffrage work at the time, also accompanied Catt to Louisiana. The National Association suffragists addressed eager crowds, including members of the convention, on the woman suffrage question at the Athenaeum lecture hall in New Orleans during the final deliberations. The Constitutional Convention deliberated for several days, considering Gordon's argument for woman suffrage as a means to securing white supremacy but in the end only managed to secure a single clause, "All taxpaying women shall have the right to vote in person or by proxy on all questions of taxations."¹³ This small victory in such a conservative state allowed Gordon to launch a campaign on behalf of the a scrap of suffrage, proclaiming that "We asked for bread, and received, not a stone, it is true, but a crumb."¹⁴ Gordon used this "crumb" to awaken "Louisiana women to a sense of their responsibility in preserving and creating those ideals of government which will secure in the broadest sense of the term the liberty of man, woman and child."¹⁵ Gordon maintained that enfranchisement of educated, tax-paying women is the "only honorable solution of white supremacy in the South."¹⁶

From 1898 on, Gordon exploited southern racism to rouse support from southern whites. Gordon spoke publically on behalf of all white southern women, insisting, "if any class of women favor suffrage, the Southern women should, as no class of women have

¹³ *Daily Picayune*, February 23, 1900.

¹⁴ *Daily Picayune*, February 23, 1900.

¹⁵ Gordon commonly referred to the 1898 Louisiana resolution as a "scrap of suffrage". The lone clause was perceived first as a disappointment. Gordon delivered her "Scrap of Suffrage" speech before the Woman's National Suffrage Convention in Washington D.C. See *Daily Picayune*, February 23, 1900.

¹⁶ *Daily Picayune*, February 23, 1900.

ever been made to feel the indignity of their position so keenly.”¹⁷ The NAWSA allowed Gordon to campaign southern states on their behalf because of her prominent social standing and work in Louisiana and believed she could influence the movement in the South, being an educated, white southern lady. Gordon’s white supremacist rhetoric resonated throughout the entire suffrage campaign, even after she separated herself from the national organ. Interviews with Gordon from as early as 1901 exemplified her racial prejudice, arguing that white women were essential to upholding white supremacy in the South:

The question of white supremacy is one that will be decided by giving the right of the ballot to the educated, intelligent white women of the South. This is a fact that many of the brightest men in the South are acknowledging today. The white women of the South hold the balance of power. Their vote will eliminate the question of the Negro in politics and it will be a glad free day for the South when the ballot is placed in the hands of its intelligent, cultured, pure, and noble womanhood. The woman suffragists of the north are looking to the south; they are watching the signs of the times. Everything points to this great evolution, that between the negro vote and the vote of the intelligent womanhood, the South, true to its traditions, will trust its women and thus placing their hands the balance of power, the negro as a disturbing element in politics will disappear.¹⁸

Historian Elna C. Green highlights Gordon’s word choice at a 1907 NAWSA annual convention where she maliciously attacked the War Amendments that allowed for the enfranchisement of the “cornfield darkies” but not that of “intelligent motherhood.”¹⁹

During the early part of the southern movement, northern white suffragists argued that the South should be placated with ideas woman suffrage and campaign efforts should

¹⁷ Gordon continued, “Our mothers saw the negroes from the cane fields enfranchised, to become their lawmakers and legislators, and we of the younger generation have lived to see, in changing the Southern Constitution, fraud, instead of educated tax-paying women, chosen as a means to an end.” See *Daily Picayune*, February 20, 1906.

¹⁸ *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1901.

¹⁹ Elna C. Green, “The Rest of the Story: Kate Gordon and the Opposition to the Nineteenth Amendment in the South,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol 33, 2 (1992): 174.

appeal to the biased sentiment of white southern Democrats in order to make headway.²⁰

As a leader of the southern campaign, Mississippi's Belle Kearney described the changing conditions of the South after the Republican's ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment and the "curse" the federal government placed on the black race. Kearney believed enfranchisement of the "politically inept and otherwise ignorant black men" by way of a mandated Federal amendment proved detrimental of the black race.²¹ During the elections of 1875, Kearney recalled that black men "were urged to stand by the Republican Party as the one that had brought them freedom, and were terrified with the threat of being forced back into slavery if they voted otherwise."²² Ultimately, racial tension escalated because of the irresponsible occupation of the South as it increased the ever-present hostility and indignation towards blacks. The premature emancipation of uneducated black men perpetuated abuse from southern whites, because the majority of enfranchised southern blacks were perceived as illiterate and ignorant and therefore dependent on southern whites. Southern whites saw most black southern men as incapable of governing themselves, let alone other human beings, because they lived the majority of their life in slavery.

Gordon appealed to the southern white man's arguments of a black man inability to comprehend their own citizenship due to a lack of proper education and culture.

²⁰ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn examines the anti-black woman suffrage tactics used by NAWSA and individual suffrage leaders, like Kate Gordon, to propel the suffrage movement in the South towards "educated suffrage" and states' rights strategies. See Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 110-112, 121.

²¹ Kearney, *A Slaveholders Daughter*, 19.

²² Kearney argued, "license is not liberty, nor the ballot a blessing unless it has become the expression of a moral principle; and this cannot be until men have been trained in the holy duties of citizenship, and have caught the spirit of an intelligent loyalty to all that for which a righteous government is the standard-bearer". See Kearney, *A Slaveholders Daughter*, 18 -19.

Gordon, also obsessed with ideas of white supremacy, fostered an unhealthy fear of amalgamation as she watched droves of immigrants flood into southern ports and former slaves leave the fields to become masters of their homes.²³ Gordon and Kearney moved toward action in the South to win educated woman suffrage to counteract the black vote and ultimately restore the South to its former glory.

Kate Gordon continued to emphasize the importance of the white women's vote to suppress the "negro problem" in the South. In 1907, Gordon, Clay, and Kearney proposed an amendment to the Mississippi state constitution that sought to enfranchise only white women. This southern campaign ultimately drew a line in the sand that northern NAWSA leadership would not cross in an attempt to pacify the South. Kate Gordon, frustrated with northern suffragists, separated herself from the NAWSA. Northern suffragists could no longer permit the racist rhetoric that Gordon, Clay, and Kearney promoted on behalf of NAWSA in the South. Alice Stone Blackwell, editor of the *Woman's Journal* and daughter of Henry Blackwell, implored Gordon and Clay to seek reason and call off the "black eye to the woman suffrage movement all through the North and West."²⁴

After Gordon and NAWSA parted ways, she went on to establish her own suffrage organization, the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference (SSWSC), in 1913. Gordon's group endorsed limited enfranchisement of educated property owning women through state legislated suffrage. Gordon's SSWSC motto was "Make the Southern States White." The organization emphasized white nationalism in the South,

²³ Kate Gordon wrote to Laura Clay, "If something is not done, we will be as mongrelized as Cuba." See Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 101 – 103.

²⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 123.

arguing that once intelligent, cultured, pure and noble women were given the ballot their presence would remove “the negro as a disturbing element in politics.”²⁵

In the early stages of the SSWSC, Gordon convinced herself that southern white women support would succeed in flanking efforts of the NAWSA. Gordon’s SSWSC played to the Old South traditions of white nobility and supremacy, insisting that southern women would rally to her side in the name of the South. Unfortunately, Gordon had to maintain relationships with the NAWSA due to financial woes that required her to speak cordially with northern leaders in exchange for financial assistance. In 1914, however, the SSWSC received an unexpected contribution from Alva Vanderbilt Belmont that finally freed the organization from the financial dependence of the NAWSA. With this newfound freedom, Gordon openly attacked NAWSA leaders for their lack of understanding and insensitivity to southern problems, accusing them of attempting to undercut the SSWSC in an “an intriguing, insidious way.”²⁶

Gordon continued to pick fights with the NAWSA and Congressional Union (CU), later known as the National Woman’s Party (NWP), over the next several years by arguing their interference on southern soil threatened the success of southern suffragists and the necessity of state sponsored suffrage.²⁷ During this time, Gordon’s extreme radical tactics and personal attacks on the NAWSA alienated her from long time southern supporters. Several other suffrage organizations even reprimanded her for her actions. The southern campaign was now an obsession for Gordon, who insisted that the only way

²⁵ See “Miss Kate Gordon Promoted to National Leadership and Will Leave During the Week for National Headquarters in New York To Take Up the Work of Corresponding Secretary of the Suffrage Movement, to Which She Has Been Called,” *Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1901.

²⁶ Kate Gordon to Laura Clay, November 6 1915, Laura Clay Papers, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

²⁷ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 153.

to protect the South from the “negro problem” was to enfranchise white educated women through state sponsored suffrage amendments.

For a short period, relationships improved between Gordon’s SSWSC and the NAWSA after Carrie Chatman Cat was re-elected as president. The pair appeared to get along until conflicts arose during the planning of the upcoming Democratic Convention and Catt’s new “winning plan” platform that endorsed a national suffrage campaign in favor of a federal amendment.²⁸ Gordon felt slighted at Catt’s intrusion on her SSWSC’s soil and competing for the loyalty of southern suffragists. The dispute continued between Gordon and Catt and fractured what remained of their relationship. Gordon inevitably won the support at the Democratic Convention, but at a very significant cost; the SSWSC was slowly fading from suffrage support and relevance. With Gordon’s caustic tongue at the helm, the SSWSC was unable to keep loyal supporters and financial backing to keep the organization alive. By 1918, the SSWSC was alive only in name with Gordon and Clay speaking on behalf of her organization, or lack thereof.²⁹ Still opposing Catt’s winning plan, Gordon committed herself to defeating a federal suffrage amendment by any means necessary, even if it meant aligning herself with antisuffragists in the name of the South.

Kate Gordon would not concede to Carrie Chapman Catt and her northern ambitions of changing the Southern Constitution, yet again, to force the South into submission.³⁰ Suffrage leaders called for Gordon’s resignation, insisting that she was interfering with NAWSA’s efforts in the South. Gordon refused to join the NAWSA and

²⁸ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 157-159.

²⁹ Green, “The Rest of the Story,” 186 -187.

³⁰ *Daily Picayune*, February 20, 1906.

held her opposition to a federal amendment close, right next to the scars of the 14th and 15th Amendments:

The trouble with you northern suffragists is your inability to see that the principle of self government for the state is as great as self government for that individual.... As I reread your letter on the negro woman and the question propounded, I realize how far apart we are in the understanding of the question. It is not the negro woman or the negro man especially but the realizing of the frauds of the 14th and 15th Amendments, and which if applied will mean for the [S]outh to accept the ideals of an inferior race or continue to perpetuate upon our people the tyranny of a one party power as a matter of self defense.³¹

For Gordon, the southern experiences and the influences of those around her instilled this sense of southern pride that she was committed to defending, no matter the consequence. Gordon's family and lived experiences shaped her political ideas and her opposition to universal suffrage by way of federal amendment.

Although the NAWSA indulged Gordon's rationale for a period of time, northern activists inevitably stopped making concessions to racism to exploit the South's "negro problem." Historian Marjorie Wheeler called northern attempts to stomach southern racism a "moral power struggle," which eventually developed into an unprincipled practice that NAWSA leaders were unable to tolerate. White southern suffragist support was ultimately divided between two separate suffrage agendas; Gordon's path for white women's suffrage to insure the continued "numerical superiority of the white electorate" and the NAWSA's mainstream appeal for woman suffrage on behalf of all women without exploiting ideas of southern racism.

White southern women, like Gordon, who nurtured the early southern campaign, primarily descended from elite families with strong and diverse educational backgrounds. These well-educated white women rose to the more notable, influential leadership

³¹ Kate Gordon to Ida Husted Harper, 9 December 1918, Laura Clay Papers, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

positions in the early stages of the campaign because of their experiences in the uncharted territory south of the Mason-Dixon line. Kate Gordon examined a white woman's wealth, education, and social status and determine how exactly the privilege of universal enfranchisement would impact women, primarily for individuals of color. Gordon rose to national recognition very early on in the southern suffrage movement because she was one of the few elite southern suffragists willing to campaign aggressively on the NAWSA's behalf in the South. Gordon's activism in the suffrage campaign started in the mid-1890s and carried through until the end of the movement. Her unique position as one of the first southern suffragists allowed her the control the first years of the southern campaign. She felt compelled to act out against a federal amendment for woman suffrage in the name states' rights and white supremacy. Gordon and her fellow southern activists insisted that the only way to preserve white supremacy in the South was to achieve woman suffrage at a state level, which would allow southern states to enact their own limitations to suffrage, like qualifications based on race, class, and education. Gordon maintained a position that excluded black women and uneducated white women from her southern suffrage agenda, because of her belief in the privileged class over gender, all the while refusing to compromise.

CHAPTER 3

SUE SHELTON WHITE: A MILITANT ONE

In 1906, the NAWSA campaign efforts refused to further condone the racist strategies of Kate Gordon the southern campaign grew stagnant and failed to mobilize. Southern suffrage efforts nevertheless remained dormant until the end of the first decade in the twentieth century. A revival after “the doldrums,” stagnate period of suffrage activity from 1896 – 1910, prompted different classes of women to organize and rally supporters to the movement.¹ The influences of white southern working class activists revitalized a ‘Second Wave’ of the southern suffrage campaign. Second Wave activists like Tennessee’s Sue Shelton White, who did not descend from privileged class, used dedication and leadership to ignite campaign efforts that omitted racially bias motives in an effort to secure universal enfranchisement for all women.

White fell into a separate category of white southern suffragists. White believed that all women are entitled to suffrage, regardless of race, socio-economic status, or education. Not all white southern suffragists carried an elite family name and social status. White managed to gain a modest position within the movement and secured herself as one of the most well-known Tennessee suffragists, without the highborn status and social standing of other suffragists like Kate Gordon. The economically diverse white southern women offer a refreshing look into the South and the suffrage question. The experiences of white southern women who grew up in a culturally diverse community had an alarming influence on the southern movement. Recognition of the contributions

¹ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2009), 200 – 206.

and activism of these culturally diverse white southern women did not occur until long after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

The transition from the Old South values to the modernized New South also produced a New Woman. This transition from Old to New created rifts between southern white women from different generations as the roles of women changed due to the economic shift away from a plantation system. Early experiences of white southern activists also played a significant role in the individual acceptance or rejection of woman suffrage ideals and racial discrimination. Dissecting the generational influences, upbringing, and social status' of three very distinct white southern activists offers an explanation into the development of three separate ideologies that complicated woman suffrage in the South. The early experiences of Josephine Pearson, Kate Gordon, and Sue Shelton White correlate with campaign efforts that either promoted or enticed racially motivated criticisms against African American enfranchisement and those that did not. Younger white southern suffragists like Sue Shelton White characterize an inability to sympathize with the traditional attitudes from the Old South's master class generations that she knew, or understood, very little about. White southern women submerged in traditional southern culture did not always end up as the extreme activist like Gordon; sometimes they ended up like Sue Shelton White.

Born in 1887, Sue Shelton White lived in the county seat of Henderson, Tennessee. White grew up in a community where blacks and whites coexisted because of a shared social and economic presence within the community. Early in her childhood she lived and interacted with blacks who lived within a close proximity to her home,

Our house stood near the center – on my father's map; but, as a matter of fact, it stood in the twilight zone between the main town and the Negro settlement know

as “Jaybird”. What had been planned as the street in front of the house became a yellow line of mud or dust with a plank walk on one side, leading to the road which was the beginning of Main Street. So, while a part of the town, we were isolated.²

White recalled her childhood, playing in the front, facing the white part of town. When she played in the back, she faced Jaybird, and “thus began, early in life, to observe the black and the white and to note some differences in their lives.”³ Members of the black community in Henderson knew White’s mother and often referred to her as “Ole Miss.” The family home was within “close proximity to at least one hundred Negroes” and as far as White was concerned, they made no attempt to steal the family chickens, stove wood, or her virginity.⁴

The economic status of White’s family during her childhood was poor. White’s father, James Shelton White, practiced as a lawyer and as a Methodist minister. Her father’s slave-holding family lost everything after the War while her Baptist mother, Mary Calista White, was from “immigrant, non-slaveholding stock.”⁵ During her early childhood, White’s father traveled throughout the South wherever the church sent him with his wife by his side. White’s mother did not join the Methodist congregation. White’s father did not convert his wife, which ultimately made the family’s presence within the congregation intolerable to the other Methodist members in it. According to White,

² Sue Shelton White, “Mother’s Daughter,” in *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York, NY: The Feminist Press, 1979), 48.

³ Sue Shelton White identified her lineage as “several generations of southerners.” See Sue Shelton White, “Race Question”, unpublished article to the editor of *Harpers Weekly Magazine*, Reel 13 of 14, Manuscripts of Sue Shelton White, Women’s Manuscript Collections from the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA.

⁴ Sue Shelton White, “Race Question”, 2.

⁵ Sue Shelton White, “Mother’s Daughter,” 47.

A Methodist preacher smote the cheek of his presiding elder several years before I was born. After that my father's preaching terminated abruptly. It was about my mother's right to be herself. The Methodist brethren wanted to force my mother into the Methodist church, an intimidation to which my father could not be a party.⁶

Early on, White's parents exposed her to the otherwise radical notion that women could have a choice in their lives. White even described her parents as Democrats, and "consistent in a moderate Southernism," but learned, through the actions of her father, that she did not always have to bow to the will of southern patriarchy.⁷ Growing up with parents who tolerated and accepted individuality perhaps influenced White, very early on, to make her own choices without seeking approval or validation as a woman stepping outside her private sphere.

White also experiences among white family members who had not upheld the racial code. At nine years old White lost her father, which forced her widowed mother to raise her children alone. When White was eleven, she was sent to visit her father's sister, Aunt Jane, in a distant part of the South. The larger city seemed older, more aristocratic and traditional than White's hometown of Henderson. Her aunt's house was close to the middle of town, "a stone's throw from the public square," and, with the exception of her servants cabin behind the house, not a single "Negro home in sight."⁸ Aunt Jane shared stories with her niece and talked to her about the slaves she had as a child and how she taught them to read. Aunt Jane's father, White's grandfather, had not objected to her teaching the slaves but did caution her that it was against the law. Her aunt's confession

⁶ Sue Shelton White, "Mother's Daughter," 46-47.

⁷ Sue Shelton White, "Mother's Daughter," 47.

⁸ Sue Shelton White, "Race Question," unpublished manuscript to editor of *Harper's Magazine*, 2, Papers of Sue Shelton White, Women's Manuscript Collections from the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA.

to breaking the law intrigued her, as did her admission to the attraction of Susan B. Anthony's abolitionist cause.⁹

The conversations and memories Aunt Jane shared about her life made a significant impact on the suffragist. Later on, White confessed that if she went to a "certain distant county" where her grandfather worked his slaves, she would "belong." She did not go, except to visit, and she "ignored the genteel limitations that would have preserved my status as a lady."¹⁰ White separated herself from her family's past and did not indulge in the Old South traditions or customs, which was a conscious, independent choice that she made. In addition, White's own mother modeled a rejection of traditional southern womanhood. Her own mother drew very few distinctions between the responsibilities of her sons and her daughters while raising children as a widow. These early experiences and influences followed White throughout her life as she moved into the public sphere.

At age fourteen, White's mother died leaving her an orphan. White spent the remainder of her youth under the care of "a fine old lady who wore lavender and slept in an antique bed and required a great deal of attention from servants."¹¹ It was with this old lady who exposed White to the lifestyle of small-town southern belles and the pre-Civil War days that spoke of Yankees, "Negros in their place", and scandals of interracial relationships. During her stay with this older woman, White met a girl named Mary Ann who was three-quarters white and always in a hurry to get home after dark. Mary Ann told White that she nearly had to fight her way home after dark past the corner restaurant by the railroad track. White did not fully comprehend why but all at once she developed

⁹ White, "Race Question," 3.

¹⁰ White, "Mother's Daughter," 50.

¹¹ White, "The Race Question," 4.

an awareness of the “protecting grace of white respectability” among her people. She later recalled it was southern white men who loitered around areas where she was able to pass by unmolested and her three quarter white friend Mary Ann could not.¹² These events stayed with White throughout her life, and even prompted her to write a memoir about the question of race. These early events pushed White to question issues of race and women’s rights, both black and white, as she moved on throughout her life.

White attended West Tennessee Business School in Dyer and, in 1905, got a job as a stenographer. Several years later, in 1907, White’s older sister Lucy gave up her job as a court reporter for the Tennessee Supreme Court in Jackson, Tennessee and passed it on to White. After hearing several cases, White understood that social justice was limited to one’s own environment:

“No matter how much of a free-thinker one may be, the conditions and traditions of one’s environment are restraining. Such restraint is both subjective and objective. There are conflicting views, emotions, impulses – even conflicting evidence.”¹³

White recalled the “innumerable families” who were in economic distress in the South, even suggesting the “almost clannish effort to regain economic power without sacrificing pride of prestige in the struggle.”¹⁴ White, again, acknowledged limits to freethinking minds of those who are submerged in a culture fueled by racial prejudice and the reactions to change which was most common in rural farming areas of the South where financial security was hard to maintain in the changing economic climate.

After several years in the courtroom as a court reporter, White joined together with local women to establish a local suffrage organization, the Jackson Equal Suffrage

¹² White, “The Race Question,” 5.

¹³ White, “The Race Question,” 6.

¹⁴ White, “Mother’s Daughter,” 50.

League in 1911.¹⁵ The experience White gained as a court reporter helped her earn respect as a public figure within the suffrage community because of her visibility in the courtroom and unique position at the Tennessee Supreme Court. A few years after the Jackson Equal suffrage League was organized, White moved to a new position as the recording secretary of the state-level suffrage organization Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association (TESA) in 1913. Only a year later, the TESA split because the decision of the NASWA to hold its national convention in Nashville. Once the NAWSA chose the host site, the Chattanooga division of the TESA withdrew their sponsorship to set up their own organization creating a bitter rivalry.

At the 1914 Nashville convention, NAWSA's President Dr. Anna Howard Shaw endorsed Laura Clay's U.S. Elections Bill that would give women the right to vote for U.S. Congressmen and Senators. Dr. Shaw encouraged support for the "Shafroth-Palmer Amendment" that more or less placated southern anxieties by placing the power of enfranchisement in the hands of the state. The shift in Shaw's leadership away from the proposed federal Susan B. Anthony Amendment, also known as the Bristow-Mondell Resolution, and towards a state sponsored amendment divided suffragists yet again. After lengthy discussions over the course of several days during the Nashville convention, Shaw confirmed her strategy to solicit suffrage from individual states, thus giving in to states' rights supporters and conceding with southern politicians, a proposal that Kate Gordon was sure to approve of.¹⁶ The Susan B. Anthony Amendment lost the spotlight in

¹⁵ Paula F. Casey, "Four Prominent Tennessee' Suffragists: Tennessee's Superb Suffragists," in *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage*, eds. Charlotte Crawford and Ruth Johnson Smiley (North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 55.

¹⁶ Sue Shelton White to Elizabeth Hoyt, April 13, 1931, Manuscripts of Sue Shelton White, Women's Manuscript Collections from the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA.

the South and energies for local NAWSA affiliated organizations shifted toward individual state referendums. White did not support the newly conferred NAWSA practice, but continued to support the organization nonetheless.

At the end of the Convention, the rivalry over the Tennessee Suffrage Association ended up strengthening suffrage support in Tennessee. White watched Nashville journalist and suffragist Ida Clyde Clark feed the rivalry in 1915 by setting up an independent organization, the Business and Professional Women's Equal Suffrage League, which caused each organization to struggle for control and increased the scope of suffrage. White saw the wisdom of Clark's aim and even encouraged the rivalry in an effort to stimulate suffrage sponsorship. If the rivalry could create enough discussion, perhaps more women would take interest in suffrage activities. However, in 1917 the national suffrage campaign directive shifted organizations toward unity in support of the Great War, very similar to Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's early activism during the Civil War.¹⁷

In the beginning, White complied with the requests for women to set suffrage efforts aside in order to support the troops and their country. However, much like Anthony and Stanton's struggle with Henry Blackwell and Wendell Phillips, White was not happy about suffrage being cast aside for the sake of another political objective and

¹⁷ The inability to sway the South from their stronghold on slavery and dominating patriarchal presence threw the nation into a civil war after the South adopted disunion strategies. Anthony and other women's rights leaders suspended women's activism until 1863 in the name of natural human rights. According to Faye E. Dudden, women joined together with abolitionists in the early stages of the Civil War because they felt it was right and that emancipation would require defining the rights of a free person, which would include women. See Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 48-49

sought to collaborate with a more passionate organization.¹⁸ In 1918, White left her state-level suffrage organization and moved to Washington D.C. to fight along side the militant suffragist Alice Paul, a Quaker from New Jersey, and her organization, the National Woman's Party (NWP). Paul worked abroad with the Pankhurst mother-daughter duo in England where she learned tactics in social protest that she intended to bring back to America to secure the vote at home. White was convinced Paul's radical tactics and relentless perseverance towards a federal amendment was necessary to secure a political victory, even in the face of protesting a wartime president.

Sue Shelton White disagreed with Kate Gordon's radical white suffrage proposal and argued that the only way to secure enfranchisement for all women in the United States was through a federal amendment. White and Gordon advocated for woman suffrage in the South while Josephine Pearson, arriving later on the scene, sought to block the suffragist campaign in her home state of Tennessee. Josephine Pearson insisted that if a federal amendment secured the vote for women, it would threaten what remained of southern state sovereignty and race equality. Pearson also claimed that woman suffrage, as a whole, destroyed the very tradition of white southern womanhood. Both Gordon and White rejected the notion that suffrage poisoned femininity and womanhood, but remained divided on issues of race and class.

White fell on the opposite end of the suffrage spectrum, apart from Josephine Pearson and Kate Gordon, not only because of her socio-economic status, but also for her

¹⁸ Wendell Phillips held support of freedmen's rights and sidelined appeals to incorporate women's suffrage, insisting, "This hour belongs to the negro."¹⁸ Stanton and Anthony attempted to merge the issue of woman suffrage with black male suffrage but abolitionist Henry Blackwell suppressed their suggestion, insisting that incorporating woman suffrage with black male suffrage would compromise the quick passage of the proposed amendment. See Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 177.

dedication to a federal amendment for all women. Historian Elna C. Green evaluates White's sudden interest in the NWP and resignation from the NAWSA by suggesting, "Southern suffragists might have been more eager for the federal amendment and for more aggressive campaigning than NAWSA had (and subsequent historians have) recognized."¹⁹ This further complicates the question of suffrage activism in the South and validates the necessity of further research into the lives of individual white southern suffragists.

Southern white women like Sue Shelton White spark an entirely new research approach to the southern suffrage movement because of her advocating for a federal amendment to secure enfranchisement regardless of race, education, or social status. White was not an elitist, nor did she attend the best schools, in fact, she grew up *with* former slaves and held no "traditional southern" opinions of white supremacy. If anything, White attempted to further explain the conflicting views and southern prejudices that southerners experienced while growing up south of the Mason Dixon line. White assessed the South's way of thinking an unpublished manuscript,

The South is unhappy, sensitive, uneasy in its conscience, about the negro. We ask questions of ourselves and then question our own answer to our questions But again, we question, worry, fret. We try to do right,- and then something happens. Perhaps there is an "outrage" somewhere,- perhaps a lynching,- perhaps a White House tea. Where we dared hope to see the sunrise and daylight, the thick red of the bloody shirt mocks us. Mob psychology overwhelms fair intentions of individuals. Rednecks lynch a "nigger" and inter-racial understanding hangs suspended by the same string.²⁰

White's moral compass also propelled her to act on behalf of a suffragist, Miss Maud Younger of California, from an "unincorporated organization," the NWP, in Tennessee

¹⁹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 28.

²⁰ White, "Race Question," 6.

that was denied hearings because she was “pro-German, disloyal, and un-American.”²¹

White recalled that she found herself “playing a lone hand” during her time as recording secretary of the TESA because moral support for certain political positions, like that of Miss Maud Younger, were rarely made public.²²

The vote was important to White and other women like her who wanted to use enfranchisement as a tool to better their own situation, as she witnessed in her youth and experiences in the courtroom. However, white southern women like Josephine Pearson saw no advantage to the vote when they could secure what they needed without stepping foot inside the political arena of men.

White grew up in the New South during the Gilded Age during the arrival of the “New Woman.” The lack of ‘Old South’ influence during her early youth left White knowing very little about traditional southern womanhood, white nationalism, and the great epoch of southern state sovereignty. Growing up in west Tennessee during the latter part of the nineteenth century shaped White’s perspective on race relations and ideas of southern womanhood. White grew up observing the differences between ways of life for black and whites while living across from Jaybird. After being orphaned, White was exposed to the limitations of her own gender by other women who remained loyal to the old antebellum southern traditions and discouraged women moving outside of the private sphere. She one-day fell into an argument about suffrage:

I found that almost unaware I had committed myself. I became a suffragist, an active one, finally a militant one. As I plunged deeper into the suffrage fight, I had to marshal all my defenses. Prejudices were strong. I fared better than some of my associates by virtue of strength gained from my single-handed grappling with life.²³

²¹ Shelton White to Elizabeth Hoyt, April 3, 1931.

²² Shelton White to Elizabeth Hoyt, April 3, 1931.

²³ White, “Mother’s Daughter,” 51.

White's life experience allowed her to discern for herself what kind of tool suffrage should be used for. Her commitment to suffrage occurred all at once. White was not groomed for a position on the suffrage question, she made a conscious decision on her own to become a suffragists. White did not allow southern prejudices or Old South traditions to influence her advocacy for universal suffrage rights. Sue Shelton White maintained a resolute position arguing neither against black women or states' rights, but for all women – equally.

CHAPTER 4

- DIVIDE AND CONQUER: TAKING ON THE SOLID SOUTH

During the suffrage campaign, women in the South, both black and white, struggled to maintain a unified agenda for the woman suffrage cause. Forceful arguments both for and against the proposed legislation complicated the issue. Suffrage advocates fought long and hard against traditional institutions of male politics, and some battled the long-standing practices of southern racism. The barriers suffrage activists encountered from opponents and political naysayers present a significantly more complex version of the amendment's history than appears in most of the historical literature. Southern women watched as liberation of former male slaves from bondage and then presented with an American citizenship. Shortly after, to the dismay of early northern suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the government enfranchised black men without ever considering women.

The heart of suffrage sponsorship and activism prior to the 1890s was concentrated in northern states and the newly established western territories. Maintaining relevance in the North and western territories was almost effortless due in part from activism surrounding the ideas of individual human rights, which found roots in northern abolitionism. The delicate position of the South, with all of its conservative politics and patriarchal structure, limited activism to the northern and western states. Suffrage organizations designated very few resources towards promoting woman suffrage in the South by the end of the nineteenth century; there was simply not a large enough audience for the cause prior to the late 1880s. Western territories proved significant to the suffrage cause and leadership, as western politics embraced the changing of the tide and offered more opportunity for new legislation that extended women's rights and political

enfranchisement.¹ Northern suffragists experienced the unsettling response to the Fifteenth amendment and the violent conflicts from political upheaval that occurred in the years following Reconstruction; therefore taking on any attempt at suffrage activism in the South was more or less viewed as a risk. The attitudes of elite white southern women suggested that woman suffrage was anything but welcome.² The lack of certain acceptance coupled with the uncontested return of conservative democrats in southern politics kept northern suffragists at a careful distance.

National campaign leaders doubted they could gain any significant headway for woman suffrage in the conservative South during the late nineteenth century. Some white southern women held no interest in suffrage politics, favoring the traditional role of the southern lady and her ability to influence their families, husbands, and homes. South Carolina's *Newbury Herald and News* published a response to woman suffrage:

We see no argument in the letter to convince us of the position take by Mrs. Chapin, and we do not believe the ladies care anything about voting, and do not think they would vote if the privilege ere extended to them. In some Northern States the right of suffrage is extended the women in the election of school boards, and our recollection is that after having this privilege for about six years, not more than an average of one woman in twenty-five takes advantage of the privilege, and we do not believe the proportion would be that large in South Carolina. We know it would not be among the white women.³

¹ Western territories also offered more opportunities for women, such as Mrs. Lucy B. Taylor. Taylor was the first woman to graduate with a dental degree from Cincinnati Dental College in 1866. After graduation, Taylor opened up a practice in Iowa and another office in Chicago. She was born in New York, but proclaimed love for her "adopted country – the West". The West made her recognition and success in the dental profession possible. See Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 402.

² After the Civil War, southern women lacked protection and were vulnerable without the luxury of the Old South's master class status to protect them. Southern women rallied around white southern men in challenging black freedoms and establishing a common goal of white supremacist rhetoric in an effort to prolong the master class' diminishing social status. See Faust, *Mothers of Invention*.

³ "Woman Suffrage," *Newbury Herald and News*, March 31, 1887.

With articles like the *Newbury Herald and News* circulating, appealing to the South for suffrage support proposed difficulties about the success of the movement, even from

Laura Clay:

[Clay] thought the Committee were discouraged about the work in the South. She, as a Southern woman, was not. She realized the difficulties. There was a good deal of suffrage sentiment in the South, but it was almost wholly unorganized. Both the Prohibition Party and the People's Party (national) are hesitating about adopting a suffrage plant, for fear it will cost them the support of the South. It is important to remove this difficulty, for politicians will not grant us suffrage from high moral motives alone.⁴

If the suffrage campaign was to assemble further south, activists would have to deal with the hardship, limited funds, and womanpower in states that required much more campaign work because of the lack of suffrage activism over the last several decades.⁵ In 1895, Carrie Chapman Catt acknowledged the need for more support from the new national organization from other states and insisted that the organization itself is ineffective because support for suffrage was splintered without one unifying body to campaign in every state on behalf of woman suffrage as one voice.⁶ The NAWSA

⁴ Ann Gordon, ed. *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Vol. V: Their Place Inside the Body-Politic, 1887 to 1895* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 415.

⁵ Regarding limited resources, Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt were invited to address several clubs during a southern speaking tour but declined due to financial depression that limited ability of work. See Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage IV*, 465 – 466. Extra campaign work was required in the South because issues of suffrage “matured more than a generation later” than the North. See Green, *Southern Strategies*, 6.

⁶ Carrie Chapman Catt offered her report on the Plan of Work Committee by stating, “There are illustrious men and women in every State, and there are men and women innumerable, who are not known to the public, who are openly and avowedly woman suffragists, yet we do not possess the benefit of their names on our membership lists or the financial help of their dues. In other words, the size of our membership is not at all commensurate with the sentiment for woman suffrage. The reason for this condition is plain; the chief work of suffragists for the past forty years has been education and agitation, and not organization. The time has come when the educational work has borne its fruit, and there are States in which there is sentiment enough to carry a woman suffrage amendment, but it is individual and not organized sentiment, and is, therefore, ineffective.” See Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage, IV*, 249.

acknowledged the potential that lay in the South, recognizing interest in for woman suffrage was indeed possible.

Early on in the southern campaign, the NAWSA leadership accommodated southern opinions and appeased white conservative political views to win over support through the leadership of Kate Gordon. During the National Suffrage Convention in 1893 NAWSA, President Susan B. Anthony openly objected to the possibility of alternating the site of the annual convention to cities outside of Washington. Anthony declared:

“The sole object, it seems to me, of this national organization is to bring the combined influence of all the States upon Congress to secure national legislation. The very moment you change the purpose of this great body from National to State work you have defeated its object. It is the business of the state to do the district work; to create public sentiment; to make a national organization possible, and then to bring their united power to the capital and focus it on Congress.”⁷

Anthony’s objection was overturned, and the delegates voted in favor of hosting the annual convention at other sites, including southern cities. Two years later in 1895, NAWSA hosted the National American Convention for suffrage in Atlanta, Georgia in an attempt to engage southern supporters on their home turf.

During that same year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton published “Educated Suffrage,” an article that proposed to eliminate foreign vote. As an unexpected result, politicians and other activists suggested additional suffrage restrictions towards other minority groups after the publication.⁸ Stanton and Anthony both seemed to target the South and make nativist arguments in an effort to propel the suffrage question forward. Whether or not

⁷ Ida Husted Harper, ed., *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters, and Many from Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1898), 738.

⁸ While there is no mention of restricting the vote to strictly white women, Stanton’s article suggests her support of limitations on suffrage rights. See Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 199.

Stanton's intentions were to appeal to the South, her proposal to eliminate foreign votes certainly increased southern sympathy for white educated women's enfranchisement.

Class based arguments propelled early suffrage work in the South to the front lines. Anthony failed to keep the focus of suffrage at the national level and finally conceded that the national campaign must begin work in the southern states to rally support. In 1895, southern activism was limited to Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Louisiana because of financial and existing suffrage support. Anthony and NAWSA Committee Organizer Carrie Chapman Catt embarked on a lecture tour to "arouse sentiment" and increase suffrage support for the upcoming national convention in Atlanta, Georgia.⁹ Catt's speeches focused on appealing to southern Democrats by urging southern states to grant women suffrage rights with educational provisions.

Henry Blackwell, abolitionist and publisher of the *Woman's Journal*, also joined Catt and made campaign speeches at southern suffrage conventions by urging politicians to seek the enfranchisement of literate women. Blackwell also suggested a property stipulation in addition to educational provisions.¹⁰ Carrie Chapman Catt's speeches suggested that the NAWSA catered to southern politicians by accepting a states' rights approach towards the "negro question" in the South. Henry Blackwell first suggested this platform to southern Democrats as a way to use state legislations and generate laws limiting suffrage through various grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and poll taxes.

⁹ Harper, ed., *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, 806.

¹⁰ There was no mention of using race as a way to limit woman suffrage. See Marjorie Julian Spruill, "Race Reform and Reaction at the Turn of the Century: Southern Suffragists, the NAWSA, and the "Southern Strategy" in Context," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, ed. Jean Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107.

Southern Democrats were open to the idea of woman suffrage as a way to combat the “negro problem” so long as the women were behind the idea.¹¹

Southern politicians indeed humored the idea of granting women suffrage in an effort to counteract the black vote and restore white political power in the South. Many southern Democrats opened up to the idea due in part from Henry Blackwell’s 1867 pamphlet, “What the South Can Do: How the Southern States Can Make Themselves Masters of the Situation.” From 1880 through 1890, Blackwell’s pamphlet worked its way into the political debates of southern politicians as a real solution to combating the black vote. Blackwell’s argument proposed a simple solution: enfranchising women in the South gave the white vote its strength in numbers, which guaranteed a white political majority.¹² Reading the southern newspapers only confirmed the sentiment of white southern men’s disdain for black voters:

White supremacy will not be confined to St. Landry parish in the coming election. The white people of other sections are arousing to the necessity of purifying our elections by eliminating that absolutely corrupt and dangerous class of voters. Ominous rumblings can be heard, which means that the day of usefulness of Mr. Nigger is at an end.¹³

These arguments and southern prejudices forced NAWSA leadership to lean on white southern suffragists, like Kate Gordon, to appease the southern Democrat’s conservative view of suffrage in order to win over the political majority.

The NAWSA approached Laura Clay in 1896 to help plan a strategy for the untapped suffragist support in the South. With Clay organizing a number of elite white

¹¹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 11.

¹² Henry Blackwell, “What the South Can Do: How the Southern States Can Make Themselves Masters of the Situation,” in *History of Women’s Suffrage, Vol. II. 1861-1876*, eds. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1881), 929-930.

¹³ “Quote Democrats, Brother,” *St. Landry Clarion*, September 7, 1895.

southern women in various southern states, NAWSA proceeded with a plan to win over southern support by placating southern politicians' views of white supremacy. Kate Gordon, emphasized the importance of recruiting southern women with "a name to conjure with" for NAWSA leadership positions.¹⁴ Clay and Gordon campaigned their own agenda in the early years of the NAWSA's southern campaign. As educated white southern women with respectable names, northern leaders looked to Clay and Gordon for early guidance in the unfamiliar territory.

Clay and Gordon jumped behind the white majority argument, insisting the "whites only" measure is the only way a political victory would be achieved in the South. Clay and Gordon moved into influential positions in the NAWSA in order to drive the southern movement towards winning woman suffrage to preserve white supremacy. Clay and Gordon were two of the most powerful white suffragist voices from the South, championing reform measures in their home states of Louisiana and Kentucky to put elite white women at the forefront of the campaign. Kate Gordon was one of the first southern women who held a leadership position within NAWSA and was able to drive the national campaign on a path towards appeasing southern attitudes of white supremacy in the early years of the southern campaign.

Unfortunately for Clay and Gordon, southern politicians found a legal alternative to restrict the number of black votes. The legal victory for southern Democrats came from an 1898 Supreme Court ruling out of Mississippi which upheld provisions for voter registrations outlined in the state constitution; which included literacy tests and poll

¹⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 48

taxes.¹⁵ After the Supreme Court upheld the Mississippi ruling on voter registration requirements, other southern states quickly followed suit by implementing their own versions of voter registration restrictions called “grandfather clauses”.¹⁶ Once the grandfather clause became common practice in the South, southern Democrats no longer considered possibilities of what white woman suffrage could bring to the South. Southern states were able to suppress the black vote without the need or assistance of a ‘counterbalance vote’ from white women. Grandfather clauses were upheld by the Supreme Court and now legal throughout the South. The legalization of these voting restrictions rendered the principal argument to southern politicians for women’s votes absolutely worthless. After the South won the legal battle in favor of the grandfather clauses, the suffrage campaign failed to achieve any significant headway until the early twentieth century.

The period of lag in the campaign is commonly referred to as the “doldrums” due to the stagnant activity, minimal activism in the South, and conservative leadership of NAWSA. This lull in southern suffrage activity was attributed to the extent at which northern suffragists were willing to go in order to appease white southern politicians and suffrage activists. Early efforts spearheaded by women like Kate Gordon ultimately

¹⁵ Henry Williams, an African American, was indicted and convicted of first-degree murder by an all white jury. Williams argued the all white jury was not a “jury of his peers” and appealed to the Supreme Court on the grounds that voting restrictions in the state did not allow him equal protection under the law and the right to a fair trial under a jury of his peers. The Supreme Court ruled 9-0 that voting restrictions in the state constitution did not violate the Fifteenth amendment, as the provisions were not exclusively discriminatory to African Americans, the provisions applied to all eligible voters in the state of Mississippi. See *Henry Williams v. State of Mississippi*, 70 U.S. 213 (1898).

¹⁶ From 1898 – 1910, southern states implemented “grandfather clauses” that did not disenfranchise African Americans directly; rather, it granted voting rights to direct descendants of pre-1866 voters without requiring a literacy test. The clause granted nearly all white males pass-through status while almost all southern black men were not even granted citizenship until 1868 and voting rights until 1870. See Kermit Hall, et al., *American Legal History Cases and Materials* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 454.

hindered any kind of real progress in the South. Historian Marjorie Spruill Wheeler also suggests that the doldrums were due in part from northern suffragists unable to move southern leaders from their blatant racist tactics, which prevented any new campaign strategies or approach.¹⁷ Wheeler's analysis is an accurate assessment based on the political climate and minimal suffrage activity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For southern suffragists, the last decade of the nineteenth century ended in one giant setback due to the significant change in strategy as a result of the upheld legality of voter restrictions.

Clay and Gordon continued to defend white supremacy in the South as a way of respecting southern men who remained bitter over black men's enfranchisement and the loss of state sovereignty during Reconstruction. Nearly a decade later, the South finally bounced back from the doldrums that crushed early spirits of NAWSA's southern campaign through the revival by a younger generation of suffragists. The Second Wave movement in the early twentieth century came through a new wave of suffrage activism by younger generations of white southern suffragists like Sue Shelton White who challenged traditional views of southern patriarchy in an effort to enfranchise all women. When Sue Shelton White joined the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century, she advocated for universal suffrage and did not allow the racist environment of the South or elite white women like Kate Gordon to pollute her objectives.

Momentum in the South also suffered greatly from a generational lag, since not all the women active in the southern movement had the same types of experience in activism, paid work, and higher education. After nearly a decade of learning the ropes of running public campaigns and gaining experience in activist roles, white southern women

¹⁷ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 125.

were finally catching up to work at the same level with northern suffragist. A change towards how to approach the South came after the second wave with white southern women like Sue Shelton White, a modest court reporter who was committed to universal enfranchisement for all women.

As support for woman suffrage grew stronger, suffrage activists hoped that the publicity and success of suffrage at home and abroad would inspire influential politicians like Theodore Roosevelt, a presidential nominee under the Progressive Party platform, to pledge support for woman suffrage.¹⁸ Suffragists also implemented various demonstrations, like parades, that had the potential to incite public curiosity and bring more awareness, good and bad, to the suffrage movement as a whole. The goal of Paul's planned demonstrations was to create a conversation around woman suffrage by forcing the debate into national headlines, thereby causing a trickle down effect to the homes of the American people. Anything NAWSA could do to get the South talking about suffrage, they were willing to try.

One of the most dramatic attempts to publicize the national movement on a much larger scale and build on the support from Washington came from Alice Paul's suffrage parade of 1913. Women from all over the world came to show support and take part in the first national suffrage parade, including women from the South.¹⁹ For the first time many white southern suffragists encountered black suffragists from other states and

¹⁸ Washington State achieved suffrage in 1910 with suffrage support increasing in all other states shortly thereafter. The issue of equal suffrage was placed at the forefront of Roosevelt's presidential campaign thus stimulating suffrage at a federal level. See Kenneth R. Johnson, "Kate Gordon and the Woman-Suffrage Movement in the South," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 38 (1972): 366.

¹⁹ Women from over twenty nations were represented in the parade, as well as representatives from nearly every state. Representative R. P. Hobson of Alabama was also present and marched with the women in the sixth section. See "5,000 Women March in a Woman's Suffrage Demonstration, Beset by Crowds," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1913.

organizations. Although not all southern women posed any objection to marching with black women, Kate Gordon and fellow southern white women threatened pull participation from the parade if black women march with them as equals.²⁰ Facing a very delicate situation, Paul relied on compromise to keep the issue of suffrage a national focus and placate white southern women. While the suffrage parade proved successful in bringing national attention to woman suffrage in the news, Paul later recalled that white southern women did not want to be “personally associated in any way with colored women” and always threatened to leave the campaign on account of racial prejudice.²¹ Carrie Chapman Catt also addressed the delicate nature of the South and segregation, insisting that the South must be pacified in regards to segregation but not necessarily by excluding black women’s participation altogether.²² Paul and Catt both initiated conservative approaches to the South, which faults their overall activism towards women of color.

Not all women in the South were in favor of woman suffrage or happy to see its success. Although support for woman suffrage grew, a counterbalance of antisuffrage advocacy dominated by white southern men and women developed just as quickly.

Josephine Pearson, a well-educated white woman from Gallatin, Tennessee, held deep concerns against woman suffrage in order to save the honor of southern woman, “States

²⁰ Christine Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman’s Party, 1920-1928* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 26 – 27.

²¹ Alice Paul insisted that she maintained support of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and other black organizations because the views of the NWP were never the issue, southern white women were. See “Conversations with Alice Paul: Woman Suffrage and the Equal Rights Amendment,” Interview by Amelia Fry, Suffragists Oral History Project, University of California at Berkley, November 1972 and May 1973, 134.

²² Jad Adams, *Women and the Vote: A World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 241.

Rights” integrity, and the Constitutional record of Tennessee.²³ Pearson vowed to keep the issue out of Tennessee and defeat any political measure brought into her great state. The southern antisuffrage campaign operated on a political platform of racism and conformity to traditional southern womanhood, which honored patriarchy and the separates spheres of men and women.

Through this research, generational lines are clearly drawn which created conflict between the older groups of white southern activists. Kate Gordon supported state suffrage and clashed with younger activists like Sue Shelton White over the best strategy to achieve woman suffrage on southern soil. The idea of a federal amendment that enfranchised all women created tension in the South, as not all southern suffragists favored the idea of universal suffrage. Southern white women argued that intervention by the federal government of the elective process posed a threat to states’ rights and white supremacy.²⁴ Kate Gordon and her followers feared the possibility of woman suffrage by federal amendment and the further extension of black suffrage. Gordon’s group demonstrated their disapproval by joining suffrage organizations that proposed limitations on the reach of enfranchisement within each state. Other white southern women who entirely objected the very idea of woman suffrage, like Josephine Pearson, dedicated their efforts to anti-suffrage campaigns to combat the success of suffrage activism. Unlike suffragists in the North, Sue Shelton White and other southern supporters of the NAWSA agenda, were faced the difficult challenge of advocating for woman suffrage against two opposing forces in the South; one of those opposing forces being a faction of former southern NAWSA activists.

²³ Pearson, “Presidents Message,” 220.

²⁴ Johnson, “Kate Gordon and the Woman-Suffrage Movement in the South,” 366.

Overall, the suffrage campaign in the South proved to be more complex than early activists anticipated. The fractioned movement in the South suffered greatly from early setbacks in the late nineteenth century due to limited sponsorship and generational disparities. Although the early twentieth century “second wave” appeared to hold more promise, conflicting ideas of true southern womanhood compound with various influences of white nationalism and racial prejudice created a much more complex atmosphere for a national organization to survive in. Each argument for and against woman suffrage that flourished in the ‘Solid South’ was no doubt influenced by southern tradition as experienced by individual activists. Northern suffragists did not recognize the affect of white southern experiences and the influence of the Old South on the southern suffrage movement. Only in hindsight are historians able to dissect and unpack the complex nature of the southern campaign and the unexpected influence of individual experiences of southern womanhood.

CHAPTER 5

THE PATH TO A PERFECT THIRTY SIX: TENNESSEE AND THE WHOLE

A DISTASTEFUL AFFAIR

Three white southern women, Kate Gordon, Sue Shelton White, and Josephine Pearson, fought mercilessly in the political arena on the issue of suffrage prior to arriving in Nashville, Tennessee in 1920. Gordon, a Louisiana native, barely kept her political position relevant in 1919 after losing the majority of her support and financial backing for the SSWSC. The more Gordon spoke out against the NAWS's supported federal amendment, the faster she faded from the southern suffrage spotlight. Sue Shelton White left the Tennessee suffrage scene in 1918 to join Alice Paul and the NWP picket line in Washington, D.C. White's choice to leave her home state in the South, and the NAWSA, centered around Carrie Chapman Catt's redistribution of NAWSA's resources from southern states back to Congress when the South was finally gaining momentum as well as bitterness from Tennessee suffragists who did not agree with White's association with Alice Paul's militant and "unincorporated" organization.¹ Josephine Pearson, a Tennessee native, arrived to the political arena in 1917 but was no stranger to supporting the antisuffrage campaign in her early career through various lectures and newspaper submissions. In Pearson's short tenure as a leader of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage, she managed to establish and maintain a significant political position in Tennessee through her network of well-placed acquaintances that put her at the heart of the battle. With the Federal Amendment looming toward southern soil, Tennessee emerged as the platform of splintered sisterhood.

¹ Sue Shelton White to Elizabeth Hoyt, April 3, 1931.

By 1910, five states, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Washington, granted women suffrage rights. In the territory of Alaska, the first bill approved by the governor in 1913 granted women suffrage rights.² Sixteen states, approximately one third, required educational standards for suffrage in 1910; half of those states were in the South.³ In states like Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Virginia, elaborate systems of alternative tests were already in place to “cut down the negro vote to five percent of adult males.”⁴ If woman suffrage ever came to the South, and voting provisions remained constitutional, the same type of voting restrictions could be used to suppress the woman vote.

In 1911, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) formed, joining the northern state anti-suffragist organizations together. Southern states did not organize antisuffrage campaigns as quickly, hoping that custom and tradition would hold off the suffrage movement in the South. Historian Anastasia Sims argues that black rights and woman’s rights are inseparable to southern anti-suffragists. In their minds, both black men and women’s enfranchisement would sabotage social order in the South.⁵

Once the suffrage movement gained traction and the anti-suffrage organizations made their way down into southern states, white southern conservatives openly questioned the issue of woman suffrage. A Virginia anti-suffragist made the connection

² Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* (New York, New York: J.P. Lippincot, 1975), 166-168.

³ Frank Abbott Magruder, *American Government with a Consideration of the Problems of Democracy* (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1918), 360.

⁴ Mary Brown Sumner Boyd, *The Woman Citizen: A General Handbook of Civics with Special Consideration of Women’s Citizenship* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1918), 42.

⁵ Anastasia Sims, “The Radical Vision of the Anti-suffragists,” in *Votes for Women: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 110.

plainly by stating, “[woman suffrage] would undo the work of the constitutional convention by throwing the balance of power into the hands of the Negro woman instead of the Negro men.”⁶ The arguments for the southern anti-suffragists’ campaign cited an infringement of state sovereignty and the end of white supremacy in the South:

2. WE ARE UNALERTABLY OPPOSED TO THE ADOPTION OF THE SUSAN B. ANTHONY AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, which Amendment will force the unrestricted ballot upon unwilling majorities in the Southern States, and will place the control of the electorate outside the Sovereign State.

4. We oppose any measure that threatens the continuation of **Anglo-Saxon** domination of Social and Political affairs in each and every State of the Union without strife and bloodshed which would inevitable follow an attempt to overthrow it.⁷

By 1910, most southern Democrats assumed the majority of Americans agreed with their view of the Fifteenth Amendment as a mistake of federal powers to interfere with states’ rights control of individual suffrage. As early political debates over woman suffrage surfaced in the South, southern democrats regarded it as an “extension of the Fifteenth Amendment” and an infringement of states’ rights.⁸ From a social standpoint, anti-suffragist men and women argued that women belong in a private sphere, away from political power and influence. Additionally, Tennessee anti-suffragist leader John J. Vertress published pamphlets emphasizing his belief of women’s equality, “It is often asserted that men and women are equal; everybody knows that they are not.”⁹ In the same

⁶ Advisory Committee Opposed to Woman Suffrage, “The Virginia General Assembly and Woman Suffrage,” Southern Pamphlet Collection, Rare Books Division, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

⁷ “Declaration of Principles of the Southern Women’s League for the Rejection of the Proposed Susan B. Anthony Amendment to the Constitution of the United States,” Papers of Josephine Pearson, reel 1.4, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

⁸ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 19.

⁹ John J. Vertress, “An Address to the Men of Tennessee on Female Suffrage,” 1916, pamphlet, Papers of Josephine Pearson, reel 1.4, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

publication, Vertress also referenced Supreme Court cases *Muller v Oregon* (1908)¹⁰ and *re Mackenzie v Hare, et al* 239 (1915)¹¹ further demonstrating obvious legal sentiment and popular opinion of women's inferior role in American society and existing political institutions.

In 1914, the Rev. Anna Howard Shaw resigned from the NAWSA presidency and NAWSA leadership reinstated Carrie Chapman Catt as president. Catt followed Alice Paul's National Woman's Party (NWP) lead and united suffragists to focus strictly on a path towards a federal amendment. Southern politicians disagreed with NAWSA's strategy of a federal amendment. Congressman John Humphrey Small of North Carolina maintained, "The regulation of suffrage has always been recognized as part of the local self-government of every state," therefore another suffrage amendment would "violate one of the fundamentals of our government."¹² Neighboring South Carolina Senator Christie Benet pleaded to the U.S. Senate:

We believe in my state, and I subscribe to that doctrine, that one of the fundamental rights of sovereignty of our state is involved in this resolution – the right to prescribe the qualification of our electors.¹³

¹⁰ In 1908, Curt Muller, superintendent of Grand Laundry, required Mrs. E. Gotcher to work more than her required ten hours, which contradicted an Oregon statute. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Oregon law, which required regulations for persons not deemed capable of protecting their physical well-being. This ruling was considered a setback to women's rights activists as it legally affirmed the physical inferiority of women. See *Muller v Oregon* 208 U.S., 412 (1908).

¹¹ Mrs. Gordon Mackenzie applied as a registered voter in the state of California in 1913. Because of her marriage to Gordon Mackenzie, a native of Great Britain, her registration was refused on the grounds of § 3 of the Citizenship Act of 1907: "Any American woman who marries a foreigner thereby takes the nationality of her husband and is not limited as to place or effect prior to the termination of the marital relation." The Supreme Court ruled against Mackenzie and denied her right to voter registration in addition to confirming the loss of her citizenship. See *Mackenzie v Hare*, 239 U.S. 299 (1915).

¹² J. H. Small to Mrs. J. Arthur, April 14, 1917, John Humphrey Small Papers, Manuscript Documents, Duke University Library.

¹³ "Speech of Senator Benet," September 28, 1918, reprinted in *Woman Patriot*, October 19, 1918, 3.

Southern Democrats appeared to stand resolute in their collective ideology of rejecting any form of additional federal infringement on rights southern states had left. Leaving woman suffrage in the hands of each state allowed the South to suppress women's rights as well as the rights of African Americans as they saw fit.

At the 1916 Democratic Convention, the Democrats proclaimed: “[We] recommend the extension of the franchise to the women of the country by the States, upon the same terms as men.”¹⁴ It appeared southern Democrats favored state sponsored suffrage in an effort to keep the federal amendment, and the federal government, out of the South. In addition, using Blackwell's statistical argument, state sponsored suffrage allowed for legislators to impose the same types of “Jim Crow” restrictions placed on African American males in many parts of the South. The democratic President, Woodrow Wilson, hinted at the possibility of endorsing a federal amendment during his speech at a NAWSA Convention in Atlantic City in September of same year.¹⁵ Southern white suffragists like Kentucky suffragist Madeline McDowell Breckinridge and Virginia suffragist Lila Meade Valentine both agreed that suffrage is a state right and should remain the exclusive right of the state; however, their loyalty to Carrie Chatman Catt and the NAWSA later challenged their original ideologies. In an effort to ease the minds of southern Democrats, suffragists proposed the new federal amendment as an idea originally derived from early southerners like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who

¹⁴ The Democratic platform was almost the same as the Republican plank, which Hart suggests is the first time on record that the Republican Party took a stand for States' Rights. See William Octave Hart, *The Democratic Conventions of 1908 -1912-1916, Republican Conventions of 1912-1916, and Progressive Convention of 1912 with Other Political and Historical Observations* (New Orleans: 1916), 83.

¹⁵ Wilson is quoted saying, “We feel the tide; we rejoice in the strength of it; and we shall not quarrel in the long run as to the method of it.” See Christine Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1910-192* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 99-100.

supported the amendment process as a way for the government to keep in touch with the times.¹⁶

On January 9, 1918, President Wilson formally addressed his support of a federal suffrage amendment as a “war measure.” The following day the House of Representatives voted in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment but suffragists still had to depend on the Senate for ratification.¹⁷ By the beginning of 1918, sixteen additional states secured suffrage rights for women. A few months later, while attending the NAWSA Executive Council meeting in Indianapolis, Sue Shelton White heard Carrie Chatman Catt and her top organizers discuss limiting suffrage work in the South due to the federal amendment within reach of ratification. Catt intended to keep the NAWSA forces on states that showed promise for an amendment’s passage through Congress. Although Catt did not intend to prevent suffragists and southern organizations from working in the South, rather Catt decided against providing any additional help to the South from the national organization.¹⁸ White grew frustrated with the NAWSA because she hoped, with the help of the national organization, to persuade few more states in the South in favor of suffrage.

Later on in September, Wilson appealed to the Senate urging the connection of women’s contributes during the war effort to that of their enfranchisement. While the

¹⁶ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 163.

¹⁷ The amendment passed by one vote in the House. See Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 216.

¹⁸ Carrie Chapman Catt was quoted in the New York newspaper *The Sun*, “I don’t think, either, that the opposition of certain Southern Senators is because of the Negro question. It is just conservatives, pure and simple, and that is the trouble with the Northern anti- Senators too.” Catt realized the anti support was not limited to the South, yet was unwilling to allocate resources to help win southern votes. This attitude deterred White to resign from the national organization in order to support a campaign willing to work in the South for suffrage. See “Suffragists Certain That the Senate Must Pass National Amendment Soon,” *The Sun*, July 7, 1918, 7. See also, Sue Shelton White to Elizabeth Hoyt, April 3, 1931.

Nineteenth Amendment was pending approval from the Senate, eight additional states secured woman suffrage by legislative enactment.¹⁹ On June 4, 1919 the Senate finally passed the Anthony Amendment by a vote of 56 to 25. As of March 22, 1920, just nine months after its passage by the Senate, thirty-five states voted ‘yay’ on the Nineteenth amendment. Only one more state, a thirty-sixth state, was needed to ensure its ratification.²⁰ With ratification looming, Kate Gordon wrote to her dear friend Laura Clay, “I am so heartily sick of the whole situation and the way the suffragists have deserted all the things we contended for as the fruit of woman suffrage, that I am afraid I will be sympathizing with those arrant fools the anti’s.”²¹

As the regular session of the legislature came to a close, considerable debates occurred over the legality of a special session of the legislature being available to vote on the Amendment’s ratification. The Amendment passed through North Carolina in March, which required a call for a special session of the legislature to vote on the amendment’s ratification. North Carolina Governor Thomas W. Bickett first consented to a special session to vote on the Amendment in the coming months. The session was called several months later, after Tennessee’s session. Bickett had since retracted his initial support for the Amendment but saw ratification was inevitable and asked the legislature to accept the amendment; the resolution was defeated two days later on August 19.²²

The Nineteenth Amendment passed through Tennessee, just three months after North Carolina tabled the amendment for a special session. Tennessee Governor Albert

¹⁹ Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People*, 166-168; Statistical information taken from The National Woman Suffrage Association, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1940), 161-164.

²⁰ Christine Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights*, 147.

²¹ Kate Gordon to Laura Clay, March 19, 1920, Clay Papers.

²² A. Elizabeth Taylor, “The Woman Suffrage Movement in North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 38 (2) (1961): 186, 187.

H. Roberts weighed heavily on calling a special session of the legislature to vote on the issue of suffrage when he was presented with the Amendment. Calling a meeting of the legislative session to vote on a constitutional amendment from Congress was tricky. Because of the Tennessee Constitution, the legislature who would vote on the amendment were elected prior to the submission of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment and are therefore unable to act on behalf of the Amendment's ratification. Governor Roberts called Assistant Attorney General W.L. Frierson to understand the legality of a special session called for the sitting legislature. Frierson confirmed to Governor Roberts that the power of the legislature to ratify the amendment derived its power from the Constitution of the United States and therefore superseded the Tennessee Constitution.²³ On June 25, Governor Roberts announced the assembly of a special session of the legislature at the conclusion of the Democratic primary in August. With additional rejections of the amendment from Mississippi, Delaware, and Kate Gordon's home state of Louisiana, and no other calls for a special session, the campaign battle arrived in Nashville, Tennessee on August 9, 1920 with the weight of ratification on its heels.

From the moment Governor Roberts announced the special session, Nashville turned into a war zone. Suffragists and antisuffragists from the North and South flocked to Tennessee in effort to influence the vote in their respected favor by any means necessary. Even suffragists found themselves on opposite sides of the argument. Kate Gordon arrived in Nashville with Laura Clay to join the fray alongside Josephine Pearson. In a letter to M. G. Peck, Carrie Chapman Catt recalls seeing Kate Gordon with Josephine Pearson and other anti-suffragists:

²³ A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Tennessee: The Thirty-Sixth State," *Votes for Women: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1995), 59-60.

The opposition of every sort is here fighting with o scruple, desperately, Women, including Kate Gordon and Laura Clay, are here, appealing to Negrophobia and every other cave man's prejudice. Men, lots of them, are here. What do they represent? God only knows.²⁴

In addition to suffragists and anti-suffragists (men and women), the lobby interests marched on Nashville promoting their own agenda. Many anti-suffragist organizations held strong ties to powerful interest groups like the textile industry, as it was linked with agricultural elites.²⁵ The liquor interests, railroad lobby, and manufacturers lobby were all present in Nashville, swooning state politicians and lawmakers in attempts to deflect the suffrage amendment. If woman suffrage passed, labor reform and prohibition was next on the ballot.

The special session's significance in Tennessee was amplified because women won the right to vote in Presidential and municipal elections by legislative enactment the previous year. More importantly, if this special session passed the Nineteenth Amendment, Tennessee would be the thirty-sixth state, the majority, to vote in favor of the amendment and legally secure its ratification as the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The Senate and the Committee on Constitutional Convention, while dismissing accusations of a violation of the oath of office or an unconstitutional ruling, both agreed that it would be "an honor" for Tennessee to be the thirty-sixth state to secure its ratification.²⁶ The Senate was pro-suffrage and passed the resolution through with a

²⁴ Kate Gordon, a former member of NAWSA, aligned with antisuffragists in Tennessee against her former colleagues. Carrie Chapman Catt, from Tennessee, letter to M. G. Peck, August 15, 1920, in Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1996), 335 -336.

²⁵The diverse interest groups were united against suffrage because of women's claims to vote in reform measures for child labor, minimum wages, prohibition, safety standards, etc. For additional information, see Elna Green, *Southern Strategies*, 45-55, specifically 52.

²⁶ Anastasia Sims, "Powers that Pray" and "Powers that Prey": Tennessee and the Fight for Woman Suffrage," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (Winter 1991): 210.

twenty-five ‘yay’ and four ‘nay’ vote on August 13. Once the amendment moved to the house, the real showdown started in full swing. Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler later recalled attempts at securing a majority in the legislative chamber:

Meanwhile the male antisuffrage lobby, from early morning of each day to the wee small hours of the next, threatened and cajoled the embattled sixty-two who had signed pledges. They were baited with whisky, tempted with offers of office, loans of money, and every other device which old hands at illicit politicians could conceive or remember. An alleged attempt to kidnap a suffrage member was made. Various schemes were started to get rid of enough suffrage legislators to allow the opposition a chance to act, a favorite proposal being that men might conveniently get messages calling them home.²⁷

According to *The Lookout*, a Chattanooga newspaper, pro-suffrage groups used more restrained tactics that were no less disapproved of with “automobile rides, hugs, kisses, even the absurdity of powdering the members’ noses and roughing their cheeks in the assembly hall were frequently witnessed.”²⁸

On August 18, the voting of the amendment began in a packed house. Suffragists had an idea of how each man would vote based on a red rose worn by the legislator; those wearing the rose meant they were in favor of defeating the amendment. A first roll call was taken to table the amendment; it came back tied forty-eight to forty-eight. The tie was from an unexpected switch in favor of suffrage from Banks P. Turner of Yorkville.²⁹ The call came for a second vote, but it remained the same as the first. A third vote was called in favor of the ratification of the amendment. The final vote came in with forty-nine ‘yay’ and forty-seven ‘nay’ with the winning vote credited to freshman legislator

²⁷ One newspaper reported, “Nashville looks like a real oasis in the dry desert. Moonshine corn whiskey is flowing freely.” See Sims, “Armageddon in Tennessee,” 345.; Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1923), 446.

²⁸ “The People Against the Politicians,” *The Lookout: A Newspaper Devoted to Society, Art, and Literature* (August 1920): 1.

²⁹ Taylor, “Tennessee: The Thirty-Sixth State,” 64.

Harry T. Burn who switched his vote in favor of suffrage after voting twice with the antis to table the amendment. Burn promised suffrage leaders that he would vote in favor of the amendment if his vote would ratify the amendment. Although suffrage leaders did not necessarily count on his vote, they also did not know his mother also called upon him to not forget to “be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put the “rat” in ratification.”³⁰

Suffragists managed a huge victory in Tennessee and essentially the battle was won, however, the war was not yet over. The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment during Governor Robert’s special session was a call to arms for anti-suffragists. The Tennessee Constitution soon became the center of anti-suffragists’ last shred of hope to legally defeat the federal amendment. Anti-suffragists cited the Constitution of the state of Tennessee; “No convention or general assembly of this state shall act upon any amendment of the Constitution of the United States proposed by Congress to the several states; unless such convention or general assembly shall have been elected after such amendment is submitted.”³¹ The special session called by Governor Roberts on August 19, came after the primary election held on August 5th. The representatives voting in the special session held office during the amendment’s introduction. Josephine Pearson and fellow anti-suffragist supporters protested and, with Tennessee constitutional law on their side, declared ratification of the amendment by the current legislative as unlawful and called for its repeal.

After the favorable vote on August 18, Speaker Walker did not call for reconsideration within the first two days of the three days allowed to him by law. On the morning of the third day, August 21, “thirty-seven members of the House left the state

³⁰ Harry Burn’s swapped vote story is most commonly credited to a letter from his mother. See Sims, “Powers that Pray” and “Powers that Prey,” 218.

³¹ TN Const. art. II, § 32.

and broke quorum.”³² Pearson later criticized the Suffrage forces for holding a session without the Red Rose Brigade who “emigrated to Alabama” after the compromised vote of the Nineteenth Amendment as ratified by “political corruption and, generally believed bribery.”³³ The motion to reconsider was struck down by all those present for the session. Ten days later on August 31, and after suffrage members had left Nashville to return home, the fugitive Red Rose Brigade attempted to revive the suffrage question in the Tennessee House of Representatives. The remaining pro-suffrage representatives were silent when anti-suffragist legislatures voted to expunge the activities of August 21 from the record. The motion in “having erased August 21 from history” proved unsuccessful “because there was not a majority of entire membership voting to expunge.”³⁴

Many antisuffragists appealed motions of the Nineteenth Amendment all the way to the Supreme Court, arguing that the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment is constitutionally because the ratification of the amendment in states like Tennessee violated their own constitutional rules.³⁵ Josephine Pearson maintained that an illegal certificate of ratification was submitted to Washington D.C. “with all possible haste” and the entire ordeal is acknowledged as a “national “fake” – that produced a Jubilee.”³⁶ Anti-

³² “The Constitution of Tennessee requires to-thirds of the members as a quorum. When the House met on August 21st without a quorum, more than a third of the members having illegally absented themselves from the state, the suffrage members took from the journal the motion to reconsider and voted it down by a vote of fifty to nothing, which was the majority of all those to which the House was entitled.” See *The Suffragist*, October 1920, 258.

³³ Pearson, “My Story,” 240; The Red Rose Brigade was named after the anti-suffrage emblem, the red rose. Suffragists showed their support by wearing a yellow rose. See Anastasia Sims, “Powers that Pray” and “Powers that Prey”: Tennessee and the Fight for Woman Suffrage,” 219.

³⁴ Anastasia Sims, “Armageddon in Tennessee: The Final Battle Over the Nineteenth Amendment,” 348; *The Suffragist*, October 1920, 258.

³⁵ Oscar Leser sued to have the names of two women removed from the voter registry in Baltimore, Maryland. Leser argued that the Maryland state constitution limited suffrage to men and the Nineteenth Amendment was adopted under unconstitutional pretense and not maintained under Maryland law. See *Leser v Garnett*, 258 U.S. 130 (1922).

³⁶ Pearson, “My Story,” 240.

suffragists traveled to Washington to contest the “illegal certificate” to Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, who remained unconvinced of the claim against Tennessee’s ratification of the amendment. Josephine Pearson retreated from Nashville and later exhibited harsh criticism for her home state of Tennessee in her personal recollection of the event:

When I – go over the whole distasteful affair, I’m quite convinced that Hitler, hearing of this likely from afar, got the suggestion for his *first stops of his present power* from reading of this advertised feature of *state* and National Policy and Bravado – of such a degree of corruption in America! Having once known *Godly, classic Germany* (1900) – Last seeing it in 1925- I sigh equally for *Germany*, as I blush to recall my state’s (1920) policy, protocol type of “Mein Kampf!”³⁷

Anti-suffragists made one final stop in Connecticut attempting to stop the state’s ratification vote. If the ratification pending in Tennessee could be overturned based on the pending injunction, perhaps anti-suffragists could stop the amendment’s ratification. Their efforts were in vain as Connecticut ruled in favor, which sealed the fate of the amendments ratification, regardless of the reversal of Tennessee’s vote.³⁸ Academics of the period sided with the anti-suffragist claims’ and criticized the infringement on states’ rights, yet again with adding “Amending Clause” to the Constitution within the Nineteenth Amendment. The “Amending Clause” set up an irresponsible political agency and destroyed autonomy of the state; “a state which does not control its own suffrage is not a state, but a mere province.”³⁹

Anti-suffragists continued to challenge the amendment, filing several lawsuits against the state and local governments for violating “provisions in State Constitution

³⁷ Josephine Pearson, “My Story,” 240.

³⁸ Sims, “Armageddon in Tennessee,” 348.

³⁹ George Stewart Brown, “Irresponsible Government by Constitutional Amendment,” *Virginia Law Review* no. 3 (1922): 157, 160.

forbidding them to ratify or safe-guarding the local self-government of their States.”⁴⁰

Carrie Chatman Catt and other suffrage leaders instantly challenged the anti-suffragist claim with references to the recent Supreme Court decision of *Hawke v Smith* in June of 1920.⁴¹ The anti-suffragists rejected the Supreme Court ruling in *Hawke v Smith*, as it further damaged the southern states claim to states’ rights by invalidating state constitutions. Anti-suffragists continued to wait patiently for their day in court.

As of September 20, 1920, the anti-ratification suit had not been brought before the Tennessee Supreme Court. At the time, Sue Shelton White was in Tennessee and submitted reports to *The Suffragist* on the legal developments of the suit brought against Tennessee state officials. White criticized the actions of the anti-suffragists in her detailed account of current events, claiming that:

At every step of the way, suffragists have been made to ‘show cause’ in due and proper form, while their opponents enraged in such bandit methods as fleeing the state to break a quorum and remaining away for ten days, slipping back when suffrage members were at home for the week end, and undertaking by less than a constitutional majority to tamper with the record, to expunge, reconsider and non-concur.⁴²

White also noted that the case filed by Charles S. Fairchild on July 7 in the District Attorney’s office of the District of Columbia was slated for dismissal. If the injunction was not dismissed, it would come up again on October 4 for review. The Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia ultimately dismissed the injunction on October 5 but

⁴⁰ Brown, “Irresponsible Government by Constitutional Amendment,” 164.

⁴¹The Supreme Court ruling in *Hawke v Smith* maintained that a proposed federal amendment can only be ratified in one of two methods. One, a three-fourths majority of the states. Two, by conventions in three-fourths of the states, the choice of method being left to Congress. Legislators are defined as representative bodies that make the laws for individuals in each state and the purpose of a state legislative ratifying proposed amendments is a federal function, derived from the Constitution. For addition details, see *Hawke v Smith*, 253 U.S. 221 (1920).

⁴² *The Suffragist*, October 1920, 249.

they appealed to the United States Supreme Court; it remained upheld.⁴³ The case brought by the anti-suffragists in the Tennessee Courts was given “a writ of supersedeas, setting aside the temporary restraining order against Governor Rovers certifying the action of the Legislature.” One additional suit was appealed to the Supreme Court, *Leser v Garnett*, claiming that thirty-six states had not legally ratified the amendment. The Maryland Court of Appeals handed down a decision where judges confirmed that ratifications were valid. The anti-suffragists appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States and the decision was, again, sustained.⁴⁴ There was no other legal avenue available to antisuffragists. The United States Supreme Court upheld the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. The battle for woman suffrage was finally over.

Tennessee played one of the most crucial roles in the Federal campaign for the women’s suffrage movement and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Home to suffragists and antisuffragists, the state was torn on politics, most importantly, the issue of universal suffrage. Gordon’s radical politics alienated other white southern suffragists like Sue Shelton White who believed in the federal amendment. After losing respect with fellow suffragists, she campaigned against a federal amendment and embraced antisuffragist leader Josephine Pearson to thwart the crusade. The events that occurred in Tennessee provide a historical understanding into the legal avenues women were willing to go through in order to secure their rights. Although the antisuffragist attempts at overturning the Amendment in Tennessee fell through, women orchestrated the campaigns and the legal action against the federal amendment.

⁴³ Sue Shelton White, “Legal Attacks on Suffrage Amendment: Last Minute Efforts to Keep Women From the Polls in November Fail,” *The Suffragist*, November 1920, 268.

⁴⁴ Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926) 461.

CONCLUSION

The long hard nearly 75-year-old battle finally ended in August of 1920. The victory proved to be the end of an era when Tennessee became the 'perfect thirty-six' and ratified the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchising all women. The language of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment remained unchanged from its original version first proposed to Congress in 1878, "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," but the movement itself constantly stayed in constant flux. The campaign started by northern women seeking equality and recognition slowly developed into a full-fledged campaign for woman suffrage rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony attempted to align woman suffrage with black male suffrage after the Civil War. Although their attempts failed, Stanton and Anthony gained experience over the years and eventually merged with Henry Blackwell and Lucy Stone's organization to form the national organ for woman suffrage support. After establishing a national organization, suffragists looked to the 'Solid South' as the key to winning the vote.

Although ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment came from a southern state, NAWSA's early attempts at arousing suffrage support in the South failed to procure any real momentum. The majority of NAWSA's leadership prior to the 1890s consisted of educated white northern elitists. Similarly, elite white southern suffragists, like Kate Gordon, joined the NAWSA during the early stages of the southern campaign. White southern women like Gordon opposed the enfranchisement of lower classes of uneducated women, especially black women. For a time, the NAWSA permitted Gordon's state sponsored suffrage plan in effort to appeal to the white democratic support

in the South. However, once younger white southern women like Sue Shelton White joined the campaign, the need for the Old South mentality and class homogeneity that once united southern white women like Kate Gordon faded. The New Women from the New South revived the struggling campaign that previously belonged to an exclusive club of elite white northern women. White southern women also broke from the national organizations to find a movement that represented their suffrage beliefs. Suffrage organizations constantly rivaled with one another on strategy and the best hope for winning suffrage support in the South.

Campaign leaders ostracized radical white supremacist southern suffragists like Gordon in the early 1900s. This revival of the southern suffrage campaign forced antisuffragists to organize in the South. Just three years before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Josephine Pearson, president of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, answered the call to oppose woman suffrage. Prior to Pearson's appointment, she maintained confidence in Tennessee's democratic legislature to defeat the amendment. The southern call to arms against the Amendment came as a surprise, to Gordon and to Pearson. They believed that if the Amendment passed, what remained of southern state sovereignty and white supremacy would be lost forever.

The final years leading up to ratification fractured long-standing relationships among northern and southern white suffragists that fought side by side for nearly two decades. The movement in the South was a different type of campaign for white southern women for different reasons. Examining women like Gordon, White, and Pearson in a southern perspective offers additional insight into the lives and circumstances that influenced their political differences. Gordon and Pearson both came from elitists groups

within their respective social circles, while White and Pearson's fathers practiced ministry. What made these women so different in their views when they shared very similar backgrounds? Why did the South foster such different views on the suffrage question? My research suggests that a much closer look is needed when examining the southern suffrage campaign, paying particular attention to the experiences and social status' of white southern activists as these factors challenged traditional views of southern womanhood in future generations after the Civil War.

Kate Gordon never really got over the loss of states rights' to the Federal Amendment on southern soil. Gordon had a long history of activism in Louisiana as well as experience in the political spotlight, which was very different for a woman in the South. The high visibility of Gordon in her early life is certainly worth recognizing as historically significant as her influence on reform efforts and "scrap of suffrage" made her an exceptional southern woman at the turn of the twentieth century. However, Gordon's presence within the southern suffrage movement as a high profile campaign leader manifests an idea of what a typical white southern suffrage representative is really like. Elna C Green breaks down the representation of Kate Gordon in the southern suffrage movement as she is commonly portrayed arguing that the majority of southern suffrage supporters rejected both her racism and her states' rights tactics.¹ While Green is correct, the rejection of her racist attitude and "states' rights tactics" only came after a failure to win momentum in the South after the end of the doldrums period.

Prior to 1910, Gordon was active in NAWSA as secretary and even filled in for Carrie Chapman Catt in public pro-suffrage debates. In the end, Gordon was disappointed in the end result of the suffrage campaign. The victory in Tennessee was a landmark

¹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 150.

defeat in her eyes. Gordon resolved the suffrage success by stating, “ratification by Tenn. was as fraudulent as the spirit that put over the 15th Amendment.”² Historians include Kate Gordon’s early suffrage contributions, as one of the first southern women in the NAWSA, as well as incorporate her radical suffrage ideologies into southern suffrage history because of her established position in the movement. It is important to recognize that Gordon shared just one part of a three-sided woman suffrage fight on southern soil; universal suffrage, states’ rights suffrage, and anti-suffrage. Gordon’s position as a suffragist did not speak for all white southern women.

In an initial review of white southern suffragists, Sue Shelton White appeared to be the exception to the rule. Kate Gordon’s prominence in the southern campaign overshadowed many white southern women who may not share the same privilege or social status. Luckily, Sue Shelton White stood out amongst the crowd with her dedication to the suffrage question and ambition to stop at nothing to achieve it. White, who is younger than both Gordon and Pearson, was not exposed to suffrage until she began working as a court reporter. White publically spoke out against Gordon’s attempts to speak on behalf of the white women of the South in the name of “white supremacy” in her first years in the movement, ensuring that she separated herself from the racist rhetoric Gordon held so close to her political agenda.³ White did not allow her southern heritage stand in the way of the vote. Born nearly a generation behind Pearson and Gordon, White embraced the opportunities in the New South and committed herself to the suffrage question as a New Woman.

² Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 177.

³ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 154-155.

Josephine Pearson, quite differently, thought herself to be an exceptional woman, even writing in her memoirs that one day it could be used for “dissertations in the making.”⁴ Pearson knew that her memoirs would prove to be valuable for historians looking back on her life in the early twentieth century, why was this so? Perhaps Pearson’s father suggested that Josephine leave behind a legacy for the Pearson family name, seeing that she did not have a brother or another sibling to carry on another generation? Pearson spoke of her life and her home state of Tennessee in high esteem throughout her own personal recollections. After the success of the Dixie Highway, Pearson reflected on her native state:

Having served my native Tennessee in various civic, club, patriotic, religious, also, political activities, I have the claimed feeling that all of Tennessee IS MY HOME! Educationally, having served it, also some years, each, in South Carolina, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Virginia – even lecturing, Educationally, in Texas, - I desire to record that in spite of its “Evolution reputation” – (which I respect) and, even in London, challenged criticisms made vs, it (as well as did Kitty Cheatham); - I do admit that Tennessee – in many respects – is, often, more dramatically progressive than some other, or possibly, any of the States! Her political horizon – is often, more or less, of a re-sky for temporary ambitions! Sometimes, it is of a purely patriotic coloring – for an artist! Too often, perhaps, the spot-light is thrown on Tennessee! But, Tennessee, dear Tennessee! I love it any way ‘tis! Its three physical divisions – almost make it into three states; topographically, climatically; also in variations of politics and literature – as well as type of occupation!⁵

Pearson recalled this memory of her home state many years after Tennessee ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. The reflection is significant because Pearson was able to recognize what the northern suffragists of the time could not; Tennessee was progressive and not like other states in the South. Knowing that her home state was more progressive than others, she still believed that Tennessee would not be swayed from its democratic position. Pearson more or less acknowledges that Tennessee is the distinct feature of the

⁴ Josephine Pearson, “My Story,” 224.

⁵ Josephine Pearson, *Fading Tapestries*, 12-13.

South and is almost three separate states within it because of how different the people and the landscape are. While Kate Gordon may not be from Tennessee, she represented a third separate suffrage ideology during the final battle of the suffrage campaign. In truth, Pearson's recollection of Tennessee's distinction is oddly appropriate.

Despite the political, socioeconomic, and generational differences, Josephine Pearson, Kate Gordon, and Sue Shelton White step far outside of the traditional sphere of southern womanhood to take on extraordinary responsibilities. Gordon, White, and Pearson affirmed their position on the woman suffrage question publicly, very uncharacteristic for a southern woman of any class. Their public position and activism challenged existing southern institutions of patriarchy because they asserted themselves into politics and the public sphere primarily reserved for and dominated by men.

Northern and southern women from a variety of social statuses and backgrounds found a voice in the suffrage campaign. For southern women, once the lower social classes of women joined the movement, the national organization could no longer approve of Kate Gordon's attempts to harness racism and educated suffrage to win support for woman suffrage. White southern suffragists, more alike than they realize, complicate the history of the southern suffrage campaign. While understanding the lives of three distinct southern white women is crucial in this suffrage study, establishing a foundation of the legal and political implications of suffrage history is necessary when examining the movement as a whole, as well as understanding the legality of suffrage as it applies to *citizens* of the United States. Women, who still do not have their own equal rights amendment, have poured blood, sweat, and tears into every movement and war the United States involved itself in.

Even today, laws passed on state and federal levels fail to ever address gender issues. The struggle for women's right to vote was the product of gendered language added to the Constitution because of a failure to recognize women as equals during a critical period of rethinking the parameters of full citizenship. In the South, the bitterness over states' rights created a barrier against the women's suffrage campaign because of hostility over "the sequel" to the Fifteenth Amendment and fears of even more African American suffrage, by *white women*.⁶ Overall, the history of suffrage provides a well-constructed timeline as to the changes that occurred during the mid-1850s on through the early twentieth century. As a historian, recognizing these themes and understanding the implications of the certain social and political movements helps academics and scholars develop a deeper understanding into the complexity of American history. Questions still remain in regard to southern women of color and how discrimination affected their participation in the suffrage movement as well as how black and white women utilized their votes, similarly or not? How different were turnouts for black women in the South versus black women in the North? This limited examination of three distinct southern white women answers several lingering questions, but a large number still remain. With the amount of considerable number of unanswered questions still outstanding, the southern suffrage movement will continue to attract historians for years to come.

⁶ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 129.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Jad. *Women and the Vote: A World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Anthony, Susan B. and Ida Husted Harper, et al., *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume IV, 1883 – 1900*. Rochester: Charles Mann Printing, Co., 1902.
- Boyd, Mary Brown Sumner. *The Woman Citizen: A General Handbook of Civics with Special Consideration of Women's Citizenship*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1918.
- Brown, George Stewart. "Irresponsible Government by Constitutional Amendment," *Virginia Law Review* no. 3 (1922): 157 – 166.
- Catt, Carrie Chapman and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1923.
- Casey, Paula F. "Four Prominent Tennessee' Suffragists: Tennessee's Superb Suffragists." In *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage*. Edited by Charlotte Crawford and Ruth Johnson Smiley. North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.
- Dudden, Faye E. *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Fitzhugh, George. *Sociology for the South: Or the Failure of Free Society*. Richmond, VA: Morris, 1854.

- Flexner, Eleanor. *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1996.
- Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Gordon, Ann, ed. *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Vol. V: Their Place Inside the Body-Politic, 1887 to 1895*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Green, Elna C. "The Rest of the Story: Kate Gordon and the Opposition to the Nineteenth Amendment in the South." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol 33 (1992): 171 – 189.
- Green, Elna C. *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Hall, Kermit, Paul Finkelman, James W. Ely. *American Legal History Cases and Materials*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- 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 Vol. 2*. Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1898.
- Hart, William Octave. *The Democratic Conventions of 1908 -1912-1916, Republican Conventions of 1912-1916, and Progressive Convention of 1912 with other Political and Historical Observations*. New Orleans, LA: Privately Printed for the Author, 1916.
- Johnson, Kenneth R. "Kate Gordon and the Woman-Suffrage Movement in the South." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 38 (1972): 365 – 392.

- Jones, Anne Goodwyn. *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Kearney, Belle. *A Slaveholders Daughter*. New York: The Abbey Press, 1900.
- Keyssar, Alexander. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York, New York: Basic Books, 2009.
- Lunardini, Christine. *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1920-1928*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.
- Magruder, Frank Abbott. *American Government with a Consideration of the Problems of Democracy*. New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1918.
- Marshall, Susan E. *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.
- Page, Thomas Nelson. *The Old South: Essays Social and Political*. New York, New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1892.
- Pearson, Josephine. "Presidents Message, (Retiring from Anti-Suffrage Leadership of Tennessee)." In *Votes for Women! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*. Edited Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1995.
- Scott, Anne Firor and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*. New York, New York: J.P. Lippincot, 1975.
- *VICTORY: How Women Won It: A Centennial Symposium, 1840 – 1940*. New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1940.

- Seymour, Rev. Geo F. "Bishop Seymour on the New Woman," *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Woman's Anti-suffrage Association of the Judicial District of the State of New York*. New York, NY: F. B. Rothman, 1905.
- Sims, Anastasia. "Armageddon in Tennessee: The Final Battle Over the Nineteenth Amendment." In *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*. Edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995.
- Sims, Anastasia. "Powers that Pray" and "Powers that Prey": Tennessee and the Fight for Woman Suffrage," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (Winter 1991): 204 – 221.
- Sims, Anastasia. "The Radical Vision of the Anti-suffragists." in *Votes for Women: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*. Edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Spruill, Marjorie Julian. "Race Reform and Reaction at the Turn of the Century: Southern Suffragists, the NAWSA, and the "Southern Strategy" in Context." In *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*. Edited by Jean H. Baker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, et al., *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. I 1848 – 1861*. New York: Fowler & Wells Publishers, 1881.
- Taylor, A. Elizabeth. "The Woman Suffrage Movement in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 38 (January and April 1961): 45 – 62, 173 – 189.
- Taylor, A. Elizabeth. "Tennessee: The Thirty-Sixth State." In *Votes for Women: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*. Edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1995.

- Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn. *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Turner, Manuela. "Better Citizens Without the Ballot": American Anti-suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era." In *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*. Edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995.
- Wheeler, Marjorie Spruill. *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- White, Sue Shelton. "Legal Attacks on Suffrage Amendment: Last Minute Efforts to Keep Women From the Polls in November Fail" In *The Suffragist* (November 1920): 230.
- White, Sue Shelton. "Mother's Daughter." In *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties*. Edited by Elaine Showalter. New York, NY: The Feminist Press, 1979.
- White, Sue Shelton. "Race Question", unpublished article to the editor of *Harper's Magazine*. Manuscripts of Sue Shelton White, Women's Manuscript Collections from the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA.
- Wilson, Charles Reagan. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980.