

“The Patriot Blood of Our Fathers Runs Through Our Veins!”:
Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric and the American Woman's Rights Movement,

1848-1890

by

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ABSTRACT

In speeches, declarations, journals, and convention proceedings, mid-nineteenth-century American woman's rights activists exhorted one another to action as equal heirs of the rights and burdens associated with independence and chided men for failing to live up to the founders' ideals and examples. They likened themselves to oppressed colonists and compared legislators to King George, yet also criticized the patriot fathers for excluding women from civic equality. This dissertation analyzes these invocations of collective memories of the nation's founding, described as Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, in publicly circulated texts produced by woman's rights associations from 1848 to 1890. This organization-driven approach de-centers the rhetoric of the early movement as the intellectual products of a few remarkable women, instead exploring movement rhetoric across the first generation through myriad voices: female and male; native- and foreign-born; those who spoke extemporaneously at conventions along with well-known organizers.

Tracing the use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric over a fifty-year span reveals that activists' invocations of the founding were inseparably connected to their willingness to work for racial and class equality along with woman's rights. References to the Revolution and such slogans as "no taxation without representation" could be inclusive or exclusionary, depending upon how they were used and who used them. In the opening decades of the organized woman's rights movement, claims to a shared Revolutionary heritage reflected larger commitments to racial, class, and gender equality. As organizations within the movement fractured around competing ideas about how to best improve women's lives, activists' rhetoric changed as well. When the commitment to

universal equality gave way to ideologies of race, class, and nativity privilege, references to the founding era morphed into justifications for limited, rather than equal rights. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric largely disappeared from suffrage, education, and pay equity arguments by the late 1880s, replaced by arguments grounded in white, Protestant, female moral superiority.

DEDICATION

To my husband, DJ,
whose faith in me never waivered,
and whose support, counsel, and good cheer
made completing this journey possible.

And to my children, Wyatt, Charlotte, and Gideon,
for their patience in sharing Mama with the “big paper”
for entirely too long.

I love you all so very much!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At a Fourth of July dinner celebration in 1853, woman's rights activist Amelia Jenks Bloomer proposed the following toast:

The Women of the Revolution. Although they toiled along with the men of the Revolution for independence and freedom yet they failed, when the struggle was over, to secure an equality in those rights and duties which are the common birthright of all. May their daughters of the present generation be more fortunate in their struggle for rights so long withheld!¹

Bloomer, well known as the editor and publisher of the Seneca Falls-based temperance and woman's rights paper, *The Lily*, as well as for her work as the local deputy postmistress, had been an invited speaker during the day's celebration in Harford, New York. She was one of many nineteenth-century Americans, both men and women, who cited the promises and struggles of the Revolutionary War as justifications for social and political rights for a disenfranchised group. Woman's rights activists insisted that the toil of the women of the Revolution had earned equality for their granddaughters.²

The heritage of the Revolution provided an array of symbols and collective memories that were powerful rhetorical tools in framing arguments about citizenship and equality. In speeches, declarations, journals, and convention proceedings, mid-nineteenth-century American woman's rights activists exhorted one another to action as equal heirs of the rights and burdens associated with independence and chided men for

¹ Dexter C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1895; reprint, 1975), 123-4. As a temperance advocate, Bloomer presumably toasted with a non-alcoholic beverage.

² To maintain consistency with the phrasing in the original sources, this dissertation uses the singular "woman's rights" and "woman suffrage" rather than "women's rights" and "women's suffrage" unless otherwise dictated for grammatical correctness.

failing to live up to the founders' ideals and examples. They compared themselves to oppressed colonists and paralleled legislators with King George, yet also criticized the patriot fathers for excluding women from civic equality. Such rhetoric was a logical tool for activist women and their allies to use; beginning with Abigail Adams, men and women, both American and foreign born, periodically pointed out the hypocrisy of excluding women from the privileges of full citizenship. Woman's rights advocates appealed to their audiences both philosophically and emotionally by connecting their cause with the texts, figureheads, and actions of the Revolution; in so doing, they copied the rhetorical choices of partisan orators, antislavery activists, and labor rights advocates. They borrowed and adapted from a strand of argumentation that suffused American politics. Indeed, much of the power of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric came from its basis in collective memories shared by a large majority of Americans.³ However, the rhetoric woman's rights advocates used was also subversive: in addition to praising the sacrifices of the founders, at times activists criticized Revolutionary heroes for the choices they made after the war's end and the legacy of inequality they left behind.

In the opening decades of the movement, rhetoric citing the Revolution was generally more inclusive and less complicated than other suffrage arguments based on religious principles or theories of natural rights. While arguments grounded in republicanism cited abstract ideas, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric reminded audiences of specific wartime hardships, loss of life, and the heroic examples of the founding generation. Advocates for woman's rights used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to make

³ Enslaved African Americans and Native Americans were two noteworthy minorities who generally did not share in these collective memories.

arguments for civic equality that, for a time, were secular, as well as gender-, class-, nativity- and sometimes race-neutral.⁴

Activists' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric was most frequent in the early decades of the movement; it shifted in response to tensions within the movement during the Civil War and early years of Reconstruction; then largely faded away by the late 1880s. In the postbellum period many activists' latent beliefs in white supremacy (which had previously quietly coexisted with their beliefs in equal rights) emerged more frequently in movement rhetoric.⁵ Even while arguing for the equality described in the Declaration, suffragists increasingly descended into racist and classist categorizations based on white, native-born, middle-class female privilege. Former allies turned on the movement and reinvigorated claims that suffrage was predicated on men's (including black men's) ability to defend the nation through force of arms – a claim better countered by women's recent service during the Civil War than the more distant past. The rise of

⁴ While the arguments many women's rights advocates constructed were gender-, race-, and class-neutral, their actual practices as individuals and as groups fell far short of these ideals.

⁵ The literature addressing racial and class divisions between female reformers and among various associations is well-developed. On racial and economic divisions among women abolitionists and suffragists see Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Ann D. Gordon, ed. *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998); Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

socialism and women's participation in political upheavals in France drove increasing wedges between middle-class activists eager to distance themselves from labor unrest and foreign-based radicalism and working class women who prioritized pay equity and equal work opportunities above suffrage as movement goals. At the same time, the nation's collective memories of the Revolution began to collapse into a sanitized, commercialized "founding era" that encompassed the colonial period as well as the war for independence and the early national period.⁶ This double co-optation of ideals and symbols left no place in the movement for Revolutionary rhetoric that imagined radical equality.⁷

In the three decades it was a common part of the woman's rights movement's equality rhetoric, Revolutionary heritage arguments alone remained largely unanswered by critics. Natural rights-driven arguments often led to debates about the semantics of virtual and actual representation, while appeals to women's Christian duties to improve their homes inevitably led to citations of Saint Paul's admonition that women remain

⁶ The change toward commercialized celebrations of a condensed history began as early as the Sanitary Fairs during the Civil War, but escalated with the postwar emphasis on local heroes from a variety of periods, the commercial success of the Centennial fundraisers, and the colonial revival movement in American art and architecture. See especially Frances M. Clarke, "Old Fashioned Tea Parties: Revolutionary Memory in Civil War Sanitary Fairs," in *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013; Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 61; Charlene Mires, *Independence Hall In American Memory*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) 135-139; Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 61:2 (1982): 374-402; ———, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington," *American Sociological Review* 56:2 (1991): 221-36.

⁷ I describe this as a co-optation of ideals because, while a belief in racial hierarchies undergirded many activists' philosophies of equal rights, the grievances and goals they expressed in early movement texts reflected the perspectives and needs of women oppressed because of their race and class, as well as gender.

silent in churches.⁸ The example set by the rebellious founders even provided a counterargument – ministers who quoted Paul were as misguided as the old Tory priests who preached obedience to the crown. If the colonists were right to reinterpret scripture in their favor, women were simply following their example. Or, as Susan B. Anthony quipped: “You men have put St. Paul out of the way whenever he has stood between you and a pet project. He said obey the king; but you did not do it when you turned the king’s tea out in Boston harbor.”⁹ And although the “Petticoat Revolution” was mocked, and sometimes ignored, activists’ claims that women were equal heirs of the Revolutionary legacy went almost entirely unanswered. Few critics were willing to argue that representation – read as voting rights – were not part of the founders’ legacy, and even when some attempted to, their counter arguments could not identify distinctions between men and women’s claims.¹⁰ Nowhere in the print record have I found a columnist willing

⁸ In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.” 1 Cor. 14:34 *The Holy Bible*, King James Version. Alternately called the “Pauline Doctrine” and the “Pauline Injunction,” this interpretation stretched back to the Antinomian Controversy and religious scholars such as Thomas Hooker and Cotton Mather. For more, see Sandra F. VanBurkleo, “*Belonging to the World*”: *Women’s Rights and American Constitutional Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19, 85.

⁹ Susan B. Anthony, as quoted in “Editorial Notes,” *The Independent*, July 22, 1869. Abolitionists made similar comparisons to dismiss those who use scriptural arguments to justify slavery.

¹⁰ One of the few critics willing to make such claims was theologian and anti-suffragist Horace Bushnell. He argued that women had no claim to suffrage because the Revolution had not been about voting rights, and, he insisted, there was no natural right to suffrage for men or women. Bushnell’s work is discussed in Chapter 3.

to dismiss the sacrifices of the women of the Revolutionary era, or an editor callous enough to argue that women did not suffer from the losses and privations of the war.¹¹

When women's historians first sought to analyze the rhetoric of the woman suffrage movement, they described references to the Revolution like Bloomer's comments above as part of a larger category of arguments based on republicanism and natural rights ideologies. However, thanks to the insights provided by the field of memory studies, such language now appears as a distinct type of rhetoric – one grounded in memory, not philosophy. My study of activists' rhetorical appeals traces the repeated invocation of the events, characters, and sacrifices of the Revolutionary War. I use the term Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to describe the strand of argumentation drawing on these collective memories. I argue that the repeated use of Revolution-based memories constitutes a third style of rhetoric within the woman's rights movement, distinct from arguments grounded in natural rights or religion.

The leaders of the emerging woman's rights movement, both female and male, were predominately (although not exclusively) native-born, educated, Protestant and Quaker whites of middle-class standing in the northeast and midwest, and a majority were concurrently active in the abolition and temperance movements. As such, they were well-versed in the dominant political rhetoric, as well as Revolutionary, republican, and Christian anti-slavery arguments and counterarguments. In using Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to argue for woman's advancement, they did not innovate – they carefully selected from an array of established rhetorical tools. To study the rhetoric of the

¹¹ The only exception to this silence came from a series of letters between Eliza Farnham and John Neal published in *Brother Jonathan* in 1843, and thus before the beginning of the organized movement. Farnham's critique is discussed in Chapter 1.

woman's movement broadly, this dissertation revolves around collaboratively produced texts published by, or on behalf of, the myriad woman's rights organizations of the mid-to late-nineteenth century, rather than emphasizing the ideology of particular individuals.

The claim to equal citizenship vis-à-vis the Revolution was not the primary language of the woman's rights movement, but it is well worthy of scholarly attention because it was widespread, attention-grabbing, and malleable over time. Activists privately and publicly commented on their expectations and experiences using the language of the Declaration of Independence and other symbols from the Revolution to attract audiences and catch readers' eyes in news columns. Additionally, as legal scholar Juliana Tutt has argued: "Suffragists produced such a massive amount of printed material... that even a secondary argument resulted in a huge array of source material."¹² Numerous groups of women's rights advocates, even those not willing to work for full suffrage, used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to argue for married women's property rights, changes to divorce laws, and equal access in education and employment. While a number of studies investigate the changing cultural and political uses of memories of the Revolution throughout American history, very few address the role of women. By exploring women's own invocations of the national founding, this dissertation adds a gendered analysis to our understandings of the place of the Revolutionary heritage in mid-to late-nineteenth century American culture and the limits of a minority group's appropriation of collective memory to achieve change.

¹² Tutt made this statement in relation to her study of women's tax resistance efforts, but the same is true of other secondary arguments. She notes "Taxation [and Revolutionary heritage rhetoric] was a minor aspect of the suffrage movement only *relative* to other arguments." See Juliana Tutt, "'No Taxation Without Representation' in the American Woman Suffrage Movement." *Stanford Law Review* 62 (May 2010): 1475.

Methodology

This dissertation analyzes a variety of publicly circulated texts produced by the first generation of the organized American woman's rights movement (1848-1890): organizational proceedings, woman's rights pamphlets and newspapers, published testimony to state and federal legislative bodies, and addresses to the public created by woman's rights associations.¹³ These carefully crafted documents were often written collaboratively; some were endorsed by the entire body of delegates gathered at a particular convention, others were approved by committees on publication after the convention adjourned. When activists spoke to legislative committees, it was generally as representatives of a particular association – that organization then printed copies of selected members' testimonies. To supplement these sources, I also explore summaries of speakers' arguments and reports on conventions given in contemporary newspaper reports published by both supporters and detractors. Taken together, these sources provide an overview of the uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric by members of the first generation of the movement, primarily in the Northeast and upper Midwest. This dissertation conducts a textual analysis of documents produced by or for formal associations and intended for mass consumption: newspapers, pamphlets, declarations,

¹³ Historians generally divide the American woman's rights movement into generations, with the first generation covering the period from the first convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 to the reunion of the two competing national suffrage organizations to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890. The second generation (often biologically, as well as intellectually) led the movement from 1890 to the mid 1920s; following the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, they formed the League of Women Voters and worked to inform and encourage female voters. These generations are not to be confused with the scholarly construction of "waves" of feminism, which label the entire suffrage movement as first wave, with the second wave encompassing the movement beginning in the 1960s.

speeches, Congressional testimony, and published proceedings from official organization meetings, to explore Revolutionary heritage rhetoric as a collaborative discourse. The first generation of the movement generally rejected suggestions and attempts to unify into a single national organization with a designated organ. However, they still produced collaborative texts and went to great effort to publicize their ideas, arguments, and demands. By the second generation, the movement had grown to encompass a variety of “official” publications, including the *Women’s Journal* and an array of printed suffrage tracts. Many of the texts included here were written by several authors, often as committees appointed to draft several documents – sometimes in advance of a convention, other times during, or shortly afterward. When such documents could not be presented for approval to all the convention attendees, they were submitted to executive committees, or committees on publication. Other texts, such as individual speeches, were approved for inclusion in the published convention proceedings by committees. Thus, even when a text is attributed to a single author, its substance and rhetoric may be seen as reflective of the larger discourse within the movement. Following Daniel McInerney, by focusing on the repeated, collaborative, “conscious, literary performance” of a host of members of a social movement, I demonstrate the “shared patterns of thought that suffused the movement over time.”¹⁴ My organization-driven approach to the texts aims to de-center the movement as the product of one or two exceptional intellects. Too much of the history of the woman’s rights movement in the nineteenth century has revolved around Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and to a lesser extent, Lucy Stone.

¹⁴ Daniel J. McInerney, *The Fortunate Heirs of Freedom: Abolition and Republican Thought* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.)

While they were intelligent, devoted leaders in the movement, they were far from alone. Rather than exploring Revolutionary heritage rhetoric as a facet of particular leaders' political thought, this dissertation reveals the trajectory of memory-driven rhetoric over the course of the first generation of the movement as a whole.

The texts analyzed in the case study chapters should be understood as at once representative and unique. They are representative because they use the same slogans, memories, and quotations of the Declaration of Independence that characterizes all Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. However, Revolutionary memories were most often peppered throughout speeches, one or two sentences at a time, placed for dramatic emphasis, rather than forming the main substance of an argument, as many brief quotations included here demonstrate. Phrases like “no taxation without representation,” or “our patriot fathers,” just like “Remember the Alamo,” and “September Eleventh,” serve as mnemonic referents, a kind of memory shorthand that conjures a larger event and accompanying emotions.¹⁵ This fragmented style helps to explain why women's use of memory as a rhetorical tool has long remained invisible. To understand these recurring phrases and brief invocations as a distinctive strand of rhetoric requires both following the pattern in their usage and deconstructing the exemplars of such rhetoric when they occur. Thus, the texts which most lend themselves to analysis because they contain longer sections of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric are also sources which are unique.

¹⁵ For more recent works describing mnemonic referents, see Lars Eckstein, *Remembering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* (New York: Rodopi, 2006) and Anna Seleny “Revolutionary Road: 1956 and the Fracturing of Hungarian Historical Memory,” in *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, ed. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 37-59.

Although this project revolves around changes in the use of a particular rhetoric produced by the woman's rights movement, rather than the reception of such arguments by outsiders, contemporary newspaper reports provide glimpses into the larger public reactions. Newspapers' reprinting, or not, of activists' texts and speeches also demonstrates editors' beliefs that some kinds of arguments or claims for rights were more worthy of publication than others – either from shared ideals, or, more often, as material readers would find interesting, shocking, or humorous. When editors reviewed anti-suffrage books and lectures, they described the effectiveness of the argument based on their own knowledge of pro-suffrage claims, including Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. That commentators sometimes denigrated anti-suffragists for not addressing activists' invocations of the Declaration demonstrates that such rhetoric was a well-known part of the overall suffrage argument.

Each of the three body chapters focuses on key examples of the diverse, and eventually contradictory, uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric at particular times. To reflect the communal nature and development of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, the selected texts were all produced by or for associations or conventions and nearly all were published within two years of their original presentation. While strong personalities, such as Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Stone, certainly emerge, these texts were not the creations of a single intellect. Rather, they were the products of debate and conversation; they reflected their authors' ideas about the nature of female citizenship and the meaning of the Revolution shared across locations, organizations, and generations. Ideally, the final versions of these documents might be compared with working drafts, covered with marginalia and notations from various authors, to reveal private debates over composition

and persuasion. Sadly, such sources are no longer extant, to my knowledge. In their place, I have followed other scholars of movement rhetoric in relying upon the speeches and debates recorded in the minutes of convention proceedings, as attendees challenged terminology and arguments, and committees justified their finished work to the assembled delegates. Additionally, newspaper reports sometimes documented debate left out of the official proceedings, and published slightly different versions of texts.¹⁶

Convention proceedings and organization publications serve as insightful sources for this project for several reasons. For the majority of the first wave of the woman's rights movement, roughly annual conventions provided the only occasion for activists to exchange ideas, debate, and collaborate in ways that left documentary records.¹⁷

Although carefully edited by convention officers, convention proceedings provide the most complete record of the speeches and debates at each meeting. As the movement grew, pamphlets, newspapers, and journals helped to circulate movement ideas to wider audiences. Woman's rights texts primarily drew on Revolutionary memory as a

¹⁶ See especially John McClymer, "How Do Contemporary Newspaper Accounts of the 1850 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention Enhance Our Understanding of the Issues Debated at That Meeting?," *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000* (2006), <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1000688165>. On the importance of published convention reports as sources for understanding movement ideology and rhetoric see also Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her: Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 50.

¹⁷ Conventions were suspended during the Civil War, but held nearly every year otherwise. Although many activists corresponded with one another, such letters largely present only congenial, bilateral discussions unlike the sometimes-heated group debates at conventions. While engaging conversations no doubt helped many women to develop their ideas and hone their arguments, those that took place in social settings left no written record for analysis.

supplement, rather than replacement for religious and maternal language, although at times the cry of patriotic duty and inheritance stood alone. Extended lectures frequently shifted between religiosity, political theory, women's authority as mothers, and collective memories of the Revolution, making them multifaceted sources.

These documents did not, and were not intended, to stand alone and thus should not be read in isolation. Paulina Wright Davis exercised "considerable editorial control" over the publication of the Worcester convention proceedings, and numerous scholars have commented on the careful manipulation of documents and emphasis on their own events that Cady Stanton, Anthony, Matilda Jocelyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper employed when crafting the volumes of *The History of Woman Suffrage*.¹⁸ William Lloyd Garrison and Horace Greeley had economic as well as ideological reasons for reprinting speeches from anti-slavery and women's rights conventions.¹⁹ Therefore, to situate the texts properly, each chapter includes a brief discussion of the political and social context

¹⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage: 1848-1861*. Vol. 1. 6 vols. (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1881); ———, *History of Woman Suffrage: 1861-1876*. Vol. 2. 6 vols. (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1887); Cady Stanton et. al. *History of Woman Suffrage: 1876-1885*. Vol. 3. 6 vols. (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1886). For the most recent work on Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's effort to position themselves as "founders" of the organized movement, particularly through the *History*, see Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). On Davis and the 1850 Worcester convention, see John McClymer, "How Do Contemporary Newspaper Accounts of the 1850 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention Enhance Our Understanding of the Issues Debated at That Meeting?" *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*, 2006. <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1000688165>.

¹⁹ Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon, 1967); Augusta Rohrbach, *Truth Stranger Than Fiction: Race, Realism, and the U.S. Literary Marketplace* (New York City: Palgrave, 2002).

of the period during which the authors created the sources, as well as descriptions of the organizations behind their production and circulation. The contextual material in the chapters also summarizes the place of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in other political and reform movements during the period under consideration.

Literature Review

Histories of the American woman's rights movement began with the first generation of suffragists themselves. Beyond Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's well-known *History of Woman Suffrage*, other activists kept scrapbooks and collections of papers, and suffrage newspapers often included reminders about important anniversaries within the movement, historical sketches, and brief biographies.²⁰ As the daughters and granddaughters of the pioneer suffragists matured and moved into leadership roles within the movement, they wrote biographies of their friends, mentors, and family members, and published edited volumes of their papers.²¹ The pattern of studying the suffrage

²⁰ Widely available examples of first generation movement histories include Harriet Jane Hanson Robinson, *Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement: A General, Political, Legal and Legislative History from 1774, to 1881* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881); Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, and Paulina Wright Davis and Victoria Claflin Woodhull, *A History of the National Woman's Rights Movement for Twenty Years* (New York: Journeymen Printers' Cooperative Association, 1871).

²¹ See for example Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1930, 2001 reprint); Anna Davis Hallowell, *James and Lucretia Mott, Life and Letters, Edited by Their Granddaughter, Anna Davis Hallowell, with Portraits* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885). Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, 3 vols., (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1898); and Harriot Stanton Blatch and Theodore Stanton, eds. *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, As Revealed in Her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences*, 3 vols., (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922).

movement either as a monolithic whole, or through biography, continued until the second wave of American feminism in the 1960s brought a new scholarly interest in delving into the complexities of the various actors and organizations within the woman's rights movement. By the end of the twentieth century, the field had become well developed, with studies ranging from consumer culture in the movement and patterns of dress among activists on the lyceum circuit to broad examinations of women's status as citizens over two centuries and transnational movements for women's equality and the expansion of democracy. Most recently, scholars have begun exploring the role of memory in crafting histories of the movement and deliberate efforts to shape the story of woman's rights as it unfolded.²²

Many studies of the woman's suffrage movement note the deliberate patterning of the Declaration of Sentiments produced in Seneca Falls in 1848 after the nation's Declaration of Independence. Yet, beyond quick acknowledgements of such similarities, scholars have given almost no attention to the persistent references to the Revolution within the woman's rights movement. The only works directly addressing women's rights advocates' uses of Revolution-based arguments are Judith Wellman's 1988 article

²² Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jean H. Baker, ed. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002); VanBurkleo, "Belonging to the World"

On memory and efforts to shape the image of the movement in process, see especially John McClymer, "How Do Contemporary Newspaper Accounts of the 1850 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention Enhance Our Understanding of the Issues Debated at That Meeting?," Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls*,

“Women’s Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in Antebellum New York State,” in the journal *New York History*, Thomas Dublin’s 1975 piece “Women, Work, and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: ‘The Oppressing Hand of Avarice Would Enslave Us’,” in *Labor History* and Carolyn Vacca’s 1998 dissertation, “A Reform Against Nature: Woman Suffrage and the Rethinking of American Citizenship, 1840-1920.” Wellman focuses primarily on male supporters of woman’s rights use of Republicanism in debates over suffrage and married women’s property rights in the New York legislature from the 1820s to the 1850s, while Dublin briefly discusses the Lowell strikers’ rhetorical use of “their Yankee heritage” and the Revolution. Within a discussion of Cady Stanton’s efforts to ground movement ideologies in male-accepted political philosophy, Vacca makes a brief mention of the connection, using the phrase Revolutionary rhetoric and noting that such “well-known Revolutionary catchphrase[s]... [p]rovided an aura of respectability that their resolutions would otherwise lack” and “fill[ed] a void, the lack of historical context and language for women’s rights.” However, Vacca’s overall project revolves around the interplay between pro- and anti-suffrage arguments, and her discussion of Revolutionary rhetoric ends with the Declaration of Sentiments. Additionally, Catherine Lavender publishes the website “‘Liberty Rhetoric’ and Nineteenth-Century American Women,” which she designed for undergraduate students in History, Women’s Studies, and American Studies. Lavender’s site provides documents from the early Lowell textile mill strikes and the “Declaration of Sentiments” from the 1848 Seneca Falls convention and poses analytical questions to help students contrast the sources.²³

²³ Thomas Dublin, “Women, Work, and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: ‘The

This dissertation draws on three branches of existing literature to explore collective memories of the Revolution as a previously overlooked strand of suffrage rhetoric: studies of the journals, newspapers, and pamphlets produced by advocates of woman's rights, (generally referred to as the woman suffrage press) and the rhetoric used within those texts; organizational histories of woman's rights associations; and studies of Americans' collective memories of the Revolution.

The Texts and Rhetoric of the Woman's Rights Movement

This dissertation complements, rather than contradicts, the dominant historiography on suffrage rhetoric by analyzing the changing Revolution-based arguments about the nature of female citizenship. That body of scholarship, from historians and scholars of speech, demonstrates that nineteenth- and early-twentieth century women's rights activists, like advocates of female domesticity, predominately used gendered arguments grounded in maternal authority and Protestant understandings of female moral superiority and eventually white middle-class privilege. In some of the more recent additions to the historiography, scholars have explored the ways in which the second generation of the movement embraced various forms of racism, nativism, and classism to promote political rights for white women.²⁴

Oppressing Hand of Avarice Would Enslave Us,” *Labor History* 16:1 (1975): 99–116. Catherine Lavendar, <http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/americanstudies/files/lavender/> Accessed 12/30/2013. Carolyn Vacca, “A Reform Against Nature: Woman Suffrage and the Rethinking of American Citizenship, 1840-1920” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1998) 36; Judith Wellman, “Women's Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in Antebellum New York State,” *New York History* 69:3 (1988): 352–84.

The historiography on American suffragists is now vast, with new work delving into state and local level movements; conflict between suffragists and abolitionists, and among individuals within well-known associations. Such conflict-based monographs include explorations of gender, class, and race-based tensions, as well as regional studies.²⁵ Yet, despite a wealth of insightful biographies and studies addressing local reform communities, the textual products and rhetoric of both abolitionist-feminists and

²⁴ For highlights of the work discussing women's use of morality-driven arguments, particularly those arising from women's work in abolition, see: Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1978); Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Suzanne M. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

On the moralism of domesticity, see especially: Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Nicole Tonkovich, *Domesticity with a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997).

On the turn toward racism, nativism, and classism, see especially: Louise M. Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); ———, "Women's Rights, Race, and Imperialism in U.S. History, 1870-1920," in *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*, ed. James T. Campbell, Matthew Pratt Guterl, and Robert G. Lee, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.)

On the use of sentimental fiction, poetry, and drama by supporters of the movement, see Mary Chapman and Angela Mills, eds. *Treacherous Texts: U.S. Suffrage Literature, 1846-1946* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011.)

²⁵ For a sample of both recent and early studies of state and local suffrage movements, see: Lori Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Louise R. Noun, *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1969); Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change*; Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of These Women: Rhode Island in the Antislavery Network* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Newman, "Women's Rights, Race, and Imperialism."

mid-nineteenth-century women's rights activists remain underexplored, particularly by historians. The classic studies on the rhetoric of the suffrage movement overall remain Aileen Kraditor's 1965 *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, which used 1890 as a starting point, and communications scholar Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's two volume *Man Cannot Speak For Her*, an anthology of sources and a volume of analysis. Kraditor and Kohrs Campbell both divide suffragists' rhetoric into two categories: arguments from justice or natural rights and arguments from "expediency" (claims that because of women's perceived special characteristics, such as moral purity, their political participation would improve society.) Kraditor and Kohrs Campbell categorize all references to the founding era and the Revolution as aspects of natural rights arguments. Following Kohrs Campbell's volumes, other scholars in the speech communications field produced a collection of essays addressing individual woman's rights newspapers, including four from the mid-nineteenth century: *The Lily*, *The Una*, *The Revolution*, and *The Woman's Journal*. Focusing just on *The Revolution*, Lana Rakow and Cheris Kramarae edited a volume of excerpts from the paper and provide contextual commentary. With a similarly narrow focus, Carolyn Vacca's study of the ways external criticism shaped movement rhetoric revolves almost exclusively around the six volumes of Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's *History of Woman Suffrage* for her coverage of the first generation of the movement.²⁶

²⁶ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her: Key Texts of the Early Feminists*; ———, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*; Lana F. Rakow and Cheris Kramarae, eds., *The Revolution in Words: Righting Women 1868-1871* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Martha M. Solomon, *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910*.

Historians' recent studies of woman's rights rhetoric and texts differ from the publication-focused work from communications scholars in that they are largely biographical in nature, revolving around the political thought of particular individuals, most often Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Grimké sisters.²⁷ However, Nancy Isenberg's *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* and Susan Zaeske's *Signatures of Citizenship* stand as valuable exceptions to the predominance of individual and local studies.²⁸ Drawing on a wide range of woman's rights publications, critical and supportive newspaper accounts, prescriptive literature, editorials, laws, and legal proceedings, Isenberg argues that over the course of the antebellum period, supporters of women's rights positioned themselves as "public critics" who together forged a "coherent feminist critique" of women's subordination in many facets of American life.²⁹ Isenberg focuses on competing notions of publicity and challenges to patriarchal authority rather than

(Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1991); Vacca, "A Reform Against Nature."

²⁷ Stephen Howard Browne, *Angelina Grimke: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), Sue Davis, *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Women's Rights and the American Political Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Candida Smith, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), Gerda Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Browne, like Kohrs Campbell, Solomon, Rakow, and Kramarae is a professor of Communications, while Davis is a Political Scientist.

²⁸ Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Susan Zaeske *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

²⁹ Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*, xiii.

specifically on rhetoric. This project builds on Isenberg's insights about the collective nature of woman's rights advocates' social critiques by describing tensions between civic ideals and her explanation of Americans' gendered understandings of citizenship.

Antebellum feminists, Isenberg argues, struggled against notions of citizenship "complicated by competing and contradictory definitions of political identity. One civic ideal celebrated active participation, measured not only by the vote but by jury and militia service, while another, more legalistic understanding defined citizenship as a passive inheritance of 'birthright' entitlements."³⁰ Whether through birth in the nation, or direct descent from those who served in the war, Americans identified the Declaration of Independence and the events of the founding era as self-evident guarantors of political and social rights. Woman's rights advocates insisted that since the Revolutionary heritage belonged equally to women and men, the accompanying rights should as well.

In contrast to the diversity of Isenberg's sources and foci, Zaeske's study revolves tightly around anti-slavery petitions: letters and correspondence of the women circulating them, the language used in the petitions themselves, and the records of their reception in newspapers and congressional debates. Through close reading of the petition texts, Zaeske reveals the role of petitioning in changing women's understandings of their own citizenship from local to national, and corresponding expansions in their notions of rights as national citizens.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., xiv. Linda Kerber echoes these distinctions in the nature of citizenship in the introduction to her work, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*, which focuses on the obligation-driven measures of female citizenship. Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*.

³¹ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 6.

More wide-ranging volumes by Linda Kerber and Sandra VanBurkleo include chapters specifically addressing references to the Revolution in nineteenth-century women's rights activism.³² In her collection of essays, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, Kerber explores Elizabeth Ellet's volumes recording the experiences of women during the war, while Kerber's *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies* includes the experiences of the Smith sisters' invocation of "no taxation without representation" language as part of lawsuits over property taxes and voting in Connecticut in the 1870s. Kerber places the Smiths' suits within the context of the suffrage movement's use of the argument in debates about the nature of representation and sovereignty. Two legal scholars have also explored the "no taxation without representation" aspect of movement rhetoric, one considering it in the context of tax resistance as a protest strategy, the other primarily exploring activists' use of the term "taxation" as a metaphor for discrimination against women writ large.³³

VanBurkleo, like Kerber, emphasizes the legal and constitutional theories surrounding female citizenship. Although VanBurkleo rejects the explicit label of "feminist" for the antebellum period, she argues that women's rights advocates created a

³² Linda Kerber, "'History Can Do It No Justice': Women and the Reinterpretation of the American Revolution," in *Toward and Intellectual History of Women: Essays by Linda K. Kerber* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); ———, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, 81-123; VanBurkleo, *Belonging to the World*. See also Wellman, "Women's Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in Antebellum New York State."

³³ Juliana Tutt provides a legal analysis of the tax resistance strategy used by the Smith sisters and others in the movement in correlation with the rise of federal personal income taxes in her recent article. See Tutt, "'No Taxation Without Representation'; Carolyn C. Jones explores taxation as a metaphor for self. See Carolyn C. Jones, "Dollars and Selves: Women's Tax Criticism and Resistance in the 1870s," *University of Illinois Law Review* 265 (1994).

“feminized” form of republican constitutionalism that joined with theological changes from the Second Great Awakening to support women’s political rights.³⁴ Because their chapters on the nineteenth century revolve around the ideological heritage of the Revolution, both Kerber and VanBurkleo read their sources’ references to the war primarily as philosophical citations of republican principles, rather than as invocations of powerful memories. This dissertation analyzes some of the same sources through the lens of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric and finds that such appeals to the Revolutionary past appear quite distinct from more abstract discussions of natural rights.

Several journal articles explore various facets of woman’s rights movement rhetoric at particular times, with attention to specific themes, such as use of body-focused imagery, or in comparison with the rhetoric of other movements.³⁵ Linda Czuba Brigance briefly discusses changes in Cady Stanton and Anthony’s arguments during the Civil War via the Women’s National Loyal League, suggesting that during the war they focused more precisely on “constructing women as independent political actors,” as well as “binding women’s rights to negro rights,” and “positioning women as vital to victory.”³⁶ Her six-page article piqued my interest in the League, and provided an entry point for exploring woman’s rights rhetoric during the Civil War years. Judith Wellman’s 1991

³⁴ VanBurkleo, *Belonging to the World*.

³⁵ Lisa M. Gring-Pemble, “Writing Themselves into Consciousness: Creating a Rhetorical Bridge Between the Public and Private Spheres,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 41–61; Karen Offen, “Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolitionism,” *Representations* 24 (1988): 28–58; ——— “Women and the Question of ‘Universal’ Suffrage in 1848: A Transatlantic Comparison of Suffragist Rhetoric,” *NWSA Journal* 11:1 (1999): 150–161.

³⁶ Linda Czuba Brigance, “Ballots and Bullets: Adapting Women’s Rights Arguments to the Conditions of War,” *Women and Language* 28:1 (2005): 2.

piece, “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention: A Study of Social Networks” is also relevant to this project. The essay is a biographical investigation of the signers of the *Declaration of Sentiments* and the overlapping networks of legal reformers, political abolitionists, and Quaker abolitionists who supported the convention. Most recently, Louise Newman’s essay, “Reflections on Aileen Kraditor’s Legacy: Fifty Years of Woman Suffrage Historiography, 1965-2014,” explores the way scholars have used, adapted, and argued with Kraditor’s justice vs expediency model.³⁷

This study follows the work of Isenberg, Zaeske, VanBurkleo, and Wellman in considering women’s rights advocates as members of interrelated “speech communities” who collectively developed multiple rhetorics as they presented their beliefs to the public. All four emphasize the importance of women’s shared experience in engaging in political discourse through communally circulated texts. Such an approach is similar to Daniel McInerney’s focus on abolitionists’ use of republicanism as a communal discourse.³⁸

³⁷ Newman, “Reflections on Aileen Kraditor’s Legacy;” Wellman, “Women’s Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in Antebellum New York State;” ———, “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention: A Study of Social Networks.” *Journal of Women’s History* 3:1 (1991): 9–37.

³⁸ VanBurkleo, *Belonging to the World*; Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*; Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*. While VanBurkleo uses the “speech communities” terminology taken from anthropology and socio-linguistics, Isenberg describes a “shared community of discourse” (xiii), while Zaeske considers petitioners’ “formations of collective female subjectivities.” (4) Although biographical in focus, Judith Wellman’s work on Elizabeth Cady Stanton explicitly locates her within a “social network” of reformers. Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*; ———, “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention;” McInerney, *The Fortunate Heirs of Freedom*.

Organizational Histories

Following a brief introductory chapter exploring uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric before the beginning of the organized woman's rights movement, each body chapter of this dissertation functions as a case study of texts from a discreet period of movement literature. My work draws contextual information for these chapters from a number of monographs that use organizational or biographical approaches to explore the woman's rights movement. Chapter three, addressing the Seneca Falls convention and early years of the organized movement, draws particularly on Ginzberg and Wellman's biographies of Cady Stanton and the circumstances surrounding the convention. My study of the Women's National Loyal League (WNLL) in chapter four builds on the work of Julie Roy Jeffrey and Wendy Hamand Venet, particularly following Hamand Venet's treatment of the League as a national feminist organization and her attention to the interpersonal relationships among leaders. Nina Silber's *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* contributed to my understanding of the ideological climate in which the WNLL functioned.³⁹

The discussion of movement leaders' transitions among the League, the American Equal Rights Association (AERA), the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) relies heavily on Hamand

³⁹ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Wendy F. Hamand, "The Woman's National Loyal League: Feminist Abolitionists and the Civil War." *Civil War History* 35:1 (1989): 39–58; Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Wellman. *The Road to Seneca Falls*.

Venet and Faye Dudden's *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America*. Although Cady Stanton and Anthony later minimized the importance of the AERA in their *History of Woman Suffrage*, Dudden's scholarship revealed that the AERA represented a unique, if brief, period of cooperation between advocates of black male suffrage and woman's suffragists. Dudden also uncovered complicated financial relationships within the movement that help to explain Cady Stanton and Anthony's descent into racist-driven rhetoric. My understanding of the changing way the movement used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in this period also follows Carolyn Vacca's work suggesting that external criticism prompted leaders to alter their rhetorical approaches.

Chapter five's discussion of the post-war changes in gender roles in relation to the woman's rights movement draws especially on Angela Ray and Lisa Tetrault's studies of lyceum culture as well as biographies of Cady Stanton, Victoria Woodhull, and Lucy Stone.⁴⁰ In addition to the organizational records of the Women's Centennial Executive

⁴⁰ Angela G Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005); ———, "The Rhetorical Ritual of Citizenship: Women's Voting as Public Performance, 1868-1875," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93:1 (2007): 1-26; ———, "What Hath She Wrought: Woman's Rights and the Nineteenth-Century Lyceum," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9:2 (2006): 183-213; Angela G. Ray and Cindy Koenig Richards, "Inventing Citizens, Imagining Gender Justice: The Suffrage Rhetoric of Virginia and Francis Minor," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93:4 (2007): 375-402; Lisa Tetrault, "The Incorporation of American Feminism: Suffragists and the Postbellum Lyceum," *Journal of American History* (2010): 1027-1056; Amanda Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876," *Journal of Women's History* 12:1 (2000): 89-111; Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), ———, "White Women's Rights, Black Men's Wrongs, Free Love, Blackmail, and the Formation of the American Woman Suffrage Association," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, (Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995); Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*.

Committee (WCEC) and the Committee sponsored newspaper, *The New Century*, I drew material on the centennial celebration and the formation of the Women's Committee from Elizabeth Duane Gillespie's autobiography and a volume published by the Smithsonian Institution as part of the National Museum of History and Technology's exhibit on the Centennial exhibition.⁴¹

Collective Memories of the Revolution

Studies of the myriad political uses and changing memories of the Revolution form the third collection of literature relevant to this research. While a great number of scholars have considered various aspects of the war and the accompanying economic, political, social, cultural, and gender norm changes, much less work addresses nineteenth-century Americans' uses of the Revolution as a symbol or as a collective memory. Following Michael Kammen's foundational study of the Revolution in American culture from the war's end to the twentieth century, most works have taken a more chronological limited scope. Studies of nineteenth-century uses of the Revolution concentrate largely on the democratization of war memory to include working-class

On women in the wage-labor force, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States, 20th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). The literature on women's benevolent work during the war, particularly under the auspices of the Sanitary Commission, is well developed. On the connections between war work and women's rights, see Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union*.

⁴¹ Robert C. Post, ed., *1876: A Centennial Exhibition* (Washington, D.C.: Moore and Moore, 1976); Elizabeth Duane Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1901). For more on the centennial see Dee Brown, *The Year of the Century: 1876* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).

white men in the early republic and in the sectionalist rhetoric leading up to the Civil War.⁴²

Following the introductory chapter exploring Revolutionary heritage rhetoric and woman's rights before 1848, the dissertation presents three case study chapters, each focused on a pivotal period in the first generation of the suffrage movement. Each case study presents concurrent changes in Americans' often competing expressions of collective memories of the Revolution, juxtaposing these changes with points of

⁴² Kammen's classic work on the Revolution in American culture is *A Season of Youth*. Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 1978). For other studies of the political uses of collective memories of the war, see: Philip S. Foner, ed., *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829-1975* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Francois Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); John Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850, Twentieth-Anniversary Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

On Revolutionary memory in sectionalist rhetoric see Jonathan B. Crider, "De Bow's Revolution: The Memory of the American Revolution in the Politics of the Sectional Crisis, 1850-1861," *American Nineteenth Century History* 10:3 (2009): 317-332; Matthew Mason, "The Sacred Ashes of the First Men: Edward Everett, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union, and Late Antebellum Unionism," in *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*, ed. McDonnell et al. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Sarah J. Purcell. "Martyred Blood and Avenging Spirits: Revolutionary Martyrs and Heroes as Inspiration for the U.S. Civil War," in *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*, ed. McDonnell et. al. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Paul Quigley, "Independence Day Dilemmas in the American South, 1848-1865," *Journal of Southern History* LXXV:2 (2009): 235-266; Anne Sarah Rubin, "Seventy-six and Sixty-one: Confederates Remember the American Revolution," in *Where These Memories Grow*.

continuity and adaptation in suffragists' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Thus, this work relies on studies of dominant and alternative collective memories of the Revolution as the contexts in which activists' Revolutionary heritage rhetoric developed.⁴³

Organization: The Case Studies

Chapter 3: Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric in the Early Woman's Rights Conventions, 1848-1853

This chapter documents the important place of collective memories of the Revolution in the ideology of the woman's rights movement by exploring Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in speeches, letters, Declarations, and Resolutions from the early years of the organized conventions. It begins with a discussion of the convention format as a political tool, then briefly analyzing the Declaration of Sentiments prepared for the Seneca Falls convention by Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane C. Hunt. Following the gathering at Seneca Falls, women held regional and national conventions beginning in 1850 and continuing throughout the decade, often with multiple meetings each year. Friends of the movement often sent letters of encouragement, which were read aloud and selectively included in the published proceedings.

⁴³ In addition to the sources above, see also Mires, *Independence Hall in American Memory*; Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory" *Social Forces* 61:2 (1982): 374-402; ———, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington" *American Sociological Review* 56:2 (1991): 221-236; Elizabethada A. Wright, "Keeping Memory: The Cemetery and Rhetorical Memory in Constance Fenimore Woolson's 'Rodman the Keeper,'" *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 39:1 (2006): 29–54, Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

Coming from the widely-hated abolition effort, leaders of the emerging woman's rights movement were conscious that their new cause was even more radical and controversial. Chapter 2 argues that woman's rights activists used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to gain attention for their nascent movement, to justify their demands, and to awaken other women to their duty to join the cause. The texts in the chapter are primarily from the published proceedings of state and national woman's rights conventions during the first five years of the organized movement, with attention also given to newspaper reports and re-printings of selected speeches from conventions. Additionally, the chapter includes a discussion of Paulina Wright Davis' early critiques of fellow activists' uses of America's Revolutionary heritage as rhetoric inappropriate for the woman's rights cause.

Chapter 4: Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric and Female Citizenship in War and Reconstruction, 1860-1870

The Civil War and the debates over changing ideas of citizenship during Reconstruction created a unique environment for women's rights activists to reach broader audiences. As during the decades before the war, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric provided a compelling support for active, politicized female patriotism, whether in petitioning for the abolition of slavery as a way to support the war effort, or in demanding woman suffrage as an integral part of the state and federal reforms of Reconstruction. This chapter demonstrates the way woman's rights activists continued to use the legacy of the Revolution to support divergent paths to women's civic equality and suffrage, while also incorporating women's achievements during the Civil War and responding to divisions in the movement. The texts in this section sample convention proceedings from

regional and national woman's rights and equal rights organizations, as well as the Women's National Loyal League (WNLL), Congressional testimony offered by representatives of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and arguments at several state constitutional conventions. Each of these organizations and gatherings included both male and female participants and all were based in the northeastern and Midwestern states. Together, these sources demonstrate changes in some reformers' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in the postbelleum period, reflecting divisions in activists' commitment to racial equality. This chapter also explores the ways those outside the movement, both commentators and critics, adopted activists' own use of Revolutionary memories as defining arguments for woman suffrage.

Chapter 5: The Centennial, Racism, and the Commercialization of Revolutionary Memory 1873-1890

This chapter explores multiple strands of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in documents produced by supporters of woman's rights (though not necessarily in favor of suffrage) during the decade following the passage of the Reconstruction amendments and surrounding the nation's centennial. The selected texts are drawn from organizational publications of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee; the Committee's sponsored newspaper, the *New Century*; convention proceedings of the two competing national woman's rights associations; articles in suffrage newspapers; testimony offered at a hearing on woman's suffrage held by the House of Representatives; proceedings of state suffrage conventions; and the "Declaration of Rights for Women" distributed by the National Woman Suffrage Association at the Centennial exhibition on July 4th, 1876. The

thesis of Chapter 5 is that Revolutionary heritage rhetoric used around the nation's centennial and the end of radical reconstruction reflected both continuity and fragmentation in the suffrage movement's usages of collective memories of the Revolution amid increasing commercialization of the founders and the growing dominance of female moral superiority and racist- and nativist-driven arguments. In the latter decades of the century activists changed the ways they referred to the Revolutionary past into a rhetoric which supported their altered perspectives.

Conclusions

In the early years of the organized American woman's rights movement, leaders and supporters persistently invoked the heritage of the American Revolution as part of their rhetoric justifying civil, religious, and political equality for women. They alternately drew parallels between themselves and the oppressed colonists of the 1770s, insisted that the patriotic sacrifices of the war produced entitlements of rights that applied to women, and criticized the Founding Fathers for excluding women once the war was won. At conventions, in newspapers, and in public addresses, activists encouraged, chided, and demanded, with multiple approaches all revolving around the Revolutionary heritage. Movement leaders insisted that as the political (and sometimes biological) descendants of the Revolutionary generation, they were the legitimate beneficiaries of the founders' sacrifices and, simultaneously, duty-bound to perfect the founders' incomplete vision of equality. For more than thirty years in the mid-nineteenth century, woman's rights advocates used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in a variety of forms as explanations for the source and prerogatives of female citizenship. Only when the movement shifted

decisively from equality-based arguments to those of racism and white female privilege did activists modify their rhetorical connections to the Revolutionary past.

This dissertation argues that woman's rights rhetoric, and its transition to race- and class-privileged ideologies, was more complicated than scholars have previously described. The use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric demonstrates that the movement mimicked successful male-coded arguments from partisan politics, labor reformers, and abolitionists, along with more traditionally female rhetorics. As early as the mid-1860s, movement speakers often commented on the repetitiveness of their arguments, even as they continued to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Such consistent usage over three decades demonstrates that many activists believed founding-era memories to be indispensably compelling, and, as they often noted, irrefutable. Woman's rights advocates continued to draw on Revolutionary memory even after the Civil War, when other political and reform groups set founding-era heritage aside. Leaders' invocations of the Revolution were inseparably connected to their willingness to work for racial and class equality along with woman's rights. As organizations within the movement fractured and restructured around competing ideas about how to best improve women's lives, activists' rhetoric changed as well. Ultimately, references to the founding era became both commercialized and racialized to such an extent that they no longer functioned as Revolutionary heritage rhetoric; sales pitches and far-distant icons replaced emotional connections to the sacrifices of the Revolutionary generation. It was not the case, then, that invocations of the Revolution failed the woman's rights movement, but rather that as the movement matured and adapted to changes in American culture, its ideals no longer matched the rhetoric of equality.

CHAPTER 2

REVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE IN REFORM RHETORIC BEFORE WOMAN'S RIGHTS

In 1837, Angelina Grimké published *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States* on behalf of that year's Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. Hers was a unique text among anti-slavery appeals of the period, suffused with woman's rights arguments justifying her and her sister's public anti-slavery work, and calling on other women to do the same. Drawing on the Revolutionary past, in the *Appeal*, Grimké challenged:

[Slavery] outlaws every Northerner who openly avows the sentiments of the Declaration of our Independence.... and menaces the severance of the bonds which bind together these United States, and to shake from our star spangled banner, as with a mighty wind, those glittering emblems of our country's pre-eminence among the nations of the earth, and to burn our Declaration as a 'splendid absurdity,' a 'rhetorical flourish;' When the British army had taken possession of our beautiful city of brotherly love, who arose at midnight to listen to the plots which were laid in an upper chamber, by General Howe in his council of war? It was a *woman*: and when she stole the secret from their unconscious lips, she kept it locked within her own bosom, until under an ingenious pretext she repaired to Frankford, gained an interview with Washington, and disclosed to him the important intelligence which saved the lives of her countrymen. Did Lydia Darrah confer a benefit upon the American army -- did she perform the duties of an American citizen? Or, was this act an impertinent intermeddling with the *political concerns* of her country, with which, as a *woman*, she had nothing to do? Let the daughters of this republic answer the question.⁴⁴

The Grimké sisters performed much of their anti-slavery lectures under the sponsorship of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAAS), but this pamphlet was published by the separate women's association. The next year, the AAAS printed an additional 5,000

⁴⁴ Angelina Grimke, *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States: Issued by an Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, 1837*, New York, NY (Boston, MA: Issac Knapp, 1838.)

copies in an abridged edition. In addition to arguing that women's duties as Christians compelled them to participate in social uplift activities outside the home (arguments developed in previous decades by women's Sunday School and benevolent associations), Grimké insisted that American women also had a patriotic duty to work for abolition. She used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to defend the anti-slavery cause and to justify women's public involvement with a political, masculine, issue. In drawing upon the memories and characters of the founding generation, Grimké followed the examples of a number of male-led political and social movements which had used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to advance their causes by interpreting the legacy of the Revolution as one that applied to all Americans, regardless of class or race. Their successes using such arguments set a precedent woman's rights activists later expected to duplicate. After all, to cite the Declaration of Independence or the Founding Fathers was to invoke patriotism, filial duty, and the discourse of rights in one sweep – and to oppose such rhetoric or dismiss the sacrifices of the founding generation was anti-American.

The Radicalism (or Not) of Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric

Woman's rights advocates and abolitionists were not the first activists to make use of the symbols of the Revolution to advance a social or political cause. As early as the 1790s, urban workers in New York claimed Fourth of July celebrations as occasions for elaborating the virtues and sufferings of laborers. By the 1830s, activists of many stripes embraced a number of American-specific rhetorics of the Revolution, the evils of "taxation without representation," and especially the language of the Declaration of Independence. Opposing views of the legacy of the founders was a mainstay in partisan

and sectionalist rhetoric leading up to the Civil War; abolitionists routinely used memories of the Revolution in their attacks on slavery. Whether these invocations appeared as radical or commonplace depended not only upon the larger argument it was part of, but also upon the speaker's gender and race. While politicians liberally praised the founders, arguing only over whose interpretation of their legacy was legitimate, reformers, particularly woman's rights advocates, dared to critique the founding fathers as well. Emotional, memory-based rhetoric allowed activists to both criticize the Revolutionary generation and to praise them – pointing out the sacrifices of Revolutionary mothers alongside the famous fathers, lamenting women's exclusion from the political rewards of independence, celebrating women's brief period of voting in New Jersey, and shaming the men who soon disenfranchised them.

When female activists used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric they challenged not only the proscriptions against women speaking in public or to mixed-gender audiences, they also departed from the accepted female-coded language of moral suasion predominant in much of the abolition movement and throughout the temperance, Sunday School, and moral improvement causes. Praising rebellion, sacrifice, and resistance to tyranny as much as cooperation and the collective good, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric was often infused with the male-coded language of battle and conflict. Indeed, woman's rights activists used imagery that seemingly mirrored the Whigs, Democrats, and eventual Republicans, even amid great efforts to distinguish their demands for suffrage from the sullying partisanship that suffused most nineteenth-century political debates. Surrounded by party symbols, rhetorics, and political philosophies, the language of Revolutionary memory was the most combative male-coded rhetorical tool activists

deployed. The radicalism of that combativeness was magnified when woman's rights advocates added direct criticism of the founders to the fray.

In her study of rhetoric in the woman's rights movement, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell explained: "In the broadest sense, rhetoric is the study of the means by which symbols can be used to appeal to others, to persuade. The potential for persuasion exists in the shared symbolic and socioeconomic experience of the persuaders (rhetors) and audiences."⁴⁵ As scholars of the movement have long described, woman's rights activists generally used two particular types of arguments: those based on social good (also called expediency), which claimed that women had particular duties or abilities to improve their communities through wider social and political participation. The second type of reasoning has often been labeled principle, or natural rights – arguments that claimed rights for women based on shared republican or Christian ideas of fairness and equality.⁴⁶ In those cases, the beneficiaries of activists' work would be women themselves, rather than the state or nation as a collective. In many ways, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric bridged the gap between these two poles, combining women's duties to uphold or improve upon the founder's legacy with the nation as a whole's obligation to the same end.

⁴⁵ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 2.

⁴⁶ These categorizations began with Aileen Kraditor's foundational 1965 *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, and have been expanded, debated, and modified by scholars of the movement ever since. For a recent, thorough discussion of the historiography of these categories, see Louise M. Newman, "Reflections on Aileen Kraditor's Legacy: Fifty Years of Woman Suffrage Historiography, 1965-2014," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 14 (2015): 290–316. For the original, see Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

Drazen Pehar, in detailing the working of what he identified as “historical rhetoric” argued that rhetoric is a form of analogy, and “historical analogies are a variety of metaphorical expressions that use an image of the past to shed some light on present or future affairs of mostly political concern.”⁴⁷ Following Kohrs Campbell’s and Pehar’s definitions, this dissertation explores rhetoric that deployed collective memories of the Revolutionary War as symbols intended to persuade audiences of the legitimacy of women’s claims to civic and social equality. In labeling this type of argumentation “Revolutionary heritage rhetoric,” I distinguish it from appeals based upon natural rights, republicanism, or constitutionalism. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric asked listeners to identify with a series of well-known events and people, rather than abstract principles.

As Maurice Halbwachs first explained in the 1950s, memory is largely a group, rather than an individual phenomenon, requiring external contexts and actors in order to remain meaningful; thus he coined the term “collective memory.”⁴⁸ The concept of collective memory is particularly useful to historians in exploring commemorations of events that carry strong emotional or political meanings within a society, yet occurred outside individuals’ own lived experiences, as in the case of the lasting influence of the Revolutionary War.⁴⁹ More recently, Wulf Kansteiner has argued that collective memory

⁴⁷ Drazen Pehar, “Historical Rhetoric and Diplomacy - An Uneasy Cohabitation,” in *Language and Diplomacy*, ed. Jovan Kurbalija and Hannah Slavik (Malta: DiploProjects, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2001) 117-38.

⁴⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory, Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction by Lewis A. Coser*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ The literature on collective memory is now well-developed across a variety of disciplines. For useful introductions to historians’ uses of collective memory in relation

is “the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests.”⁵⁰ In this framework, woman’s rights activists can be understood as memory makers deploying existing traditions venerating Revolutionary people and events in rhetorical ways to support their arguments.

David Blight has taught us that “the problem of historical memory is essentially one of competing narratives, marshaled often to high political ends.”⁵¹ This dissertation is an exploration of one group’s marshalling efforts: women presenting an inclusive narrative of the Revolution in an attempt to gain their own rights and enfranchisement, then reshaping that narrative to serve their changing purposes. This dissertation also illuminates the limitations of using alternative versions of collective memories as tools for political change. Because collective memories are formed in part by silencing competing voices, arguments using memories in new ways, or attempting to stretch dominant memories to include new actors are also frequently silenced. The record of

to American military conflicts, see David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Changing Images of the Warrior Hero in America: A History of Popular Symbolism* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982); David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (London: Viking, 1996).

⁵⁰ Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41 (May 2002): 179–197.

⁵¹ David W. Blight, “Epilogue: Southerners Don’t Lie; They Just Remember Big,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 350.

printed responses to woman's rights advocates use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric follows this pattern. Opponents not only refused to act on woman's suffrage, but they also refused to engage the debate along Revolutionary heritage lines as long as it was grounded in equal rights.

Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric Before the Woman's Rights Movement

Advocates of working-class male suffrage and labor activists often used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in their campaigns. The legal and political position of working-class white men in the United States changed dramatically in the late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries. In state after state, disenfranchised white men – both urban laborers and poor farmers – demanded and gained the right to vote.⁵² Workers attempted to organize outside the traditional guild system and to gain legal protections within their trades. Beginning in Boston, workers reclaimed “the action against the tea” (eventually known as the Boston Tea Party) as part of the working-class' contribution to the movement for independence.⁵³ Following suggestions from Robert Owen and Frances Wright in 1829, activists in New York, then elsewhere, began to publish their own versions of the Declaration of Independence. Coming in the midst of the market revolution, many of the early declarations lashed out at banks, grants of incorporation for

⁵² Many longstanding ideas about the spread of democracy and the voting practices of the early republic are being revised in response to the project “A New Nation Votes.” See especially Donald Ratcliffe, “The Right to Vote and the Rise of Democracy, 1787-1828,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 33:2 (2013): 219–54; Andrew W. Robertson, “Afterword: Reconceptualizing Jeffersonian Democracy,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 33:2 (2013): 317–34.

⁵³ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*; Foner, *We, the Other People*. See also Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*.

businesses, and presented demands for wealth redistribution of various kinds. The 1829 Working Men's Declaration of Independence insisted that the working classes were "entitled to EQUAL MEANS to obtain equal moral happiness, and social enjoyment, and that all lawful and constitutional measures ought to be adopted to the attainment of those objects." An Anti-Renters' Declaration demanded the nullification of farmers' existing leases and that landowner Stephen Van Rensselaer make land available for purchase at reduced rates. Even more radical was the American Anti-Slavery Convention's 1833 Declaration of Sentiments calling for the immediate abolition of slavery, in part through congressional restrictions on interstate slave trade and emancipation in all territory under Congress' control, including the District of Columbia.⁵⁴ By the 1840s, the Declaration of Independence and the Boston Tea Party had become two of the great working-class symbols of resistance to oppression. Although the National Trades Union collapsed after the Panic of 1837, urban labor activists had reasons to believe their rhetoric and protests had produced some measure of success in the forms of trade union councils (in New York City and Philadelphia), protective mechanic lien laws in many states, and continued efforts to strike for better conditions among various groups of workers.⁵⁵

Abolitionists were more divided in their usage of Revolutionary memory and Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. The same 1833 Anti-Slavery Convention "Declaration of

⁵⁴ See George Henry Evans, "The Working Men's Declaration of Independence," in *We, the Other People*, 50. "Anti-Renters' Declaration of Independence," in *We, the Other People*, 59-63. William Lloyd Garrison, American Anti-Slavery Convention, "Declaration of Sentiments," December 6, 1833, as reprinted in *Liberator*, 12-14-1833.

⁵⁵ For more on the changing labor laws and class divisions during the early to mid-nineteenth century, see Jonathan Hughes and Louis P. Cain, *American Economic History*, 6th ed. (Boston: Addison Wesley, 2003.)

Sentiments” that echoed the Declaration of Independence also drew sharp contrasts in the methods of the founders versus the intentions of the AAAS.

Their principles led them to wage war against their oppressors, and to spill human blood, like water, in order to be free. *Ours* forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty, through God... *Their* measures were physical resistance—the marshalling in arms—the hostile array — the mortal encounter. *Ours* shall be such only as the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption — the destruction of error by the potency of truth.⁵⁶

While the Declaration of Sentiments did not directly criticize the founders, the authors presented their own tactics as morally superior to the violence of the Revolutionary War. In 1838, the Business Committee of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women presented an Address to Anti-Slavery Societies to the convention for approval. The Address noted that the contrast with “our revolutionary fathers” described in the Declaration of Sentiments had been adopted by many anti-slavery societies and “are supposed to be adopted by abolitionists generally.” The authors suggested that all anti-slavery societies were thereby bound to adhere to non-violent resistance, both in their own defense and in what methods they recommended to others. Without continuing the explicit comparison with the Revolutionary generation, they asked, “And has it not in all ages, among all classes of men, been established as a general truth, that, while physical strength and violence may be foiled or overcome, unresisting and forbearing meekness is almost omnipotent in the propagation of truth[?]”⁵⁷ The authors, including Maria Weston

⁵⁶ William Lloyd Garrison, American Anti-Slavery Convention, “Declaration of Sentiments,” December 6, 1833, as reprinted in *Liberator*, 12-14-1833.

⁵⁷ Samuel Webb, “The Fourth and Last Day,” in *The History of Pennsylvania Hall, Which Was Destroyed by a Mob, on the 17th of May, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838) 127-35.

Chapman and Angelina Grimké Weld, were indirect but still clearly positioned anti-slavery methods as not only morally superior to those of the founders, but also ultimately more powerful.⁵⁸

Other anti-slavery advocates used the Revolutionary heritage as part of a more fiery rhetoric which suggested, if not openly advocated, active resistance to slave-catching laws and violent civil disobedience. In the fall of 1832, Maria W. Stewart delivered four anti-slavery lectures in Boston. Although her speeches were primarily religious in tone, she also referred to African Americans' stake in the Revolutionary heritage to chide her audience to action. At the close of one address, she encouraged her listeners to develop "a spirit of virtuous emulation" and to think of the efforts of the Founders. "Did the pilgrims, when they first landed on these shores, quietly compose themselves and say, 'The Britons have all the money and the power, and we must continue their servants forever?' ... No; they first made powerful efforts to raise themselves, and then God raised up those illustrious patriots, WASHINGTON and LAFAYETTE, to assist and defend them."⁵⁹ In her address at the African Masonic Hall, Stewart reminded her audience of African Americans' past acts of patriotism: "It is true our fathers bled and died in the revolutionary war, and others fought bravely under the command of Jackson, in defence of liberty. But where is the man that has distinguished

⁵⁸ Angelina Grimké married Theodore Weld shortly before the convention, thus the Angelina Grimké of the 1837 document opening this chapter became the Angelina Grimké Weld of the 1838 convention. For more on abolitionists' uses of Revolutionary memory, see Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 52-53.

⁵⁹ Maria W. Stewart, "Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall, Boston, September 21, 1832," in *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer*, ed. Marilyn Richardson, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987) 49.

himself in these modern days by acting wholly in the defence of African rights and liberty?"⁶⁰ Far from criticizing the Revolutionary generation's willingness to use force and violence, Stewart's call to act in "defence of African rights and liberty" demanded that her audience move beyond pacifism and political debate.

Nathaniel Rogers expressed a similar sentiment during his 1837 address to the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society. Rogers railed at the passivity of anti-slavery, while contrasting it with pro-slavery, states' rights arguments:

You may not advise the slaves to avenge their wrongs.... As to insurrection, those who do not allow them the right to that, must be cautious about giving vent to their Fourth of July patriotism.... The copies of that old "flourish of rhetoric" by the continental committee put forth to help us through our insurrection against the British parliament, for their *abridgement* of the *sacred right* of tea-drinking, must all be suppressed. We must hide out of sight and hearing, all those "self-evident truths," that we have aforesaid so unwarily trumpeted through the land—lest they strike the ear of some listening SLAVE. Abolitionists have been accused of instigating the slaves to rise upon their masters. The accusation is a bloody-minded falsehood, intended to excite the mob to insurrection against us and to curry favor with the South.... But James T. Austin, in his 4th of July blusters--if he has ever played the orator on that day--and all our host of pro-slavery declaimed --have done all that could be done to disseminate the principles of insurrection, by proclaiming in the ears of the land, inalienable liberty, and the sacred right to resist oppression by force. Abolitionists teach no such lessons. They teach nothing to the slave.... They advocate the universal duty of nonresistance by violence and enforce it with their practice--while pro-slavery patriotism has read the old insurrectionary Declaration of Independence, and pointed the slave to Bunker Hill and to Yorktown, as the way to vindicate these "self-evident" rights. And who that holds to the principles of our revolution, can deny to the slave the horrible right of insurrection?—and why is *his* insurrection for liberty worse than John Hancock's, and Samuel Adams's, and Joseph Warren's? If they had the right, HE HAS IT, and his occasion for its exercise is infinite compared with theirs. That occasion, my friends, I pray you may speedily take away, and I would meantime caution the oppressor against talking too freely

⁶⁰ Maria W. Stewart, "An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall, Boston, February 27, 1833," in *Maria W. Stewart*, 57.

about the doings of the revolutionary fathers.⁶¹

Rogers, a lawyer by training, was soon to become the editor of the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society's organ, *Herald of Freedom*. In this address, he made careful use of second person pronouns to appeal to his audience – opening with an inclusive “you” who are restricted in speech with the enslaved, and the patriotic “us” and “we” the original Constitutional Convention aided, who were part of “our” Revolution. Third person, abstract abolitionist “they”s might be slandered by pro-slavery advocates in order to hurt “us”; so while it was up to the listeners to decide if they identified as abolitionists, the threat against them seemed to remain, regardless. Rogers used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric not only to impugn the patriotism of those who sought to silence abolitionists, but also to compare enslaved people to some of New England's favorite founding fathers as a way to defend their right to revolt.

In a letter to the *Liberator* in 1844, Elizabeth Pease, an Englishwoman interested in the anti-slavery, peace, and “womanism” causes, expressed her support for the use of violence in attempting to end slavery. After describing her horror at the outcome of a recent trial of an abolitionist, charged with assisting a fugitive slave, she asked: “But is it possible that such an outrage, as the one I was referring to [the abolitionist was sentence to thirty lashes on a bare back], will be suffered to be perpetrated in the boasted land of the free? Is it not enough to reanimate the ashes of your revolutionary fathers, and to make them cry out in the name of freedom, 'Where are the faint embers of that liberty, for

⁶¹ Following the annual meeting, Rogers published his address in pamphlet form. Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, *An Address Delivered Before the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society, at Its Annual Meeting, 25 Dec. 1837* (Concord, NH: William White, 1838.)

which we fought and bled?”⁶² By reimagining the founders as men who would have placed principle over race, Pease offered them as a source of both inspiration and shame for failing to maintain the freedom they won.

One year later, William Lloyd Garrison presented a number of resolutions at the Norfolk County (Massachusetts) Anti-Slavery Society’s quarterly meeting. After decrying the ways that federal fugitive slave laws trampled the rights of citizens of Massachusetts, the seventh resolution insisted:

[I]f the unjust imposition of a threepenny tax on every pound of tea, by the British Parliament, was a sufficient cause to proclaim the freedom and independence of the colonies, and to justify the taking up of arms against the mother country by our revolutionary fathers; then the seizure and enslavement of the citizens of Massachusetts by the South at her will and pleasure, call for a more heroic spirit, and a loftier determination, on the part of the people of this Commonwealth.⁶³

The gathered delegates approved the resolutions unanimously, apparently seeing no contradiction between Garrison’s general argument that slavery was a moral evil that could not be corrected through politics and his advocating of violence as a substitute for political action. Although Garrison described himself as a pacifist as much as a nonpartisan, he often espoused and printed similarly inflammatory material in his anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator*, whose masthead included the slogan “No Union with Slaveholders.”

The anti-slavery movement was divided not only over their devotion, or lack thereof, to non-violence, but also by members’ beliefs that slavery could (or could not) be abolished by political means, as well as their stances on allowing women to participate in

⁶² Elizabeth Pease, “Letter from Elizabeth Pease of England,” *Liberator*, May 24, 1844.

⁶³ “Norfolk County Anti-Slavery Society,” *National AntiSlavery Standard*, November 27, 1845.

anti-slavery meetings as delegates and speakers. In 1840, the issue came to a breaking point at the AAAS's annual meeting. Well-known female abolitionist Abby Kelley was nominated as a member of the Business Committee. When she was elected, many opposing male attendees and delegates walked out of the convention in response. Following a similar division at the world's Anti-Slavery Convention in London the same year, the American anti-slavery movement fractured between the existing AAAS (which then formally welcomed women's participation, but also took the Garrisonian position favoring moral suasion over political efforts to end slavery); and the new American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (which limited women to auxiliary societies and favored using political avenues to abolish slavery.)⁶⁴

Despite these divisions, the anti-slavery movement overall experienced both numeric growth and seeming social and political successes between the early 1830s and the late 1840s. From the 1831 founding of the *Liberator* newspaper, (which traditionally marks the beginning of the immediatist abolitionist movement), organized abolition grew to a reported 100,000 members in over 1,000 local and state-level associations by 1837.⁶⁵ By 1840, more than two million Americans had signed abolitionist petitions to Congress

⁶⁴ For more on the division between anti-slavery societies, see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*. And Gerda Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*, Rev. and Expanded (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.)

⁶⁵ John, L. Myers, "The Antislavery Agency System in Maine, 1836-1838," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 23 (1983): 57-84. As cited in Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.)

or their state representatives.⁶⁶ As activist women moved between the abolition movement and the emerging woman's rights organizations, they had every reason to believe that the same Revolutionary rhetoric that served the anti-slavery cause would also bolster their own appeals for political and civil rights.

Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric in Defense of Woman's Rights Before 1848

White, native-born, middle-class American women predominated in the woman's rights movement. However, they were not the first to juxtapose language from the Revolution with the political position of American women. Perhaps the earliest use came from Cambridge law professor Edward Christian, who collaborated with William Blackstone to provide footnotes and additional material for a 1793 edition of Blackstone's famous *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. In a footnote Christian wrote: "With regard to the property of women, there is taxation without representation; for they pay taxes without having the liberty of voting for representatives"; he made no mention of the United States or its revolution.⁶⁷ This brief commentary, along with many of Christian's explanatory notes, was reprinted, essentially unchanged, in other edited versions of *Blackstone's* for the next five decades.⁶⁸ Woman's rights advocates later

⁶⁶ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 82.

⁶⁷ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England, in Four Books*, 12th ed. (London: A. Strahan and W. Woodfall, 1793.)

⁶⁸ Blackstone originally published his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* in four lengthy volumes between 1765 and 1769. Both critical and laudatory "Commentary" and edited versions soon abounded, with editors providing their own footnoted remarks on Blackstone's comments. The twelfth edition of Blackstone's original text included

referred to the quote as if it were an original part of Blackstone's text, and used it frequently as a de facto admission of wrongdoing. As early as 1813, Christian's comment was published as part of a larger critique of the legal and political status of women in America printed in a Worcester, Massachusetts paper, the *National Aegis*.⁶⁹

Perhaps the first person to make rhetorical use of the emotional American heritage of "taxation without representation" on behalf of women was the author John Neal. [Whether or not he was in fact the first, Neal later claimed that he was in his 1869 autobiography.] In 1832, Neal delivered a Fourth of July oration in Portland, Maine where he insisted that the "slavery of our women... was the very illustration of taxation without representation, which our fathers struggled against."⁷⁰ Neal had recently returned to his hometown of Portland from an extended trip to England, and was asked to give the oration to replace a speaker who canceled the day before the celebrations. Three decades later, in his autobiography, Neal described himself as a long-time advocate for woman's rights, claiming that his Fourth of July speech came as "an unpremeditated annunciation of the great principles I have always contended for" and a complete surprise to his

responses to critics in the form of Christian's footnotes and added commentary. Christian published an independent edition of his contribution, titled *Notes on Blackstone's Commentaries* in Dublin in 1797, then in 1801, released an first American edition. Interestingly, only the American edition included the "taxation without representation" comment. See Edward Christian, *Notes to Blackstone's Commentaries, Which Are Calculated to Answer All the Editions*, American. Vol. V. (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1801.) Christian's remarks were not a casual assertion, in addition to serving as a legal scholar at Cambridge, he was a well-known legal reformer. For more on the history of *Blackstone's Commentaries*, see Greg Bailey, "Blackstone in America: Lectures by An English Lawyer Become the Blueprint for a New Nation's Laws and Leaders," *Early America Review* II, (1997).

⁶⁹ "Remarks by Christian," *National Aegis*, November 10, 1813.

⁷⁰ "The Fourth of July," *Portland Advertiser*, July 9, 1832.

audience.⁷¹ Among his prolific fiction and poetry publications, throughout the rest of his life, he continued to advocate in person and in print for woman's rights.

Neal included addresses on woman's rights among his lyceum lecture topics when he began traveling as a speaker in the 1840s, but economist, lawyer, and abolitionist Amasa Walker may have been the first to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in his arguments for woman's rights on the lyceum circuit. In 1838, Walker argued the affirmative position on the question "Would the condition of society and women be improved by placing the two sexes on an equality in respect to civil rights and duties?" at the Boston Lyceum. According to a newspaper summary among the points Walker raised was the "injustice of taxing the property of females, while they were shorn of their civil privileges. They were not represented, and – 'taxation without representation' was the origin of the war of the revolution."⁷² Walker was one of five speakers on the subject, two in support and three in opposition, but no one else seems to have made mention of the American Revolutionary past. Instead, the other speakers drew examples from antiquity and medieval monarchs. Walker reminded his listeners that Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas were initially "opposed with much energy and cried down." However, the question of equality between the sexes was "again brought forward, under a new and different aspect, and must be fairly met." Along with the sudden visibility of the Grimké sisters and a few other women speaking out against slavery, one of the "new and

⁷¹ John Neal, *Wandering Reflections of a Somewhat Busy Life*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869.)

⁷² "Discussion at the Boston Lyceum," *New Bedford Mercury*, January 19, 1838.

different” aspects Walker was referring to may have been the publication of Harriet Martineau’s book, *Society in America*, the year before.

Martineau was already a well-known author at the time she produced her three-volume commentary on American life, and the work was advertised and reviewed widely in northern newspapers. She praised the country’s republican principles and founding, along with many aspects of American culture, but throughout the book she repeatedly criticized both slavery and the civil and political position of women. The section titled the “Political Non-Existence of Women” began and ended with references to the Revolution. “One of the fundamental principles announced in the Declaration of Independence is, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. How can the political condition of women be reconciled with this?”⁷³ Martineau quoted Thomas Jefferson’s defense of limited suffrage, dismissing his concern with the moral dangers of “promiscuous meetings” for voting by pointing out both that female suffrage would not necessitate mixed-gender polling, and that such gatherings were already common occurrences in religious and popular cultural events. She concluded her commentary by counterpoising America’s Revolutionary past and the ideals of the Declaration with women’s political exclusion. To those who mocked the idea of women voting, she offered a telling reminder: “The kings of Europe would have laughed mightily, two centuries ago, at the idea of a commoner, without robes, crown, or scepter, stepping into the throne of a strong nation. Yet who dared to laugh when Washington’s super-royal voice greeted the New World from the presidential chair, and the old world stood still to

⁷³ Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, European, Vol. 1 (Paris: A. & W. Galignani and Co., 1837) 102.

catch the echo?”⁷⁴ Even those American women who did not yet want to vote, she insisted, were fully capable of doing so if given an opportunity.

Martineau’s criticisms sparked a variety of angry responses. However, because she expressed them in the already established realm of female authorship, her work did not directly challenge American gender norms to the extent that the Grimké sisters and other abolitionist women did when they gave public lectures. In 1837, the General Association of Massachusetts Churches released a “Pastoral Letter” to churches under their care. The authoring ministers expressed concern over the spread of anti-slavery discussions and schisms in churches generally, the “perplexed and agitating subjects which are now common amongst us.” Of the four topics the letter addressed, the bulk of the text was occupied with the issue of women who “assume[d] the place and tone of man as a public reformer” and “so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers.”⁷⁵ Abolitionist men and women responded to the letter primarily in the anti-slavery press; the *Liberator* reprinted an essay titled “Influence of Woman” written by “A Female Petitioner” to the *Hingham Gazette*. The petitioner asked:

Who doubts for a moment, that similar attacks were made upon our grandmothers when the dark days of the Revolution dawned? Did they sit quietly and attend to their domestic concerns without feeling and acting for their country? Facts innumerable show the ardor and zeal with which they were inspired. Look back and see the societies which were formed to supply the destitute soldiers with clothing! See them on the hill-side and in the valley, industriously gathering an herb with they called Liberty Tea, to supply the place of their favorite beverage, from which they resolutely abstained. It may be said, sewing and gathering herbs come within ‘the appropriate sphere of woman.’ Well, remember their readiness to aid their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Now loading fire arms; now moulding

⁷⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁵ General Association of Massachusetts, “Pastoral Letter: The General Association of Massachusetts to the Churches under Their Care,” *Boston Recorder*, July 14, 1837.

bullets, now exposing deep laid schemes of treachery, and anon, planting and hoeing the ground for the support of their families. Did they overstep the bounds of female delicacy and propriety?⁷⁶

Other authors replied in the form of poetry. Maria Weston Chapman titled her piece “The Times That Try Men’s Souls” with the subtitle “Language of the Revolution” in the *Liberator*. The third stanza from the end read:

Our patriot fathers, of eloquent fame,
Waged war against tangible forms;
Ay, *their* foes were men— and if ours were the same,
We might speedily quiet their storms.
But, ah! their descendants enjoy not such bliss—
The assumptions of Britain were nothing to this.⁷⁷

The satirical piece, written from a male perspective, lamented the ways women had “leaped from ‘their spheres’” by “wielding the tongue and the pen” and refusing to accept the rebuke of the clergy. The first publication in the *Liberator* did not attribute the poem to Chapman, but was rather signed “Lords of Creation.” Interestingly, although Chapman compared contemporary women to the American colonists, she positioned the “grandmothers... of yore” as subserviently “obeying the will of their lords” rather than as active participants in the Revolutionary struggle.

Chapman was not alone in hinting that Revolutionary grandmothers might have been following their patriot husbands’ leads. Emma Willard’s *History of the United States, or Republic of America*, one of the best-selling textbooks on American history of the century, was clear in identifying men as the locus of action during the war. Willard did make references to women’s participation in pre-war boycotts, wartime fundraising,

⁷⁶ A Female Petitioner, “Influence of Woman,” *Liberator*, September 15, 1837.

⁷⁷ “The Times That Try Men’s Souls,” *Liberator*, March 8, 1839.

and “the heroism of the women of Carolina” in visiting imprisoned soldiers while under British occupation, but most often the women in her text were simply listed as victims of British savagery, along with children, wounded soldiers, and general noncombatants.⁷⁸ In 1843, Eliza Farnham (an established author who later changed her position below and became an active suffragist) and John Neal exchanged a series of argumentative letters published in the *Brother Jonathan* literary magazine (of which Neal was a joint editor). Although a supporter of increased educational and employment opportunities for women, Farnham initially wrote a letter arguing against Neal’s position supporting women’s political rights in a lyceum lecture the previous winter. Challenging Neal’s interpretation of the Revolutionary legacy, Farnham argued:

You refer to the Revolutionary fathers to prove ‘that people are free (whether men or women) only just so far as they are *allowed to govern themselves*; in other words, to make, expound and execute their own laws.’ I deny that the noble Fathers of the Revolution taught any such thing – *in the sense which you use this doctrine!* If you mean that women are a *part of the people* as enumerated in a census, or as those who inhabit our towns and cities, who are to be clothed and taken care of when sick, or destitute, or buried when dead, I agree with you. But you mean that women were considered a *part of the people* in the sense that they, (the people of these colonies,) rebelled against the authority of Great Britain; in the sense that they unrolled their banner, and, defying oppression, pledged their *lives*, their *fortunes* and their *sacred honors* to defend it! in the sense in which they poured out their blood at Bunker Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown, and finally devised a government to secure the happiness of all who live under it – I deny that these noble men were guilty of any such folly.

They never considered women as a part of the people to do these things – they never said that any people were not free except so far as the women with the men, made and executed their own laws – they never fought to secure to the

⁷⁸ Emma Willard, *History of the United States, or Republic of America*, (Philadelphia: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1843) 232. For more on Willard’s gendered work as a historian see Nina Baym, “Women and the Republic: Emma Willard’s Rhetoric of History,” *American Quarterly* 43:1 (1991): 1–23. On Willard’s concern with memories of the Revolution, see also Keith Beutler, “Emma Willard’s ‘True Mnemonic of History’: America’s First Textbooks, Proto-Feminism, and the Memory of the Revolution,” in *Remembering the Revolution*.

women of America any such privileges, and I hold this charge a libel on the good sense of our Revolutionary Fathers.⁷⁹

Farnham's remarks are most notable for her explicit exclusion of women from the sacrifices and accompanying fruits of the Revolution.⁸⁰ Later anti-suffragists did at times echo her argument that "taxation without representation" did not apply in the case of American women, but none would repeat Farnham's insistence that women had no claim to political rights because they had not been part of the sacrifices and eventual victory of the war.⁸¹

Just as Farnham was asserting that women were not a part of the rebelling people of the founding era, American collective memories about the place of women during the Revolution was changing. The passing of the Revolutionary generation and many of their immediate descendants, along with the rise of historical fiction, prompted a surge of literary interest in the heroes and heroines of the war. Most well-known among them was Elizabeth Ellet's 1848 two-volume work, *The Women of the American Revolution*, and

⁷⁹ Eliza W. Farnham, "The Rights of Women. Mrs. Farnham's Reply to John Neal, Esq.," in *Brother Jonathan. A Weekly Compend of Belles Lettres and the Fine Arts, Standard Literature and General Intelligence*, July 29, 1843.

⁸⁰ This exchange is the only such statement I have been able to locate, even among vociferous critics of woman suffrage.

⁸¹ Farnham argued that women were represented, along with men, in taxation because tax assessors acting for the public good set property tax rates which applied equally to both genders. To this Neal responded that "people who are not allowed to tax themselves, nor others, are not to be satisfied, in the present state of the world, by a declaration that they are *taxed for the public good*; or that they who lay the tax, share the burthen with them, by taxing themselves. Our Fathers had a different notion; and so have we." John Neal, "Letter to Mrs. T.J. Farnham, On The Rights of Women, Being a Reply to her Argument in the Brother Jonathan of June 24th, 1843," in *Brother Jonathan: A Weekly Compend of Belles Lettres and the Fine Arts, Standard Literature and General Intelligence*, Vol. V. (New York: Wilson & Company, 1843) 309.

two years later *The Eminent and Heroic Women of America* and *A Domestic History of the American Revolution*.⁸² All three texts circulated widely with numerous re-printings and new editions. Ellet's works were accompanied by titles such as *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, during the Invasion and Possession of Charlestown, S.C. by the British in the Revolutionary War* (1839), *Letters of Mrs. Adams, the Wife of John Adams* (1840), *Memoir of the Mother and Wife of Washington* (1850), and *Noble Deeds of American Women* (1851).⁸³ Whether factual or exaggerated, such books emphasized the suffering, sacrifices, and heroism of American women during the struggle for independence. Newspapers increasingly printed anecdotes recounting the stoicism of wives and mothers during the war, the heroism of Molly Pitcher, Lydia Darrah, Deborah Sampson, and various other accounts of female patriotism.⁸⁴ Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's*

⁸² Elizabeth F. Ellet, *The Women of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: G.W. Jacobs, 1848); ———, *The Eminent and Heroic Women of America* (New York: Arno Press, 1850); ———, *A Domestic History of the American Revolution* (New York: Baker & Scribner, 1850.) For more on Ellet, see Kerber, "‘History Can Do It No Justice’;" Scott Casper, "An Uneasy Marriage of Sentiment and Scholarship: Elizabeth F. Ellet and the Domestic Origins of American Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 4:2 (1992), and Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.)

⁸³ Caroline Gilman, *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, during the Invasion and Possession of Charlestown, S.C. by the British in the Revolutionary War* (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839); Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Letters of Mrs. Adams, the Wife of John Adams. With an Introductory Memoir by Her Grandson, Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1840); Margaret Cockburn Conkling, *Memoir of the Mother and Wife of Washington* (Auburn, NY: Derby, Miller, & Co., 1850.) Gilman, Conkling, and others as listed in Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History*. Also, Jesse Clement, *Noble Deeds of American Women* (New York: Arno Press, 1851.)

⁸⁴ On the development of the Molly Pitcher story in anecdote form, see Emily Lewis Butterfield, "‘Lie There My Darling, While I Avenge Ye!’: Anecdotes, Collective Memory, and the Legend of Molly Pitcher," in *Remembering the Revolution*. On Deborah

Lady's Book, reprinted a number of Ellet's biographical sketches in the magazine, as well as in her own collection *Woman's Record; or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women from "the Beginning" till A.D. 1850*.⁸⁵ By the late 1840s, no informed American could claim women had been silent or deny their role in the Revolution.

The 1846 New York Constitutional Convention Debates

The state of New York called a convention to revise its state constitution in the summer of 1846. The *Albany Argus* and other papers sent reporters to cover the debates, and regularly published transcripts of the proceedings. In mid-August, the convention came to the issues of married women's property rights, and black male suffrage, among others. Delegates in favor of expanding suffrage proposed replacing a section of the constitution describing political rights with a quotation from the Declaration of Independence. In the ensuing debate, one delegate asked whether the application of the law in that section was "a mere abstraction," prompting several outraged responses asking "had this doctrine for which our fathers bled become a mere abstraction?" According the *Argus* reporter, Mr. Crooker, who proposed the initial replacement, quickly responded. "From the sentiments contained in this 'mere abstraction,' flowed the free institutions of this land," he declared. "Were the venerable men whose names appear in this instrument (holding up the Declaration of Independence) only publishing a 'mere

Sampson, see Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

⁸⁵ Sarah Josepha Hale, *Woman's Record; Or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women from "the Beginning" to A.D. 1850* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1853.) Listed in Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History*.

abstraction' to the world?" The debate became contentious enough that the chair recessed the convention for the morning.⁸⁶

The theatrics of the angry debate and delegates waving copies of the Declaration of Independence mid-convention did not achieve black male suffrage, nor meaningful changes to married women's property law. Yet, to any activist following the proceedings, one thing would have been clear – invoking the sacrifice of the founding fathers and the Declaration was a guaranteed way to draw attention to one's position and provoke strong responses from opponents.

A majority of early woman's rights advocates also participated in the abolition and temperance movements. They were familiar with religious arguments that justified women's charitable work and activism in terms of Christian duty, and the limitations of those arguments. When activist women began to build a movement to agitate for their own rights, they turned first to a seemingly irrefutable rhetoric – collective memories of the founding fathers and mothers. With the founding mothers' importance firmly established, woman's rights advocates believed they had only to remind women of their duty to live up to their ancestors' example, and to remind men that the suffering of Revolutionary women had already earned them equality. In their formulation, to oppose woman's rights was to be against the Declaration of Independence, against the Revolution, and to be unworthy of the sacrifices of the previous generations.

⁸⁶ "Constitutional Convention," *Albany Argus*, August 14, 1846.

CHAPTER 3

REVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE RHETORIC IN THE EARLY WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTIONS: 1848-1853

In a letter of support to an 1850 woman's rights convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the leaders of the emerging movement (and a granddaughter of Revolutionary War hero James Livingston), reminded the women of Salem, Ohio of the historical justifications for their claims to the full rights of citizenship:

Our forefathers, *full of righteous indignation*, pitched King George, his authority, and his tea-chests, all into the sea, and because, forsooth, they were forced to pay taxes without being represented in the British Government. 'Taxation without representation,' was the text for many a hot debate in the forests of the New World, and for many an eloquent oration in Parliament of the Old. Yet, in forming our new Government, they have taken from us the very rights which they fought and bled and died to secure to themselves.⁸⁷

Like many supporters who were unable to attend the convention personally, Cady Stanton instead wrote this letter to be read aloud and included with the published proceedings. She ended on an optimistic note, describing abolitionist Lucretia Mott's recent speech at a Philadelphia lyceum, and a suffrage petition by women in Massachusetts. Cady Stanton took these events and others as an indication of women's progress, and noted: "That same love of liberty which burned in the hearts of our sires is now being kindled anew in the daughters of this proud Republic."⁸⁸

Cady Stanton was not alone in using Revolutionary-era memories from the convention platform to urge women to support the emerging cause. Daughters and sons

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Letter to Mary Anne W. Johnson and the Convention of the Women of Ohio," in *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women's Rights Convention Proceedings*, ed. Robert W. Audretsch, (Salem, OH: Salem Area Bicentennial Committee, 1976) 37-39.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 39.

of the republic, as well as immigrants and foreigners, gave speeches and wrote letters testifying to American women's rights to equality guaranteed by the ideologies and events of the nation's founding. In the first decade of the organized woman's rights movement, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric served a trio of functions: it provided a sympathetic historical context for their demands for equality when activists addressed the general public; it encouraged women within the movement to deepen their commitment and risk more for the cause; and it was "self-evident" and "irrefutable" evidence to fight back against critics who claimed women were spiritually, intellectually, and physically unsuited for additional rights.⁸⁹

Context for Conventions: Women's Rights in the late 1840s

Several developments during the late 1830s and 1840s supported the optimism women's rights activists felt about the inevitable success of their cause in the early 1850s. Even before the formation of regional and national women's rights associations, individual reformers used their positions as editors and publishers to advocate for women's advancement. Amelia Jenks Bloomer began publishing her newspaper, *The Lily*, in 1849, and despite her original intent to produce a moderate temperance journal, it quickly grew into a more radical forum for women's rights generally. Jane Elizabeth Jones, a dedicated equal rights author, served as co-editor of the Ohio-based *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. Sarah Josepha Hale, the longtime editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, although never a

⁸⁹ My use of the term "organized movement" here is admittedly generous, given the time between conventions and lack of organizational structure, but I mean to differentiate the development of conventions and publicly advertised meetings from the individual and small group actions of the preceding decades.

supporter of woman suffrage, openly advocated for women's property rights and the need for female education.⁹⁰ Other women, including Lucretia Mott, the Grimké sisters, Lucy Stone, and Ernestine Rose, gained national prominence as abolitionist lecturers, and in so doing, were forced to defend their own right to speak publically and to mixed gender audiences.

Along with the rise in women's national visibility as authors, editors, speakers, and workers, women made small but visible gains in education and property ownership. In the Midwest there was a movement toward coeducation among denominational colleges, and an increasing range of educational opportunities for women interested in attending such schools.⁹¹ The small, religious oriented schools offered young women a three-year practical course in English and the sciences, quite unlike the modified classical curriculums of eastern female seminaries. In addition to Oberlin College's admission of women in 1837, the Philadelphia School of Design for Women opened in 1848, and the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1850.

Between 1835 and 1850, twenty-one states passed laws creating varying degrees of protection for property ownership by married women. Bills providing for married women's property laws were often accompanied by changes in women's treatment in probate laws. These laws were, in letter and by judicial interpretation, more conservative

⁹⁰ For more on Hale as both conservative and advocate of woman's rights, see Sharon M. Harris, *Blue Pencils and Hidden Hands: Women Editing Periodicals, 1830-1910* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004); Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995). On the woman suffrage press generally, see Solomon, ed. *A Voice of Their Own*.

⁹¹ Doris Jeanne Malkmus, "Capable Women and Refined Ladies: Two visions of American women's higher education, 1760-1861" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2001).

than radical changes. Although some women participated in lobbying for such laws in their states, legislatures acted primarily as part of a larger movement to protect debtors and reform banking practices following the Panic of 1837.⁹² Women's rights advocates, while quick to describe the reforms as progress, often detailed the loopholes and remaining limitations that left married women vulnerable. Despite the remaining flaws, the process of debate and legislative change itself raised the visibility of women's property rights – a key issue for the movement, and thus served the cause.

Within the context of successful, albeit small, reforms and the constant increase in the size and circulation of the reform press, the optimism woman's rights advocates expressed during the early years of the movement seems less naïve than it otherwise might. Activists fully expected that their public statements of discontent and injustice might incur disapproval and resistance, but it was also reasonable for them to believe that such expressions would eventually produce social and political change. Similarly, their experiences in other reform groups led them to believe that public education in the form of conventions was the most expedient way to form a movement and gain attention for their cause.

By addressing their social and political grievances through conventions, woman's rights activists followed in the pattern established not only by organized anti-slavery and temperance groups, but also by reform, religious, and political interest groups of many stripes. Sabbatarians began holding general conferences in 1807, while Annual National Conventions of Colored People began in 1830, and the New England Working Men's

⁹² Richard Chused, "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850" *Georgetown Law Journal* (1983): 1359-1425.

Association held their first convention in 1844. Organizers called conventions in response to specific incidents, to discuss a variety of concerns and activist strategies, or in anticipation of upcoming political events.

While men officially presided over most conventions, including many women's religious and temperance meetings, women participated as organizers, fundraisers, and, in some cases, as delegates or speakers. Activist women often attended anti-slavery conventions, but were generally excluded from the higher leadership offices, and often refused voting rights. Even before the American Antislavery Society (AAS) split apart in 1840, anti-slavery women began holding their own regional and national conventions beginning in 1837, while still participating in male-dominated societies and meetings.

Beyond anti-slavery and temperance, other women's religious and benevolent associations held annual meetings, conventions, and similar gatherings with increasing frequency by the late 1840s. Women also commonly attended and participated in partisan political rallies.⁹³ Thus, in calling conventions to discuss woman's rights, activist women adapted a well-established and respectable pattern of reform. As the published convention proceedings reveal, many female attendees who spoke out at the early gatherings felt the

⁹³ On women's participation in political conventions and rallies before 1848, see Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins*; Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

The literature on women's benevolence groups and anti-slavery conventions is well developed. For the pre-1848 period, see especially Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Willi Coleman, "Architects of a Vision: Black Women and Their Antebellum Quest for Political and Social Equality," in *African American Women and the Vote*, ed. Ann D. Gordon et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

need to preface their remarks with justifications for their participation. Indeed, despite their bold organizational work, Cady Stanton and Elizabeth McClintock asked James Mott and Thomas McClintock to preside as chairs at the Seneca Falls gathering, and were initially hesitant to accept female only leadership at Rochester.⁹⁴ Just as at temperance, abolition, and other reform conventions, some women described their Christian convictions as forcing them to action, but others embraced the republican, political aspect of the convention format. By couching their demands in the sacrifices and rhetoric of the Revolutionary generation, these speakers insisted upon the righteous, patriotic nature of their gatherings.

Reform conventions officially began with a formal call announcing the location, date, and purpose of the gathering. Whether abolition, temperance, or women's rights conventions, the calls usually featured a listing of regionally or nationally known speakers promised to be in attendance. As with the Seneca Falls convention, organizers often planned the dates and locations of their meetings to accommodate headline guests such as Lucretia and James Mott. In some cases, a call was issued a month or more in advance of the planned meeting, but two to three weeks was most common. At the appointed day and time, organizers opened conventions by reading aloud the call, then voting on a slate of officers to conduct discussions, introduce speakers, record minutes, and read correspondence. Often advance committees presented resolutions or public addresses already in draft form for debate and discussion before the full convention voted to accept the document as part of its proceedings. Such was the case with the Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls and the Resolutions of the 1851 Worcester convention.

⁹⁴ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 198-203, 211.

Drafts of the Declaration and accompanying resolutions were written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, Elizabeth McClintock, and Jane C. Hunt during the two weeks they planned the very first convention dedicated to woman's rights.⁹⁵ Once the pattern of holding woman's rights conventions was established, they spread rapidly. In addition to the large national conventions, many smaller groups of women held local and regional conventions throughout the first decades of the movement, with the intention of educating women about their legal and educational "disabilities" and motivating them to support changes in social policies.

"Declar[ing] the Causes That Impel Them to *Such a Course*"

Once assembled, attendees at the Seneca Falls and other conventions discussed what were commonly called the "disabilities" of women under the law and social customs. Many organizers followed the example of anti-slavery conventions and used the gatherings as an opportunity to produce addresses to the public, from the Declaration of Sentiments to lists of resolutions and open letters to women in surrounding areas. In these texts, activists frequently used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric as part of their explanations for why they were dissatisfied with the existing place of women in society, and to provide context and justifications for their own demands for change. Particularly in the early years of the movement, convention sessions seemed as likely to draw critics, skeptics, and curiosity seekers as truly interested participants. Speakers thus faced the double task of educating their listeners, then moving them to action. After two days of discussion, prepared remarks, and debate over the Resolutions attached to the main

⁹⁵ Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 55-57.

document, only one hundred of the approximately three hundred people in attendance at the Seneca Falls gathering agreed with the organizers enough to sign the final draft of the Declaration of Sentiments, which closely paralleled the Declaration of Independence.⁹⁶

[Italicized text indicates changes from the Declaration of Independence.]

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one *portion of the family of man* to assume among the *people* of the earth *a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied*, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to *such a course*.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men *and women* are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain *inalienable*⁹⁷ rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of *those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government*, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of *the women under this government*, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to *demand the equal station to which they are entitled*.

The history of *mankind* is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations *on the*

⁹⁶ In her study of the attendees and signers at Seneca Falls, Judith Wellman describes the signers as members of overlapping networks of legal reformers, political abolitionists, and Quaker abolitionists. Cady Stanton later recounted that “so pronounced was the popular voice against us... that most of the ladies who had attended the convention and signed the declaration, one by one, withdrew their names and influence and joined our persecutors.” As Wellman notes, no record survives to indicate whether the names recorded as signers in the final proceedings included those who later withdrew or not. Wellman, “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention,” 30.

⁹⁷ The Declaration of Independence uses “unalienable” rather than “inalienable.” My thanks to Dr. Patricia Biggs for bringing this difference to my attention.

part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

*He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.*⁹⁸

Seventeen further grievances followed the first, for a total of eighteen, the same number as the Declaration of Independence. McClintock, Stanton, Wright, Hunt, and Mott changed only sixty-six words in the body of the Declaration, adhering much closer to the original document than most other adaptations. While the AAS's Declaration of Sentiments and other Declarations borrowed the natural rights ideology of the Declaration of Independence, but only repeated a few phrases, the Seneca Falls authors' close imitation drew on the power of the Declaration as an irrefutable piece of national heritage.⁹⁹ By keeping most of the changes to brief insertions such as "and women," or simple substitutions such as "the women under this government" for "these colonies," and "mankind" for "the present King of Great Britain," Stanton, McClintock, Mott, Wright, and Hunt, attempted to demonstrate the conservative and patriotic nature of their claims. They deleted the most radical phrase of the original document, the intent "to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another." Rather than calling for women "to alter or to abolish" the existing government entirely on their own, the Seneca Falls Declaration takes the slightly milder "refuse allegiance to it, and to insist

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," in *The First Convention Ever Called to Discuss the Civil and Political Rights of Women, Seneca Falls, N.Y., July 19, 20, 1848*, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock and Jane C. Hunt (Seneca Falls, NY: 1848) 1-4. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, GALE|AXZCBL655486615

⁹⁹ Evans' "The Working Men's Declaration of Independence," for example, used ten quotations from the Declaration of Independence, most six to ten words long, while the majority of the text was new insertions. Evans, "The Working Men's Declaration of Independence,"

upon” changes, presumably made in collaboration with men, as the authors asked for voting rights, but not office-holding.

The convention was remarkable for its inclusiveness – male and female speakers spoke to a mixed-gender, mixed-race audience. In attendance were legal reformers, political abolitionists, and Quaker and Garrisonian abolitionists who eschewed political participation. Signers of the Declaration ranged from nationally known Frederick Douglass and Lucretia Mott to fourteen-year-old Susan Quinn, textile worker Justin Williams, and Richard Hunt, owner of multiple farms, part of a woolen mill, and a portion of nearby Waterloo’s business district.¹⁰⁰ Although the third grievance in the Declaration charged that men “withheld from her [woman] rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men — both natives and foreigners,” the bulk of the document was class and gender inclusive. Grievances lamented women’s exclusion from “profitable employments” and men’s legal right to physically punish wives – problems women of all social classes and races could appreciate.

Two weeks after the Seneca Falls convention, the organizers held another meeting fifty miles away in Rochester and passed the Declaration and accompanying resolutions again. It was customary to end conventions with a collection of donations to support the publication of the proceedings; minutes often recorded thanks to supporters. Although no such entry appears in the minutes from Seneca Falls or Rochester, the proceedings were published in one volume later that year. More immediate circulation of the Declaration came from supporters such as Frederick Douglass and Nathan Milliken, who printed

¹⁰⁰ For more on the signers, see Wellman, “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention.”

positive accounts within days of the meetings.¹⁰¹ Milliken's weekly *Seneca County Courier* printed a full description, along with the Declaration and convention resolutions. In return, the *Courier* was widely cited by both supporters and opponents of the meeting. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell described in her study of early women's rights texts, "press reaction to these early conventions vividly illustrates the value of opposition for a movement. ... [Critic] James Gordon Bennett, editor of the *New York Herald*, printed the entire Declaration of Sentiments, and by so doing disseminated woman's rights ideas throughout the nation."¹⁰² While a number of papers simply reported the conventions as events of note, with only cautious support or mild critique, it was often the most critical editors who devoted multiple column inches to reprinting the Declaration or the convention resolutions as part of their attacks, inadvertently boosting their circulation considerably.

For many editors responding to initial reports in the *Courier*, the *Rochester Advertiser*, and other local papers, the parallel to the Declaration of Independence and the legitimacy such Revolutionary heritage rhetoric implied for women's claims to equality were the most noteworthy aspects of the conventions. Even brief, sarcastic commentaries used the word "revolution," whether with subtitles such as "Petticoat Revolution" in describing the organizers' intentions, or in noting that the Declaration "savors strongly of

¹⁰¹ For details on the early reports and publication of the Proceedings, see Timothy Terpstra, "The 1848 Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention: Initial American Public Reaction" (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 1975), as cited in Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*. For a more broad discussion of newspaper treatment of the conventions throughout the nineteenth century, see E. Claire Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement." in *A Voice of Their Own*.

¹⁰² Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, 68

revolution.”¹⁰³ Critics insisted that the meeting produced an “impracticable, absurd and ridiculous proposition,” and later attacked activists’ morals and femininity, yet none argued against their claim to be equal heirs of the Revolutionary legacy.

Following the summer conventions in 1848, the organized movement developed slowly. The eleven resolutions passed at Seneca Falls included calls for women to “secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise,” and additional resolutions passed at Rochester announced women’s intention to petition the state legislature annually. The published proceedings acknowledged an offer from the Trustees of the Unitarian Church to host further meetings, however, the minutes record no provisions for standing committees or any future gatherings.¹⁰⁴ In the fall, Cady Stanton helped to organize a Woman’s Equal Rights Union among her neighbors. The group of fifteen to twenty women met for a little over a year, and succeeded in collecting sixty-two signatures on a woman’s suffrage petition to the New York State Legislature.¹⁰⁵ However, it was more than a year and a half before another large gathering took place, this time in Ohio.

On February 22, 1850, the Ohio General Assembly passed an act calling a convention to revise the state constitution. In response, on March 30, eighty female equal rights advocates from twelve northeastern towns issued a call for a Women’s Convention

¹⁰³ “Woman's Rights Convention,” *Alexandria Gazette*, August 3, 1848; “The Woman's Rights Convention,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 9, 1848.

¹⁰⁴ “Resolutions,” in *The First Convention Ever Called to Discuss the Civil and Political Rights of Women*; “Resolutions,” in *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Rochester, NY, August 2, 1848*, (New York, NY: Robert J. Johnston, Printer, 1870) 15.

¹⁰⁵ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 92-94.

in Salem to “concert measures to secure to all persons the recognition of Equal Rights, and the extension of the privileges of Government, without distinction of sex or color.”¹⁰⁶

The call was explicit in the reason behind the organizers’ timing: “The meeting of a Convention of men to amend the Constitution of *our* (?) State presents a most favorable opportunity for the agitation of this subject.”¹⁰⁷ Unlike at Seneca Falls and Rochester, the Salem convention planners directly addressed the confluence of women’s rights and equal rights issues, and the call was published primarily in anti-slavery newspapers. Supporters also publicized their intention to have only female officers and speakers, while men were invited to a Universal Suffrage meeting to be held nearby on the second day of the Women’s Convention.

The convention met on the nineteenth and twentieth of April 1850, at the Second Baptist Church in Salem, Ohio. Although no distinguished speakers from out of state attended, the organizers received and read aloud letters of support from Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), Frances D. Gage, and a number of other well-known women’s rights advocates, female editors, and authors.

Jane Elizabeth Jones, a well-known local abolitionist author and co-editor of the Garrisonian *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, delivered the keynote address, entitled “The Wrongs of

¹⁰⁶ “To the Women of Ohio,” *Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 30, 1850. As reprinted in Robert W. Audretsch, ed., *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women’s Rights Convention Proceedings*, Salem: Salem Area Bicentennial Committee, 1976, 17-19.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Woman.”¹⁰⁸ Jones opened her address by pointing out that “woman’s rights” was a misnomer, insisting that the issue was one of natural rights, rather than special rights for being women; just as in the case of black men, people have rights because they are human beings, not because of their color or sex. She acknowledged the variety of situations and opinions women had about equal rights, and insisted that woman’s rights was a harder cause to argue for than abolition, peace, or temperance. She noted the lack of physical examples of women’s oppression; in contrast to slavery, most white women had no chains or lash marks, unlike wars, there were no bodies left on a battlefield, no drunks causing problems on a street corner such as those temperance advocates could point to. Women often claimed to be satisfied, or in fact were satisfied, with their circumstances. She rejected gender specific explanations for abusive behavior, setting aside stereotypes both of female moral superiority and male immorality. Rather, she identified the imbalance of power as the source of women’s oppression, but noted that women were equally to blame for surrendering their rights.

To address the dual problems of women not recognizing their oppression, and being unwilling to work to claim their rights, Jones drew upon Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to appeal to her audience. Since the purpose of the Convention was to discuss the political situation of women, Jones focused on the contradiction between the arguments of the founders and the consequences of women’s lack of political rights.

If we turn to the history of this nation, to the commencement of the contest between this and the mother country, we shall find standing prominent among the grievances of which the former complained, the wrongfulness of taxation without

¹⁰⁸ Jones’ title was far from unique. “Wrongs of woman” was a popular phrase in use by supporters, and critics, of the rights movement, though it was perhaps first used in Mary Wollstonecraft’s posthumously published *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* in 1798.

representation and from that day to the present time, taxation without representation has been theoretically abhorrent to every American Statesman.¹⁰⁹

In her first use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, Jones subtly pointed out the contradiction between the founding generation's recognition of the "wrongfulness" of taxation without representation and the failure to correct that wrong through enfranchisement. Despite opponents' insistence that women were represented through their male relatives, the parallel to the Revolution was undeniable. Invoking the Declaration of Independence as a sacred national text, she continued:

And we find also in the 'political bible' of this people, the declaration that 'all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.' But what, I ask, is the political condition of every woman in the land today? She is taxed without representation; and the government to which she is compelled to submit under penalty of death, hesitates not to exercise powers to which she, as one of the governed, never consented. It is true, the official tax-gatherer does not come and demand a percentage of that which a father or a husband had doled out to her – for the revenue of the general government, at least, is raised by duties on imports – but when she expends that money, she pays a tax upon every pound of tea, or yard of imported cloth which she buys: and yet she has no voice in the regulation of the tariff by which that tax is imposed. Does any one say this tax is so small, and affects us so little, that we will not contend against it? If so you are unworthy descendants of the fathers and mothers of '76. Three pence on a pound of tea was not much for them to pay, but there was a principle involved in the taxation, and therefore they fought against it.¹¹⁰

Hoping to stir to action women who were uninterested in tariff policies, and who did not feel themselves oppressed thereby, Jones reminded her audience more explicitly of the example set by Revolutionary ancestors. Taxes on imported cloth and tea made the perfect example to compare contemporary women with their foremothers. Coming to a

¹⁰⁹ Jane Elizabeth Jones, "The Wrongs of Woman," in *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women's Rights Convention Proceedings*, ed. Robert W. Audretsch (Salem: Salem Area Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 54.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

dramatic peak in this section of her argument, Jones switched from the third person pronoun “she,” to first person pronouns – “us” and “we” – making a direct attack on women uninterested in suffrage: “you are unworthy descendants.” She used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to position any opponents in her audience in tension with the sacrifices of the founders; by slipping from representation (via voting rights) to resistance to taxation, she created an argument no patriotic American could contradict.

One challenge that Revolutionary heritage rhetoric presented for women’s rights activists was the dichotomy between portraying the Revolutionary generation as heroes and villains. Founding mothers and fathers boldly resisted the tea tax, but then created a government that excluded women and left coverture intact. In this speech, Jones shifted between praise for the patriots when discussing taxation without representation to condemnation as she moved into the heart of her address – the principle of the “consent of the governed.” Drawing a clear distinction between war-time action and later government-making, Jones insisted: “The very first act of this nation was to deprive a majority of those whom it claimed the right to govern, of any lot or part in the government – it’s very birth-cry was a denial of woman’s equality...”¹¹¹ She declined to blame the founders directly. Instead, it was the more abstract collective, “this nation,” that erred.

Although women’s rights activists often focused their use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric on taxation as a crucial argument, in this address Jones used it as a segue into her main topic. She relied on the Revolutionary demand for “consent of the governed” to critique women’s inability to enter into legal contracts, participate in juries

¹¹¹ Ibid., 55.

and government bodies, and control their own property. For the bulk of her address, she examined points of coverture as described in Blackstone's law and other legal commentary texts, explaining the ways women were harmed by the limitations on their legal rights.¹¹² Jones then attacked the legal theories behind coverture, using a combination of religious, natural rights, and Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, at times even within a single paragraph.

Though the politician may sneer at us, because we wish to have our rights acknowledged — our right to share in the government to as full an extent as he does — because we object longer to endure taxation without representation, because we desire to have a form of government instituted which shall derive its powers from the consent of the governed; let us not be moved from our position. And though in the social circle the finger of scorn may be pointed at us because we aspire to a wider field of action, to live a higher and a larger life — because we wish to show that a woman may not only give ample attention to the wants of her family, but also cultivate her mind even as man cultivates his; let us not be moved from our position. . . . And though the Church — while professing to believe that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but that all are one — declares that it suffers not a woman to teach in public, assigns her an inferior place in its membership and in its councils, and thus in the name of religion sanctions the legal disabilities and the social wrongs which now oppress her; let us not be moved from our position.¹¹³

Here “we” referred specifically to woman's rights activists, rather than women generally. Jones criticized the broad, impersonal “the Church” like “this nation,” but made no personal attacks. Unlike the brief, fractured format of the Seneca Falls Declaration of

¹¹² As Richard Chused has described, Blackstone's simplicity made it a perfect foil for suffragists' arguments about coverture, despite being a somewhat outdated text in relation to existing laws in both Britain and the United States. (In 1840 the most widely used edition of Blackstone was an edited 1803 version.) That same simplicity, he notes, made it appeal to “conservative segments of the legal and academic communities [who] were searching British treatises for precision in an era of multiplying sources for legal rules.” Chused, “Married Women's Property Law,” 1384-5, 1388.

¹¹³ Jones, “The Wrongs of Woman,” 62.

Sentiments, Jones' address was a smooth-flowing speech, moving easily between rhetorical styles and points of argument.

As an adherent to the Garrisonian school of pacifism and apolitical activism, Jones, like many Quaker reformers, was caught in a number of contradictions in her arguments for suffrage and political rights. Midway through her address, Jones acknowledged that “all who know my sentiments in relation to Constitutions and government, know full well that I would not participate in a government... but that is no reason why others should judge for us, of the propriety and expediency of our doing so...”¹¹⁴ She was adamant that the right of individuals to participate in government was distinct from the personal choice of whether or not to do so, thereby invalidating opponents' argument that women would not vote even if given the right to do so.

Rather than emphasizing women's voting rights, Jones expressed particular concern over women's exclusion from the judicial branch of government, decrying the lack of trials by true peers and women's exclusion from the law-making process. She included the upcoming state constitutional convention among the political bodies women had rights to participate in:

The organic law of the State – the Constitution of Ohio, which imposes upon those of us who have property, in our own right, taxation without representation, which establishes laws for our government without our consent, either express or implied and threatens us with death if we resist them – this organic law is about to be revised, and it is hoped, corrected and improved.¹¹⁵

Jones called on her audience to petition the upcoming convention, but also to continue their engagement with the woman's rights cause.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 58.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The printed version of Jones' speech filled eighteen pages of the published proceedings, and the text's cover read: Proceedings of the Ohio Women's Convention, held at Salem, April 19th and 20th, 1850; with an Address by J. Elizabeth Jones. Although no records survive for the number of copies of the pamphlet originally printed, newspaper excerpts indicate that the Committee on Publication must have mailed copies to a number of editors around the country, in addition to the usual distribution through private correspondence. As co-editor of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Jones was able to print her full address; Garrison also reprinted it in *The Liberator*.¹¹⁶ However, given the length of her text, it is perhaps not surprising that other newspaper editors – supporters and critics – declined to reprint her speech. Editors excerpted most often from the brief Memorial approved by the Convention, and occasionally from the twenty-two resolutions or the official Address to the Women of Ohio. The Address focused primarily on natural rights and expediency arguments, but also defended women's right to "meddle with public affairs" by asking "Is the principle of taxation without representation less oppressive and tyrannical than when our fathers expended their blood and treasure rather than submit to its injustice?" The Address ended with an appeal to Ohio women to "flood the constitutional convention with memorials and addresses, trusting to truth and a righteous cause for the success of our efforts."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ "Wrongs of Woman," *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, May 4, 1850; "An Address," *The Liberator*, May 24, 1850, 84.

¹¹⁷ "Address to the Women of Ohio, Adopted by the Women's Convention, at Salem, April 20, 1850," in *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women's Rights Convention Proceedings*, ed. Robert W. Audretsch (Salem, OH: Salem Area Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 28.

One month after the meeting in Salem, women 140 miles south in McConnellsville, Ohio, held an additional convention with the same focus on petitioning the representatives at the state's constitutional convention. Although the *Ohio State Journal* from the nearby town of Columbus reported that "a goodly number" gathered, it was a much smaller event than the Salem convention. Nevertheless, delegates appointed a committee on resolutions, and after a period of discussion, adopted seven resolutions to submit to the constitutional convention. The last, and most controversial, read: "Resolved, That we claim the Right of Suffrage for the same reasons that our fathers of the revolution did, because it is unjust that we be compelled to pay taxes and be amenable to laws that we can have no part or lot in framing."¹¹⁸ After first mocking the initial call to convention in May, in July, the editor of the *Journal* published an account of the convention, along with the resolutions, noting that: "this subject is attracting much attention at this time, and as many persons are disposed to ridicule rather than discuss it in a fair, reasonable way, we feel it is our duty, *especially* when accompanied with a request from the ladies of the meeting, to give the public their own statement of their case."¹¹⁹

The Revolutionary heritage rhetoric activists used in the Declarations and resolutions of the New York and Ohio conventions provided a justification for women's claims by couching them in a historical context to which audiences were immediately sympathetic. Although demands for female voting rights was itself a radical idea, the

¹¹⁸ "Women's Rights," *Ohio State Journal*, July 16, 1850.

¹¹⁹ *Ohio State Journal*, May 21, 1850; "Women's Rights," *Ohio State Journal*, July 16, 1850.

rhetoric of these texts was more traditional, and less combative, than much of what would follow. Only Jones raised any criticism of the founders, and that only very indirectly, through her comments about first acts of “this nation.” The Declarations and resolutions asked readers to engage with the cause in primarily in acceptably feminine ways, through persuading friends, petitioning, and writing appeals to the Ohio constitutional convention.

The two local Ohio woman’s rights conventions were soon followed by a national convention held in Worcester, Massachusetts in October, 1850. While a majority of the attendees were from Massachusetts, the gathering achieved its aim of being a national convention by drawing delegates from throughout the northern and Midwestern states. Paulina Wright Davis, of Rhode Island, served as president, with vice presidents, secretaries, and business committee members from Pennsylvania, New York, and Ohio, as well as Massachusetts. The convention included male officers and speakers (unlike at Salem), and opened with a more conciliatory approach than either of the Ohio meetings.

Debating Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric

Suffragists’ early uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric were neither static nor uncontested. Like Jones’ address in Salem, most activists combined memories of the Revolution with arguments based upon philosophical principles such as natural rights; many wove Christian doctrines into their speeches as well. Alternately, some speakers rejected the conflict-based model of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric altogether. The Worcester call to convention insisted:

The sexes should not, for any reason or by any chance, take hostile attitudes towards each other, either in the apprehension or amendment of the wrongs which exist in their necessary relations; but they should harmonize in opinion and co-

operate in effort, for the reason that they must unite in the ultimate achievement of the desired reformation.¹²⁰

In her opening address, convention president Paulina Wright Davis offered a clear critique of the methods and rhetoric of other rights advocates, suggesting that confrontational imagery, such as invocations of the Revolution, were ineffective in persuading opponents to change their positions. She chided: “It is one thing to issue a declaration of rights or a declaration of wrongs to the world, but quite another thing wisely and happily to commend the subject to the world’s acceptance, and so to secure the desired reformation.”¹²¹ In Davis’ optimistic formulation, harsh demands or lists of grievances were unnecessary: activists merely needed to politely draw the public’s attention to the injustice of women’s position, and legislators would respond.

In direct contrast to other reformers’ use of the Revolution as a parallel to their own demands for equality, Davis insisted that the woman’s rights movement was “a movement without example among the enterprises of associated reformations, for it has no purpose of arming the oppressed against the oppressor, or of separating the parties, or of setting up independence, or of severing the relations of either.”¹²² In Davis’ view, comparing the movement for equal rights to the Revolution raised the specters of civil disobedience and armed conflict – all too dangerous in light of the violence and

¹²⁰ “Call to Convention,” in *The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention Held at Worcester, October 23d & 24th, 1850* (Boston: Prentiss & Sawyer, 1851). Accessed via the Women and Social Movements in the United States database <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1000671352>

¹²¹ Paulina Wright Davis, “Address,” in *The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention Held at Worcester, October 23d & 24th, 1850*

¹²² *Ibid.*

radicalism of the European revolutions of 1848 and the movements' existing connection with imprisoned French socialist feminists.¹²³ Indeed, Davis warned her audience:

[I]t is not with the topics of our reform and the discussion of these that I am now concerned. It is of its position in the world's opinion, and the causes of this, that I am thinking... Especially am I solicitous that the good cause may suffer no detriment from the theoretical principles its friends may assume, or the spirit with which they shall maintain them.¹²⁴

Any perceived connection between woman's rights and socialism, or the violence in Europe, would be a detriment to the movement, according to Davis. As president of the convention, she attempted to maintain an image of collaboration for the gathering, and she exerted a great deal of editorial control in shaping the final proceedings to reflect that image. However, newspaper reports of the convention described delegates openly disagreeing with Davis on a number of issues, and that claimed that much of the floor debate was quite heated.¹²⁵ At Worcester, and throughout the movement, reformers disagreed about the appropriateness of male participation, about the inclusion or exclusion of slavery as a part of claims for equal rights, and about women's own responsibility for their oppression. Particularly in regard to the latter issue, Davis insisted that women could not blame men, but rather:

¹²³ A number of American suffragists and abolitionists corresponded with French socialist feminists. Activist papers frequently published international reports and followed the trial and imprisonment of Jeanne Deroine especially. See Karen Offen, "Women and the Question of 'Universal' Suffrage in 1848" *NWSA Journal*, 11:1 (1999): 150-161.

¹²⁴ Paulina Wright Davis, "Address," in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention Held at Worcester, October 23d & 24th, 1850*

¹²⁵ McClymer, "How Do Contemporary Newspaper Accounts of the 1850 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention Enhance Our Understanding of the Issues Debated at That Meeting?"

The tyrant sex, if such we choose to term it, holds such natural and necessary relations to the victims of injustice, that neither rebellion nor revolution, neither defiance nor resistance, nor any mode of assault or defence incident to party antagonism, is either possible, expedient, or proper. Our claim must rest on its justice, and conquer by its power of truth.¹²⁶

In Davis' formulation, women who wanted equal rights were responsible for arguing persuasively, without threats or calls for patriotic resistance, and society would naturally respond. Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, and a majority of the woman's rights advocates disagreed, holding men responsible for consciously withholding rights and legislating oppression. Despite their opposing views, Davis and Stone appear to have reached a compromise by the spring of 1851, when they jointly signed a call for the second national convention. Rather than specifically blaming either gender, the call placed responsibility for women's oppression on "the world's teachers, - its preachers, its lawyers, its poets, and its painters," and upon the "soul-blighting influences of society."¹²⁷

Sometime in the first part of August 1851, Paulina Wright Davis, Lucy Stone, and William Channing, representing the Central Committee from the first national convention, completed and issued a call to convention for the second national convention. Following president Davis' opening remarks, the Business Committee from the previous convention presented a series of resolutions for general discussion. The resolutions were prepared in advance of the convention by a twenty-three-member committee, which included Ernestine Rose, William Channing, William Lloyd Garrison, Antoinette Brown, Clarina Howard Nichols, Abby Kelley Foster, Abby Price, and Lucy Stone. Wendell

¹²⁶ Paulina Wright Davis, "Address," in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention Held at Worcester, October 23d & 24th, 1850*

¹²⁷ Paulina Wright Davis, Lucy Stone, and William Channing, "Woman's Rights Convention" *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 8-28-1851.

Phillips, although not a listed member of the committee, read the resolutions to the convention. He offered introductory remarks on behalf of the committee, noting that the resolutions were “of a somewhat argumentative character,” but that since it was often only the resolutions of a convention which were reprinted by the press, he said:

[I]t is our duty to embody in these Resolutions, as concisely and fully as possible, a statement of the ends we seek, and the grounds upon which we seek them.... Though they seem to be confined to one point, it is not that the Committee are unaware of the importance of other points, but that this they deem the most important, and wish it to be fully understood.¹²⁸

When the members of the committee felt the need to be most persuasive and yet concise, they relied heavily on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric:

1. *Whereas*, according to the Declaration of Independence of the United States, all men are created equal and endowed with inalienable Rights to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; therefore, *Resolved*, That we protest against the injustice done to Woman, by depriving her of that Liberty and Equality which alone can promote Happiness, as contrary alike to the Principles of Humanity and the Declaration of Independence.

In the opening resolution, the Committee cited no scripture and invoked no philosopher.

Rather, they drew their authority from the Declaration of Independence as an irrefutable source.

2. *And whereas*, according to an acknowledged principle of this Republic, Taxation without Representation is Tyranny; and whereas the Property of Woman is taxed like that of Man; therefore, *Resolved*, That it is an act of the greatest tyranny and usurpation to deprive Woman of her Rights of being represented — of participating in the formation of the Laws, and enjoying all civil privileges in an equal degree with Man.

¹²⁸ Wendell Phillips, on behalf of the Business Committee, in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 15th and 16th, 1851* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, Publishers, 1852), 11. Accessed via the Women and Social Movements database:
<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpId=1000686073>.

11. *Resolved*, That we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; and we charge that man with gross dishonesty or ignorance, who shall contend that “men,” in the memorable document from which we quote, does not stand for the human race; that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” are the “inalienable rights” of *half* only of the human species; and that, by “the governed,” whose consent is affirmed to be the only source of just power, is meant that *half* of mankind only, who, in relation to the other, have hitherto assumed the character of *governors*.¹²⁹

For the eleventh resolution, the committee chose, like the authors at Seneca Falls, to quote the Declaration of Independence. However, instead of changing “men” to “men and women,” the Worcester committee insisted that the original Declaration could be read intact, but that its meaning had been willfully corrupted. Throughout the resolutions the authors used “we” to refer to themselves as members of the woman’s rights community; continuing this pronoun into the modified Declaration forced readers to either include themselves in the reforming “we” of the first ten resolutions along with the “we” of the Declaration, or to be outside both.

The authors’ expansive “men” included not only educated white women, but also the working classes and African Americans. The eighth resolution insisted that: “the division of mankind into two castes — one born to rule over the other — is, in the case of the sexes, as in all cases, an unqualified mischief, a source of perversion and demoralization” that damaged society, while an earlier resolution argued that civil and political rights were not predicated on intellectual equality.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ “Resolutions,” in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 15th and 16th, 1851*. The resolutions followed the Declaration of Sentiments usage of “inalienable,” rather than “unalienable.”

Phillips read the resolutions early in the opening session of the Convention. The minutes recorded a period of debate, but no vote, and the reading of correspondence and prepared speeches filled the remainder of the morning. At the beginning of the afternoon session, Mrs. Coe read a letter from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and offered an additional seven resolutions she and Cady Stanton had prepared. On the second day of the convention, Davis, as a member of the Committee on Education, proposed an additional resolution, and later that evening, Abby Kelly Foster suggested yet another. In the closing business of the convention, Phillips re-read the Central Committee's resolutions, and they passed unanimously.¹³¹

The proceedings of the convention totaled 112 pages, with notes from the Committee on Publication that they regretted the need to leave out nearly all the correspondence read and the full text of many of the speeches. Like other convention reports, no records reveal the specific number of copies printed, but copies circulated through the press and among woman's rights supporters. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, devoted three pages to a convention report, including the resolutions.¹³²

The Revolutionary heritage rhetoric used in the public documents produced by the first two national conventions, like the Declaration of Sentiments and the products of the

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 15th and 16th, 1851.*

¹³² *New York Tribune*. For a variety of the other reports on the convention, see especially "The Woman's Rights Convention," *Boston Herald*, October 16, 1851; "Woman's Rights Convention," *Weekly Wisconsin*, October 29, 1851; "Woman's Rights Convention," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, October 30, 1851.

earlier local conventions, was tempered in its radicalism. Davis and her supporters successfully limited efforts to connect the developing American movement with the violence that had rocked Paris (at least at the 1850 convention) and invocations of the founding events providing context for activists' demands, but not points to criticize or individuals to excoriate. The national conventions further established legitimacy through the support of nationally known reformers, authors, and editors, such as William H. Channing, Wendell Phillips, and Horace Greeley.

"Resistance to Tyranny is a Moral Duty"

Documents such as the 1851 Worcester resolutions, the Salem convention's Address to the Women of Ohio, and the Declaration of Sentiments all used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric as part of their appeal to a broad, and likely hostile or uninterested public. Activists also invoked the sacrifices of the Revolutionary generation when they exhorted and encouraged one another. In those instances, the founders were generally held up as examples to emulate, rather than as figureheads to attack or blame for current oppressions. As Linda Steiner has observed, "Stimulating an awareness of shared difficulties and past oppression may even discourage audience members unless they develop an alternative image of themselves as agents of change."¹³³ Amid sometimes overwhelming reports of women's social, legal, economic, and educational limitations, reminders of the rebellions and successes of the founding mothers and grandmothers provided an empowering counterpoint to motivate convention goers to continued action.

¹³³ Linda Steiner, "Evolving Rhetorical Strategies/Evolving Identities," in *A Voice of Their Own*, 183-197.

Abby Price used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in a non-confrontational, heartening way when she addressed the 1850 Worcester convention on the need for women to have more educational opportunities and to enter male-dominated vocations. Rather than using Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to criticize, Price commented on the physical strength of the founding “grandmothers”:

We are so constituted, that exercise and great exertion, with high and soul-arousing objects, are potent to give us strength and powers of endurance. Witness wives in the times of our Revolution, think of the privations, hardships, and toil our grandmothers endured; compare them with the sickly race of wives and mothers whom modern improvements and labor-saving machinery in cloth-making are relieving from so much exertion, yet reducing their physical strength in proportion!¹³⁴

According to Price, contemporary women had to overcome the reduced daily physical exertions allowed by “modern improvements and labor-saving machinery” as much as social prejudices against their mental and physical capacities for work and education. While she noted that women’s current position was “where man, not God, has placed her,” Price emphasized that custom and circumstance were most to blame for holding women back, not male domination.

Similarly, at the Akron, Ohio convention in 1851, Emily Robinson presented a Report on Education, which, like Price’s address of the year before, informed delegates about the existing restrictions on women’s access to education and the connection between social customs, education, and political citizenship. Like Price, Robinson held up the heroes of the Revolutionary era as examples to follow: “It is nothing but educational prejudice that objects to exercising the elective franchise. Think you it would

¹³⁴ Abby Price, “Speech of Abby Price,” in *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 23d & 24th, 1850*, 29.

cause the mother to forget her babe? or the wife, daughter or sister to neglect the duties pertaining to those sacred relations? Did the fathers of the revolution make any worse citizens for the acknowledgment of their independence...?" Robinson positioned women's educational access as a pathway to the social changes that would lead them to political rights:

The revolutions that have benefited men, have not often been the fruits of legislation, or great and immediate efforts at reform, but the quiet, imperceptible effect of social education. . . . The principles in the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created free and equal," and that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and the efforts of men to incorporate them into government . . . are the influences above all others, that have educated woman in to the belief that they are of universal application and adaptation, and that the acknowledgment of her right to self-government will benefit the whole race — that it is her duty to demand it.¹³⁵

Like Price and Davis, Robinson blamed social pressures and prejudices against women's abilities for women's restricted civil and political position, rather than describing gender conflict or deliberate male oppression. Women, as much as men, required changes in "social education" before the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the founders could be realized. All three urged female listeners to "demand" or "claim" their rights with the assertion that when enough women did so, society at large would naturally acquiesce.

The events and struggles of the Revolution also provided clear proof that to "claim" their rights, women would have to place principle over comfort. Mary Mott, of De Kalb County, Indiana, reminded her fellow activists of that when she wrote a letter of

¹³⁵ Emily Robinson, "Report on Education," in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851* (Cleveland, OH: Ben Franklin Book and Job Office, 1851).

support to a convention in West Chester, Pennsylvania in 1852. Mott challenged the attendees:

Of what advantage is it to us to live in a Republic? Our social position is no better than it was in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Men have made great progress since that day; from being subjects they have become Sovereigns, ruling as she professed to rule – by *divine right*. . . . After awhile England proposed taxing the Colonies. One party held that protection gave them the right of taxation. The other said that the British Constitution gave the Government no power to tax, unless the persons were represented in Parliament. They declared their resolution to pay no taxes without representation. Much was said about the rights of man. And when at last a three penny tax was laid upon tea, the men being brim-full of patriotism, cared nothing for the tax; it was the principle they cared for, and they would fight for their principles. How very sincere they were, let the millions of wives answer, whose very existence is ignored in law. There was one thing women gained by that contest; they gained a clearer knowledge of their rights, a better understanding of their wrongs, which, according to Blackstone, are a deprivation of rights. A knowledge of these has produced a strong desire to seek a remedy. Hence the call for a Woman’s Convention. We must expect some difference of opinion as to the extent of the reforms proposed; but none who have carefully examined the subject will see reason to doubt that our rights run parallel with the rights of man.¹³⁶

As Mott hinted, not all activists within the movement were equally convinced that legislative change could be achieved simply by changing public opinion. At an 1852 convention in Syracuse, New York, Lucy Stone called for property-owning women to resist taxation without representation by refusing to pay local or state property taxes, despite the social and economic costs. Men were in the wrong to try to levy the taxes, but women had the obligation to resist. She insisted:

We want, that our men friends, who are so justly proud of their “Declaration of Independence,” should make their practice consistent with it. But if they will not do that, then let them blot from its page, the grandest truths their Fathers ever uttered – truths that the crushed soul of humanity, the wide world round, has leaped to hear. But, sisters, the right of suffrage will be secured to us, *when we*

¹³⁶ Mary Mott, “Letter to the Convention,” in *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at West Chester, PA. June 2d and 3d, 1852* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1852), 20-21.

*ourselves are willing to incur the odium, and loss of property, which resistance to this outrage on our rights will surely bring with it.*¹³⁷

In her temperance paper, *The Lily*, Amelia Jenks Bloomer informed readers that when it came to taxation without representation for women, current existing tax collectors were as wrong as “the minions of king George in their day,” and reminded her audience that “we have the glorious motto that ‘resistance to tyranny is a moral duty,’ handed down to us by the heroes of 1776.”¹³⁸ At least a few women took such calls to heart, although female property owners were relatively rare in the early years of the movement, and most chose to protest while still ultimately paying the taxes due. Dr. Harriet K. Hunt, a physician in Boston, continued to pay her taxes, but sent written protests in with her annual payments beginning in 1852. She also submitted a similar protest to the Massachusetts constitutional convention in 1853, asking that the new laws either enfranchise unmarried, property-owning women, or excuse them from paying taxes.¹³⁹ Stone herself refused to pay taxes due once she and her husband purchased a home in New Jersey in 1858, instead sending in a protest statement with the unpaid bill and eventually having some household goods auctioned to pay the fee.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Lucy Stone, “Speech of Lucy Stone,” in *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, September 8th, 9th, & 10th, 1852* (Syracuse: J.E. Masters, 1852), 34-35. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁸ Amelia Jenks Bloomer, “Taxation Without Representation,” *Lily*, September 1, 1851.

¹³⁹ For more on Hunt’s tax resistance, see her autobiography Harriet Kesia Hunt, *Glances and glimpses: or, Fifty Years Social, Including Twenty Years Professional Life* (Boston: J.R. Jewett, 1856), 299-300.

¹⁴⁰ I have not found any studies that indicate whether Stone had any tax liability before the home purchase in 1858. For more on women’s tax resistance, see Tutt, “‘No Taxation Without Representation’ in the American Woman Suffrage Movement.”

Woman's rights advocates often invoked the sacrifices of the founding generation as examples to follow, and they used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to argue for a variety of reforms beyond women's voting rights. In demanding equal educational and vocational access, activists used the efforts of founding mothers and fathers to demonstrate women's physical and mental capabilities. Advocates also used the founders as examples of heroes who placed principles over personal comfort. They exhorted their audiences to work harder for the cause, to be willing to sacrifice materially and socially, encouraging women to "demand" their rights. Unlike lists of women's disabilities, such rhetoric was empowering, if at times vague about how exactly an individual could "claim" their rights.

From the beginning of the movement, woman's rights activists also used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to contextualize their critiques of the status quo. As the movement developed and attracted a growing number of critics, invocations of the founding era also worked to reply to attacks and those who dismissed or mocked the activists' claims. Just as in her 1850 address Jones suggested that those who ignored women's oppressions were "unworthy descendants" of the Revolutionary heroes, other speakers compared opponents with Tories, or labeled them hypocrites for embracing the Declaration of Independence while refusing to acknowledge women's claims to equality.

"You Grant All That the Tories of the Old World Claim"

Among the many noted activists leading the second national convention at Worcester in 1851, few, if any, were as internationally regarded as Ernestine Rose, the keynote speaker at the evening session. Rose followed William H. Channing, who

opened the session by reading a letter to the convention from French feminists Jeanne Deroine and Pauline Roland. After lamenting the overall condition of women in France, and Deroine and Roland's imprisonment, Rose noted that even in "this far-famed land of freedom, under a Republic that has inscribed on its banner the great truth that 'all men are created free and equal, and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'" women lacked equal protections and rights under the law. Rose then made a direct attack on those who ignored activists' claims that the Revolutionary heritage belonged to women as well as men, asking:

Is she [woman] then not included in that declaration? Answer, ye wise men of the nation, and answer truly; add not hypocrisy to oppression! Say that she is not created free and equal, and therefore (for the sequence follows on the premise) that she is not entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But with all the audacity arising from an assumed superiority, you dare not so libel and insult humanity as to say, that she is not included in that declaration; and if she is, then what right has man, except that of might, to deprive woman of the rights and privileges he claims for himself?¹⁴¹

Rose's challenge to critics who refused to address activists' invocations of the Revolution was apt for the time, but also prophetic. Whether to avoid further circulating a persuasive argument to which there was no ready reply, or as a way of silencing woman's rights advocates interpretation of the founding, for the next two decades opponents persistently refused to publicly engage in the debate in terms of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, responding only with religious or physiological explanations for women's limited sphere. Rather than addressing the legitimacy of women's claim to equal rights, opponents

¹⁴¹ This passage was likely part of Rose's "Science of Government" speech, given repeatedly on lecture tours throughout the 1840s. She continued to periodically use variations of the speech at woman's rights conventions, as here in 1851, as well as 1854. Ernestine Rose, "Address by Ernestine Rose," in *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 15th and 16th, 1851*.

emphasized the dire consequences to society of doing so. Ministers, social commentators, and editors in the press insisted that women's subordination was divinely ordained – in the absence of patriarchal rule marriages and families would collapse; emotional and illogical female voters would undermine the nation's safety; and women themselves would be physically harmed by the exertions of greater educational, vocational, and political activities. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric not only provided moving examples of women's abilities, but also, as Rose described, the reminder that in a republic, physical “might” did not determine political capacities.

In other circumstances, Polish-born Rose sometimes described how her passions were enflamed by the poignancy of Fourth of July celebrations, yet she grew up outside the American veneration of the founders. She made frequent reference to the Declaration of Independence in her anti-slavery, pro-labor, and woman's rights talks, but her citations were more often in relation to natural rights arguments, rather than memory rhetoric.¹⁴² At times, however, she moved beyond natural rights to using the Declaration as Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to shame those who accepted the status quo. In this passage, Rose pointedly raised the issue of the contradiction between the promises of the Declaration and the reality of women's political exclusion. After having her remarks excluded from the 1850 convention proceedings, Rose used her own resources to have

¹⁴² For more on Rose, see Carol A. Kolmerten, *The American Life of Ernestine L. Rose* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999); Paula Doress-Worters, ed. *Mistress of Herself: Speeches and Letters of Ernestine L. Rose, Early Women's Rights Leader* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2008).

her 1851 speech printed in pamphlet form for circulation, but it was also included in that year's proceedings.¹⁴³

The same year, British feminist and philosopher Harriet Taylor Mill, wife of the influential political philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill, published an essay in *The Westminster Review* titled "The Enfranchisement of Women." In a section on the woman's rights movement in the United States, Mill made a similar argument for true Americans' inability to deny women's equality while still holding to the Declaration of Independence. The essay, originally attributed solely to John, circulated in the United States primarily in excerpted form with joint attribution in an 1853 collection of woman's rights tracts.¹⁴⁴ Echoing Harriet Martineau's critique from two decades before, Mill wrote:

That women have as good a claim as men have, in point of personal right, to the suffrage, or to a place in the jury-box, it would be difficult for anyone to deny. It cannot certainly be denied by the United States of America, as a people or as a community. Their democratic institutions rest avowedly on the inherent right of everyone to a voice in the government. Their Declaration of Independence, framed by the men who are still their great constitutional authorities – that document which has been from the first, and is now, the acknowledged basis of their polity, commences with this express statement: "we hold these truths to be

¹⁴³ On Rose's self-publication of her speech, see Doress-Worters, *Mistress of Herself*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *The Westminster Review* 55 (1851): 289-311. Although Mill was early in his career in 1853, his 1843 work, *System of Logic*, and his 1848 volume, *Principles of Political Economy*, had already become the dominant texts in their respective fields, and his reputation as a preeminent philosopher was firmly established. For more, see Fred Wilson, "John Stuart Mill", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/mill/>; and Dale E. Miller, "Harriet Taylor Mill", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/harriet-mill/>. As Miller notes, there is little definitive evidence to indicate the extent to which the couple collaborated on various projects, including this essay.

self evident...”

We do not imagine that any American democrat will evade the force of these expressions by the dishonest or ignorant subterfuge, that “men,” in this memorable document, does not stand for human beings, but for one sex only; that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are “inalienable rights” of only one moiety of the human species.... The contradiction between principle and practice cannot be explained away.¹⁴⁵

In this tract, Mill (following Martineau’s style, rather than Rose’s) used pronouns to emphasize her position as an outsider and to magnify her authorial distance. The editorial “we” who lamented women’s oppression also implied condemnation from all of Britain. (That European women were involved in their own struggles for political rights was not part of Mill’s commentary in this section.) By this European/American distinction, all American readers were left to identify with the “their” of “their Declaration of Independence” and “the basis of their polity,” whether they agreed with Mill’s conclusions or not.

It was not only those with an outsider’s perspective who insisted that America’s Revolutionary heritage provided unanswered, “self-evident” justifications for female equality. In September 1853, activists gathered in New York City for a series of overlapping temperance, anti-slavery, and woman’s rights conventions. Despite almost continuous efforts by dissenters in the audience to interrupt the proceedings, speakers managed to largely proceed with the planned events.¹⁴⁶ Wendell Phillips spoke twice,

¹⁴⁵ John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, “Enfranchisement of Women,” in *Woman’s Rights Commensurate with Her Capacities and Obligations: A Series of Tracts, comprising sixteen articles: essays, addresses, or letters of the prominent advocates of woman’s larger sphere of action* (Syracuse, N.Y.: J.E. Masters, 1853).

¹⁴⁶ For more on the week’s gatherings and disruptions, see William Lloyd Garrison, “Letter to Helen E. Garrison, September 5, 1853,” in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: From Disunionism to the Brink of War, 1850-1860* Louis Ruchames, ed.

both times directly addressing the hecklers. After accusing them of proving by their behavior that some men did not understand civil discourse enough to deserve the vote, he asked:

Is it not a principle of American law, that no human being out to be held responsible for a law to which that human being has not consented? Our revolutionary fathers fought for freedom. Was not that the very principle of our revolution? ... The moment you trespass on this principle, and lay down the maxim that the men have a right to make laws for the women, you grant all that the Tories of the old world claim. ... I now repeat that the other principle of American liberty, from the days of our forefathers to the present, has ever been this: that taxation and representation go together; that they are co-extensive; that no man's property should be taxed unless he consented to the taxation.¹⁴⁷

While Rose's earlier speech attacked critics who remained silent in response to activists' Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, the 1853 convention brought out opponents whose reaction was drunken rowdyism. In reply to the boos, hisses, and various projectiles launched at the platform, speakers reminded their audience that the argument for woman's equality based on the Revolutionary heritage was "irrefutable" and "self-evident," suggesting that disagreeing with the first implied disloyalty to the latter.

William Lloyd Garrison, speaking to the women in the audience, insisted:

You have the argument conceded to you at the beginning. 'All government arises from the consent of the governed.' Any government which has it not, is not a just government, and the people have a right to overturn it and put it aside. Our fathers held that doctrine as evident; therefore, the men of this country have conceded the whole ground to you. It is for you to occupy and maintain it, come what may. ... We must either make our government conform to the Declaration of

(Boston: Harvard University Press, 1976), 247-9; Doress-Worters, *Mistress of Herself*, 153-4.

¹⁴⁷ Wendell Phillips, "Address by Wendell Phillips," in *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at the Broadway Tabernacle, in the City of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1853), 89-90.

Independence, or else abolish it and establish a new government.¹⁴⁸

Always at the forefront of abolition radicalism, Garrison was one of the few who moved beyond shaming the current generation and using the founders' legacy as a justification for change to actually suggesting that the government as a whole might need replacing. In the particular case of this New York City gathering, his remarks may have also been a barb at the chief of police, who promised to maintain order for the joint conventions, but then failed to send any officers to keep the peace, even after the first day's sessions were interrupted.

Garrison's statement aside, activists' Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in the early years of the movement was generally less radical than that which came later, even when used to counter criticism. Like Rose, advocates of woman's rights invoked the Declaration and the founding principles to dismiss opponents' outlandish predictions about the consequences of female education and political participation. As Horace Greeley (alternately a supporter and an opponent) argued after the Salem convention in 1850:

It is easy to be smart, to be droll, to be facetious, in opposition to the demands of these Female Reformers; and, in decrying assumptions so novel and opposed to established habits and usages, a little wit will go a great way. But when a sincere Republican is asked to say in sober earnest what adequate reason he can give for refusing the demand of Women to an equal participation with Men in Political Rights, he must answer, None at all. True, he may say that he believes it is unwise in them to make the demand – he may say the great majority desire no such thing... yet if after all the question recurs... the answer must be, 'I ascede to it. However unwise or mistaken the demand, it is but the assertion of a natural right and as such must be conceded.'¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at The Broadway Tabernacle, in the City of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853*, 22.

¹⁴⁹ "The Rights of Woman," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 1, 1850.

Greeley was mistaken in one aspect of his claim: at times, opponents of woman suffrage used arguments grounded in natural rights to disavow women's capacities or to insist on philosophical connections between masculine traits and fitness for political citizenship. However, when the demands for equality were based on the heritage of the Revolution, he was correct, there seemed to be no acceptably republican way to deny women's claims, consequence be what they might. In accordance with their positioning of the Declaration and Revolutionary legacy as sacrosanct and unquestionable, reformers' early uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric rarely criticized the founders.

Greeley's comment about the ease of dismissing the movement through mockery was also correct: patronizing humor characterized nearly all negative secular responses to the early conventions. Editors speculated about women's motivations for attending, suggesting that their efforts were either attempts to find husbands, or to punish men for their singleness. Reports on the conventions derided women's clothing, softer voices, and physical characteristics. The hostile press was so creative in finding aspects of the gatherings to mock that at times activists even questioned whether invocations of the Revolution would be taken seriously.

Parody or *Argumentum ad Hominum*?

There were two large woman's rights conventions in 1853: the September meeting in New York City, and the national gathering in October in Cleveland, Ohio. On the morning of the second day of the Cleveland convention, Antoinette L. Brown read aloud a letter from William H. Channing. Channing called for the preparation, printing, and circulation of a Declaration of Women's Rights to accompany a new petition drive,

which, he suggested, should take place in every state simultaneously. Lucretia Mott, one of the original authors of the Declaration of Sentiments, then suggested that the 1848 document be adopted by the sitting convention. Her motion provoked a debate that occupied the entire morning session, and much of the afternoon. Some delegates opposed the blame that the Declaration placed on men, arguing, as they had before, that women were equally responsible for the social forms of their oppression. Audience members discussed whether the Declaration's claims about women's exclusion from ALL men's institutes of higher learning still applied – Oberlin admitted women, but would not allow them to pursue all majors, nor to read their own commencement addresses. Others were in favor of re-printing the Declaration, but incorporating a new list of resolutions at the end as a way to show the progress of the movement since 1848. Mrs. Clark was in favor of re-publishing the Declaration, but she described it as a parody of the Declaration of Independence. Asa Mahan responded: “you cannot present a parody, without getting up a laugh; and wherever it goes, it will never be seriously considered” and suggested the convention draft an entirely new document. William Lloyd Garrison argued against that depiction of the Declaration, insisting:

I very much doubt, whether, among candid and serious men, there would be any such mirthfulness excited. At the time that document was published, I read it, but I had forgotten it till this morning, and on listening to it, my mind was deeply impressed with its pertinency and its power. It seemed to me, the *argumentum ad hominum*, to this nation. It was measuring the people of this country by their own standard. It was taking their own words and applying their own principles to women, as they have been applied to men.¹⁵⁰

The convention ultimately appointed a five-member committee, including Mott and

¹⁵⁰ *Proceedings of the National Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Cleveland, Ohio, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1853* (Cleveland, OH: Gray, Beardsley, Spear and Co., 1854), 67-88.

Garrison, to compose a new document, however, no draft was complete by the time the convention closed the next day. Channing's letter also urged the compilation of facts and statistics about American women's current conditions in education, employment, and legal rights. He suggested that this information should be gathered by agents paid through subscriptions and the finished work published in almanac form to circulate widely. Although this suggestion received little comment, the convention endorsed it unanimously. Once the meeting ended, the Business Committee apparently prioritized work on these volumes over drafting a new declaration of woman's rights – at the following year's convention, they reported only on progress toward gathering the necessary information for the almanacs and soliciting additional funds, making no mention of work on a statement of rights.¹⁵¹

Woman's rights advocates used a variety of techniques to counter arguments that dismissed women's abilities to physically and mentally function as equal citizens, as well as claims that women were already adequately protected by legislatures and the legal structure of coverture. They presented reports detailing restrictions women faced and documented living evidence of women injured by current laws. In this effort, the founding generation provided both examples of women's abilities to sacrifice for the common good and their equal claim to the rights of individuals detailed in the Declaration of Independence.

¹⁵¹ "Proceedings of the Fifth Annual National Woman's Rights Convention," *Liberator*, January 12, 1855, 8.

Conclusion

During the formative years of the first-generation of the woman's rights movement, the rhetoric of the movement emphasized universal equality, which worked smoothly with arguments positioning women as shared inheritors of the Revolution and its privileges. Activists successfully used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to attract attention to their cause, to explain their movement to outsiders, to encourage one another, and to challenge those who criticized their efforts. Following the conventions at Seneca Falls and Rochester, editors persistently noted the patterning of the Declaration of Sentiments on the Declaration of Independence. Collective memories of the Revolution were useful symbols in addressing two of the first challenges movement leaders faced: justifying their right to agitate on their own behalf and motivating other women to join them.

However, beyond initial reactions to the Declaration of Sentiments, critics generally refused to engage in debate along Revolutionary heritage lines. No one denied that the women had rightful claims to the legacy of the founders, or insisted that women had not been partners in winning independence. No scholars challenged their reading of the Declaration of Independence; no historian questioned the parallels they drew between suffering colonists and themselves. Editors mocked activists' appearances, suggested that they were disgruntled at being unmarried, and questioned their moral purity; ministers rebuked them for challenging the patriarchal order set by God, but the rhetoric of the Revolution went unanswered.

It was not that newspaper editors, ministers, and politicians were unwilling to challenge alternative interpretations of the founders and their intentions. At the end of the

movement's first decade, the nation was deeply divided over slavery, and both sides relied heavily on rhetoric drawing on collective memories of the Revolution. Commentators frequently rebuked opponents for misunderstanding or deliberately misrepresenting the meaning of the Revolution. As the movement entered the 1860s, the Civil War and Reconstruction brought new opportunities to exhort women to join in the political process and new challenges to woman's rights activists' commitments to equality.

CHAPTER 4

REVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE RHETORIC AND FEMALE CITIZENSHIP IN WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION: 1860-1869

In July, 1860, woman's rights advocate and anti-slavery activist William Hovey delivered an address on woman's rights at a high school exhibition in Boston. His speech was later published in the *Liberator*. He opened his comments by acknowledging that woman's rights was often an unpopular subject, yet he explained he would "prove to all candid minds" that the government of Massachusetts had "not guaranteed to woman those privileges and rights to secure which our forefathers drained their deepest veins." By taxing women without giving them voting rights, he asked: "Do you not thus reinstate the doctrine of 'taxation without representation,' which Concord and Lexington and Bunker Hill, and every well-fought field of the Revolution, have pronounced infamous? Are you not doing to woman precisely as Britain did by your fathers?"¹⁵² Like many other rights activists and abolitionists, Hovey explicitly argued that the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" included freedom from taxation without representation, and that defending those rights was the driving cause behind the war for independence. However, by the late 1850s, politicians outside of the reform community, responding to the increasingly incendiary rhetoric coming from pro-slavery forces, began to argue against this interpretation of the founders' motives. They described Revolutionary-era phrases as generalities, platitudes, or even rabble-rousing – language

¹⁵² William Hovey, "Woman's Rights: An Essay Delivered at the Exhibition of the English High School, Boston, Monday, July 16th, 1860, by Wm. A. Hovey," *Liberator*, August 3, 1860.

that had been intended to stir up revolt, but not to be taken literally by thoughtful descendents.

Despite the rhetorical and historical contortions of the Revolutionary past surrounding them, activists' usage of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric remained fairly stable in the period leading up to, and during the Civil War. While many middle class Northern white women deployed normative, commercialized versions of the Revolution as attractions at Sanitary Fairs to raise money for soldiers' aid, the more radical reformers continued their rhetoric of veneration, paired with increasing critiques, of the founders.¹⁵³ Cady Stanton and other speechmakers even began to comment on the repetitiveness of their arguments by the decade's end. The language of Revolutionary memory framed part of the national discussion of the "woman issue" – commentators outside the movement noted when opponents failed to address the validity of women's claims to the founders' legacy. Ending slavery and establishing freedpeople as citizens in the aftermath of the war opened the door to renegotiations of the meanings and prerogatives of citizenship, and woman's rights activists believed their moment had come. However, some proponents of black (male only) suffrage argued for the connections between military service and political rights, arguments which excluded women. This prompted some woman's rights advocates to counter their exclusionary claims by citing the role of women during the Revolution, while others turned to women's more recent support for the Union war effort. Other activists, most notably Cady Stanton and Anthony, began to

¹⁵³ On portrayals of Revolutionary tableaux in Sanitary Fairs, see Frances M. Clarke, "Old Fashioned Tea Parties: Revolutionary Memory in Civil War Sanitary Fairs," in *Remembering the Revolution*.

distort Revolutionary heritage rhetoric into a race-specific argument that privileged white women.

Women's Increasing Political Activism

The early years of the 1860s seemed to offer great hope for women to achieve important gains toward political equality. At the 1860 national convention, secretary Susan B. Anthony read a report detailing the progress the movement had made in the past year alone: a married women's property act in New York that guaranteed women the right to their own earnings during marriage and equal custody of their children in the case of divorce; an increasing number of lyceums which welcomed female speakers; and a \$400,000 grant from Mr. Vassar to fund a women's college that would be equal to Harvard and Yale.¹⁵⁴ When Kansas became a state in 1861, its constitution included a provision for woman suffrage in school board elections. Although the Women's National Loyal League's 1863 goal of one million signatures on an anti-slavery petition was remarkable in its ambition, women's anti-slavery petitioning overall was well developed by the 1860s. Female abolitionists began joining the nascent petitioning movement in 1834, and their numbers grew rapidly. The number of federal anti-slavery petition drives surged for three years following passage of the Congressional "gag rule" in 1836.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Susan B. Anthony, "Secretary's Report", in *Proceedings of the Tenth National Woman's Rights Convention, Held at the Cooper Institute, New York City, May 10th and 11th, 1860* (Boston: Yerrington and Garrison: 1860), 5-6.

¹⁵⁵ The Pickney Resolution, or "gag rule," immediately tabled all anti-slavery petitions without allowing them to be read on the floor of Congress. As Susan Zaeske has described, "passage of the first gag rule proved a god-send to the abolition movement by

Women's antislavery petitioning continued through the 1840s and 50s, particularly in response to the possible expansion of slavery into the land seized from Mexico in 1848, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854.¹⁵⁶ Over time, petitioners' tone and language changed considerably, transitioning from self-deprecating supplicants to positioning themselves as citizens exercising established political rights. By the 1860s northern society generally regarded petitioning as a socially acceptable reform activity among white women.¹⁵⁷

In addition to anti-slavery petitions and female anti-slavery society activities, a decade of woman's rights agitation and conventions in the 1850s helped to draw countless women into a wide array of increasingly visible petition drives ranging from state-level suffrage and married women's property laws to temperance, educational access, and pay equity. The temperance journal, the *Lily*, began publication in 1849, and quickly moved into woman's rights issues, while the *Una* focused on woman's rights from its beginning in 1853.¹⁵⁸ Throughout the 1850s, Northern white women entered the

wedding the unpopular cause with the sacred right of petition." Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 103.

¹⁵⁶ The Congressional "Compromise of 1850" negotiated boundary claims to allow Texas to be admitted as a slave state and California as a free state, ended the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and created new rules for the capture and return of suspected fugitive slaves. It also resolved the question of expanding slavery into the new territory by organizing New Mexico and Utah as separate territories, each able to decide on the question of slavery by popular vote. Similarly, the Kansas-Nebraska Act four years later repeated the use of popular sovereignty as a solution to debates over slavery in the territories, and in so doing, repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had allowed or prohibited slavery according to geographic boundaries.

¹⁵⁷ Zaeske. *Signatures of Citizenship*.

wage-labor force in increasing numbers, and most worked in unskilled and low-wage positions.¹⁵⁹ Reports of their dire circumstances provided living justifications for rights advocates' demands for increased female education and pay equity. Speeches and resolutions at woman's rights conventions addressed a broad range of reform issues, blending Revolutionary heritage rhetoric with Christian doctrines and other arguments.

Two key sources of funding for woman's rights work emerged late in the preceding decade that dramatically shaped the future of the movement. Two longtime supporters of abolition and woman's rights created trust funds which began dispersing monies in late 1858 (the Francis Jackson Fund), and early 1859 (the Charles Hovey Fund.)¹⁶⁰ These new resources supported the first paid agents of the woman's movement in a campaign in New York State, led by Susan B. Anthony. Joined by Frances Gage,

¹⁵⁸ Amelia Jenks Bloomer initially published the *Lily* on behalf of the Ladies Temperance Society of Seneca Falls, but within one year took sole responsibility for the paper. Publication continued in Seneca Falls until 1853, when Bloomer relocated to Mt. Vernon, Ohio with her husband. In 1854, Bloomer sold the paper to Mary Birdsall. Birdsall published the paper from Richmond, Indiana, for an additional two years. Abolitionist and woman's rights activist Paulina Wright Davis published the *Una* on her own for two years in Providence, Rhode Island before accepting Caroline Healy Dall as a co-editor and moving to Boston in 1855. The paper ceased publication the same year. For more on the *Lily* and the *Una*, see Edward A. Hinck, "The *Lily*, 1849-1856: From Temperance to Woman's Rights," in *A Voice of Their Own*; Mari Boot Tonn, "The *Una*, 1853-1855: The Premiere of the Woman's Rights Press," in *A Voice of Their Own*.

¹⁵⁹ By 1860 a quarter of adult women in Boston were recorded as wage earners, with sixty percent working as domestic servants, according to Thomas Dublin. Drawing on the 1860 census data, Alice Kessler-Harris estimates that thirty percent of free women nationwide engaged in some form of paid labor, with many working alongside spouses or performing outwork done in the home. Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 156; Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 71.

¹⁶⁰ Although they shared a surname, I have been unable to identify whether or not there was a familial connection between the William Hovey quoted at the beginning of the chapter and Charles Hovey, the trust fund donor.

Hannah Tracy Cutler, Jane Elizabeth Jones, and Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Anthony lectured and led petition drives around the state, ultimately convincing the legislature to grant married women the right to their own earnings and to joint custody of their children. The 1860 law went far beyond the Married Women's Property laws of the 1840s and 50s, both in its custody provision and in allowing women not only property brought to the marriage, but their earnings throughout marriage.¹⁶¹ Revolutionary heritage rhetoric provided an ideal way to connect their long-standing demands for woman's rights to the exigencies of the present.

In the early 1860s the optimism woman's rights activists expressed a decade earlier had not dimmed: they had demonstrable successes to point to; new sources of funding; and their message was reaching the American public. Although newspaper reports of the annual conventions did not circulate as widely as had the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments, journalists attended the gatherings and other papers reprinted their reports. Furthermore, with the outbreak of the Civil War, women had new roles to play as both homefront and political supporters of the war effort, and these labors also brought increasing visibility to their abilities. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, such a powerful part of sectionalist arguments, was more prominent than ever, and continued as a key component of woman's rights language.

¹⁶¹ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 22-28. On earlier Married Women's Property Laws, see Chused, "Married Women's Property Law"; and Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.)

“With the Spirit of ’76 We Hope to Gain the Day”

Throughout the decades before the Civil War, labor groups, political parties, and activists of many stripes continued to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to contextualize their demands and draw public support to their causes. In 1860, male and female shoemakers in the factory town of Lynn, Massachusetts organized a parade as part of their strike for increased wages. Strikers carried banners praising workers’ virtues, and with slogans such as “May revolutions never cease while tyranny exists.” One group carried a large picture of Washington, while another encouraged: “With the spirit of ’76 we hope to gain the day.”¹⁶² While abolitionists and suffragists increasingly used Fourth of July celebrations and the Revolutionary heritage as platforms for demanding reform, southern advocates of states’ rights preferred to compare themselves to beleaguered colonists fighting for their own freedom. The popular southern novelist, William Gilmore Simms, used the fictional Revolutionary officer, Captain Porgy, as a somewhat comic hero, and as a mouthpiece to defend slavery and patriarchy using the founding legacy.¹⁶³ In 1856, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union incorporated with the intent to purchase and restore Mount Vernon as a tribute to Washington and his devotion to the

¹⁶² “The Ladies’ Procession at Lynn,” *New York Herald*, March 9, 1860. The *Herald* noted that it copied the story from the March 8th *Boston Courier*.

¹⁶³ Although Captain Porgy was the main character in only one of Simms’ novels, *Woodcraft*, (published in 1852) he also appeared in five other works published between 1835 and 1856. For more on Porgy, and his following among southern readers, see Hugh W. Hetherington, *Cavalier of Old South Carolina: William Gilmore Simms’s Captain Porgy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966.)

Union.¹⁶⁴ Radicals on both sides of the sectional divide argued for understanding the Revolutionary past as a triumph of a principled minority over an oppressive enemy, even as a majority of the nation continued to celebrate the sacrifices of heroes and the formation of a sacred union until secession. When the Civil War began, the Confederate states used images of Washington and Jefferson on postage stamps, and towns throughout the Confederacy celebrated the Fourth of July with speeches denouncing the North's betrayal of the Revolutionary legacy.¹⁶⁵

As Revolutionary rhetoric before the war became increasingly radical, some American political thinkers began to argue that the slogans and phrases taken from the Declaration of Independence and other founding documents were not intended to be understood literally. Rufus Choate, a lawyer and Whig senator made perhaps the most famous version of this argument in an 1856 public letter to the Maine Whig committee in which he called such language “the glittering and sounding generalities of natural right,” and repudiated the dramatic implications that reading the Declaration literally might produce. Newspapers around the country reprinted the letter, and a storm of angry

¹⁶⁴ See especially Mason, “The Sacred Ashes of the First Men: Edward Everett, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union, and Late Antebellum Unionism” in *Remembering the Revolution*.

¹⁶⁵ Quigley, “Independence Day Dilemmas in the American South,” 235–266. For discussions of the changes in popular memory of the Revolution during the late antebellum, war, and immediate post-war periods, see Clarke, “Old Fashioned Tea Parties”; Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration”; ———, “Social Change and Collective Memory”.

On political uses of Revolutionary rhetoric, see George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979); Mason, “The Sacred Ashes of the First Men”; Eugene Miller and Barry Schwartz, “The Icon of the American Republic: A Study in Political Symbolism,” *Review of Politics* 47 (1985): 516–543; Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, Purcell, “Martyred Blood and Avenging Spirits.”

rebuttals, but the issue remained unresolved.¹⁶⁶ If government authority came from the consent of the governed, was that consent irrevocable? If the southern states no longer felt themselves represented, what recourse did they have? The Union victory settled the question over secession by force of arms, but even after the Civil War, philosophical questions about the proper interpretation of the Declaration remained.

Woman's rights activists framed their understanding of the Civil War around the legacy of the Revolution. When reformers spoke of the causes of the war, they drew direct lines to the limitations of the founders, the nation's failure to live up to the ideals of the Declaration and the power of slavery's supporters to corrupt the legacy of 1776. In this framework, they celebrated the war and reconstruction as opportunities to correct the mistakes of the past, and to fulfill the nation's long-thwarted destiny of true equality. As long as woman's rights activists maintained their own commitment to class- and racial-equality, along with gender equity, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric bolstered their claims.

"These Old Propositions, So Dear to Our Fathers"

The tenth annual national woman's rights convention met at the Cooper Institute in New York City in May 1860. The gathering drew between six and eight hundred attendees, even with an admission fee of ten cents.¹⁶⁷ In addition to the usual reports on

¹⁶⁶ See, for example: Rufus Choate, "Hon. Rufus Choate's Letter," *Columbian Register*, August 23, 1856; ———, "Letter from Hon. Rufus Choate to the Whigs of Maine," *Boston Post*, August 18, 1856; ———, "Letter from Hon. Rufus Choate to the Whigs of Maine," *Plain Dealer*, August 20, 1856; George William Curtis, "Reply to Mr. Choate," *Daily Atlas*, August 29, 1856; "Reply to the Letter of Mr. Choate to the Whigs of Maine, by a Whig," *Connecticut Courant*, August 30, 1856.

¹⁶⁷ *Proceedings of the Tenth National Woman's Rights Convention*, 3.

advances and remaining restrictions on women in various fields, several speakers sought to counter the criticism that many women would not choose to vote, even if woman suffrage were granted, therefore, it was not sensible to change the existing laws to accommodate the few who might. On the second morning, between speeches from J. Elizabeth Jones and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the audience heard an address from Reverend Samuel Longfellow. Longfellow pointed out the hypocrisy of those who claimed that woman's sphere was the home, but made no objection to her spending much of the day away from home, whether shopping, conducting charity or social visits, or from the need to labor in someone else's home. He insisted that woman's sphere should be limited only by each woman's individual talents and aptitudes, which could not be discovered until they had expanded educational, social, and political opportunities. Logically, then, while few women might vote initially (and, he noted, plenty of men who were eligible chose not to vote in many elections), once suffrage was an established fact, more women would participate. Indeed, he argued:

[A]ll the objections that are made to woman's voting are of the most trivial character, that would not stand a day before any serious desire that she should have her simple right in this matter, so far as she chooses to claim it. And her right lies simply in these old propositions, so dear to our fathers, - upon which they stood and fought an eight years' war, - 'Taxation without representation is tyranny,' and that 'all powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed.' And there is nothing in these two propositions which confines their application to man....¹⁶⁸

Longfellow suggested that women who were interested in voting begin doing so at every election, whether their votes would be recorded and counted or not, as a way of

¹⁶⁸ Samuel Longfellow, "Speech of Rev. Samuel Longfellow," in *Proceedings of the Tenth National Woman's Rights Convention*, 64.

claiming their rights and demonstrating their desire for representation. With such “self-evident” principles on their side, he insisted, men could not continue denying their rights.

A few months earlier, Wendell Phillips addressed the same criticism in a slightly different fashion at the New York State Woman’s Rights Convention, reminding his audience: “Our fathers did not think it necessary to prove the *usefulness* of demanded rights, and no one has a right to ask this proof of woman. The right of property is sacred, and she must have power to maintain it. Women are hung, although the fundamental principle of this government is, that no native is bound by law unless he has assented to it.”¹⁶⁹ Like other activists who reminded audiences of the “self-evident” nature of the truths they proclaimed, Phillips insisted that critics who questioned what good voting privileges would do for women were failing to understand the essential components of rights, versus privileges. While political privileges might need to be earned or justified, the sacrifices of the founders had already established suffrage as a right, needing no further explanation or defense.

When war broke out in April 1861, activists promptly cancelled plans for the annual national woman’s rights convention, as well as the annual anti-slavery convention. Although some leaders privately expressed concerns about the loss of momentum, the consensus among organizers was to suspend conventions for the duration of the war.¹⁷⁰

Amid the pre-war debates over the applicability of the tenets of the Declaration of Independence, activists continued to use a language that predominately celebrated the

¹⁶⁹ “New York State Woman’s Rights Convention,” *Liberator*, March 2, 1860.

¹⁷⁰ On opposition to the suspension, see Susan B. Anthony, “Letter of Susan B. Anthony to Lydia Mott, 1862,” in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, 748-9.

founders, rarely critiquing or devoting attention to the flaws in the legacy they left behind. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric was part of woman's rights advocates' arguments that there were neither philosophical, religious, nor historical justifications for distinctions between female and male citizenships. Thus, when the war began, activists moved naturally to the corollary that women had equal duties to politically support and direct the nation through the crisis. While some women eventually took on quasi-political roles as advisors within the Sanitary Commission, and others drew criticism for crossing gender boundaries by working as nurses in field hospitals, others transferred their previous work in petitioning to a new wartime effort.

The Women's National Loyal League

Four months after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in 1863, a "Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Nation," signed by Cady Stanton "on behalf of the Women's Central Committee" began to circulate through northern newspapers. The Committee intended to form a Women's National Loyal League, and announced: "it is high time for the daughters of the revolution, in solemn council, to unseal the last will and testament of the Fathers, - lay hold of their birthright of freedom, and keep it a sacred trust for all coming generations." The call was patriotic and invigorating, but deliberately vague about the extent to which the organizers would include woman's rights as a part of the League work.¹⁷¹ Outside of anti-slavery papers, editors published only brief

¹⁷¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Nation," *Liberator*, April 17, 1863; ———, "Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Nation," *Liberator*, April 24, 1863; ———, "Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Nation," *Liberator*, May 1, 1863; ———, "Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women

information about the upcoming meeting, but on four occasions, the *Liberator* ran the full text. Although the statement did not criticize the president or make mention of the Emancipation Proclamation, many abolitionists, including Anthony and Cady Stanton, believed Congress and President Lincoln were moving too slowly to end slavery within the Union, since the Proclamation only emancipated enslaved people in states that had seceded.¹⁷² Before calling the meeting, Anthony and Cady Stanton conferred with Horace Greeley, William Lloyd Garrison, and other prominent abolitionist leaders about their idea for another petition drive and a women's Loyal League modeled after men's Leagues.¹⁷³ Called Union Leagues or Loyal Leagues, the men's organizations largely functioned as offshoots of the Republican party, with varying willingness to pressure the party for emancipation as a war aim. The men's Leagues had between 600,000 and 800,000 total members by late 1863, and contributed significant support to the party.¹⁷⁴ A

of the Nation," *Liberator*, May 8, 1863. For examples of brief announcements, see *Springfield Republican*, April 15, 1863; *Hartford Daily Courant*, April 16, 1863; *Massachusetts Spy*, April 22, 1863.

¹⁷² Congress passed the First and Second Emancipation Acts on August 6th, 1861, and July 17th, 1862, respectively, and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863. All three provided freedom only to enslaved persons within formerly-seceded regions that had been regained by Union troops.

¹⁷³ Susan Zaeske, Ann Gordon, and most other scholars of the WNLL credit Anthony and Cady Stanton with conceiving of the League largely on their own, albeit in response to the formation of similar male leagues. However, Faye Dudden's 2011 volume specifically analyzing relationships between the leading suffragists and male leaders within the black suffrage movement suggests that male relatives and colleagues pressured Anthony and Cady Stanton to form the League, as does Lori Ginzberg's 2009 biography of Cady Stanton. Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 51; Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 108; Ann D. Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Zaeske, Susan. *Signatures of Citizenship*.

handful of Ladies' Loyal Leagues existed, but despite the similarity in name to the men's Leagues, the women's functioned like Soldier's Aid societies in that they focused on female domestic activities such as reducing household consumption and sending letters and care packages to soldiers. The Women's National Loyal League adopted their name from a radical pro-emancipation New York group known as the Loyal National League (which Cady Stanton's husband helped to found). In so doing, the WNLL marked itself as distinctive both in its political and emancipationist endeavors.

Prefiguring the debates over the markers of citizenship that followed the war, the WNLL petition noted that although women could not serve in the nation's armed forces, nor vote in its elections, they retained the right of petition and had a duty to contribute to the war effort through political means.

The Convention of the Loyal Women of the Nation opened on the morning of May 14, 1863, at the Church of the Puritans in New York City's Union Square. Admission for the morning session was free, although the evening session, held at the Cooper Institute, required a twenty-five-cent ticket. Along with several other aging activists who had previously combined abolition and women's rights work, Angelina Grimké Weld returned to public life with the outbreak of the war and attended the meeting. In response to the League's call, she served as one of the vice presidents, speaking twice at the founding meeting and preparing documents under the League name. Her first speech at the meeting reflected the continued use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric through a full generation of women's work in abolition and suffrage.

¹⁷⁴ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 50-51.

MY FRIENDS:-It is with the deepest feelings that I come before you this morning. I came here with no desire and no intention to speak; but my heart is full, my country is bleeding, my people are perishing around me. And I feel as a South Carolinian, I am bound to tell the North, Go on! Go on!! Never falter, never abandon the principles which you have now adopted. I could not say this if we were now where we stood two years ago. I could not say thus when it was proclaimed in the Northern States that the Union was all that we sought. No, my friends, such a Union as we had then, God be praised that it has perished; God be praised that it is shattered. Oh, never for one moment consent that such a Union should be re-established in our land. There was a time when I looked upon our Fathers--the Fathers of the Revolution --with the deepest sorrow and the keenest reproach. I said to their shadows in another world, "Why did you leave this accursed system of slavery for us to suffer and to die under? why did you not, with a stroke of the pen, determine-- when you acquired your own independence-- that the slaves should be set free? that the principles which you adopted in the Declaration of Independence should be a shield of protection to every man, whether he be slave or whether he be free?" But, my friends, the experience of sixty years has shown me that the fruit grows slowly. I look back and see that great Sower of the world, as he traveled the streets of Jerusalem and scattered the seeds of truth. There he dropped the precious seed, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." I look at all the contests which the world in different nations has had to pass through for its freedom, and I see that, whether it were the Patricians of Rome, or England, or France, or any part of Europe, every battle fought gained something to freedom. We passed on until our Fathers, driven out by the oppression of England, came to this country and planted that little seed of liberty upon the soil of New England. When our Revolution took place, the seed was only in the process of sprouting. You must recollect that our Declaration of Independence was the very first national evidence of the great doctrine of brotherhood and equality, which Jesus Christ had taught the world. I verily believe that those who were the true lovers of liberty did all that they could at that time. They stepped to the very breach of the Constitution, and in their debates in the Convention they lifted up their voices against slavery--they protested against the hypocrisy and inconsistency of a nation declaring such glorious truths, and then trampling them under foot; enslaving the poor and oppressed because he was poor and oppressed, because he had a skin not colored like our own: as though a man's skin should make any difference in the recognition of his rights, any more than the color of his hair or of his eyes. This little blade sprouted as it were from the precious seeds that were planted by Jesus of Nazareth. But, my friends, if it took eighteen hundred years for that precious seed to bring forth the little blade which was then seen in our Declaration, are we not unreasonable to suppose that more could have been done than has been done, looking at the imperfections of human nature, looking at the selfishness of man, looking at his desire for wealth and his greed for glory? If it could have been possible that the South could have been overcome at that time by the freemen of the North in their desire to institute

a free Government, we should have had a free Government; but it was impossible to overcome the long and strong prejudices of the South in favor of slavery. ...¹⁷⁵

Grimké Weld opened her speech with the self-deprecating explanation common to women's antebellum speeches. In spite of her renown as a public speaker, she insisted that she had not planned to speak out, but was driven by the intense emotions of the circumstances. She carefully identified her loyalties, acknowledging her South Carolinian heritage, while counting herself as a member of the Union, noting that early in the war, "it was proclaimed in the Northern States that the Union was all that *we* sought." Alternating between plural and singular first person pronouns, Grimké Weld positioned herself, with her listeners, as inheritors of a Revolutionary legacy that was both the foundation of the current war, and the hope for its resolution. Slavery had been a blight upon "our land," and Grimké Weld expressed a very personalized critique of "our Fathers – the Fathers of the Revolution," imagining herself in a direct conversation with the ghosts of the founders. Yet, she then located those fathers within a linear framework of Christian progress throughout time; the Declaration of Independence was the natural outgrowth of Jesus Christ's ministry; indeed, it was the "very first national evidence" of Christ's teachings. With this marriage of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to Christian progress, Grimké Weld absolved the founders of guilt, while neatly avoiding the issue of slavery in the north, insisting that "we" (she, as much as her audience) would be

¹⁷⁵ Angelina Grimké Weld, "Speech of Mrs. Angeline G. Weld," in *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held in New York, May 14, 1863* (New York: Phair & Co. Steam Printers, 1863), 10-14.

unreasonable to expect the founders to have done more to overcome the “long and strong prejudices of the South in favor of slavery.”¹⁷⁶

Northern women were under great pressure throughout the war to proclaim and demonstrate their loyalty to the Union cause above devotion to their own families and domestic concerns.¹⁷⁷ This challenge was particularly acute for nationally-known abolitionists such as Grimké Weld – to appeal to the broad audience of potential League members, she needed to rhetorically balance her own familial roots as a Southerner, along with what many people considered her divisive background in anti-slavery and women’s rights activism, beside a unifying call for support of the war effort. She addressed this challenge by identifying herself and her audience as co-inheritors of a Revolutionary heritage that, while flawed, held out great promise when fully understood.

The WNLL was not, on the surface, a woman’s rights organization – the League’s primary goal was the abolition of slavery. However, underlying the League’s antislavery work was a radical claim for women’s political equality, made clear in the convention’s fifth resolution:

That it is in the same class favoring aristocratic interest that the property, the liberty, and the lives of all slaves, all citizens of African descent, and all women, are placed at the mercy of a legislation in which they are not represented. There never can be a true peace in this Republic until the civil and political equality of every subject of the Government shall be practically established.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Silber, *Daughters of the Union*.

¹⁷⁸ *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held in New York, May 14, 1863*, 15.

In the period of debate that followed the reading of the resolutions, Mrs. E. Hoyt raised an objection to the inclusion of woman's rights "isms" with the group's intention of supporting the government. She noted that woman's rights was often an unpopular topic, and, according to a *New York Times* account, argued that the "women of the Revolution, when they supported the Government, did not ask for equal political privileges with the men." The *Times* reported that her comments were applauded, but followed by someone else's remark that "when women formed a Loyal League, as the present one might be so organized, they would depart from the custom of the women of the Revolution, and that fact would justify further innovation."¹⁷⁹

In addition to Grimké Weld's speech, the Convention and the business meeting that followed produced a letter to President Lincoln, an official platform, a series of resolutions, and an Address to the Soldiers. In these documents, League women continued to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to emphasize the contradiction between Christianity, republicanism, and the existing practices of slaveholding in the United States, reminding the president that: "Our fathers had a vision of the sublime idea of liberty, equality, and fraternity; but they failed to climb the heights [sic] that with anointed eyes they saw. To us, their children, belongs the work to build up the living reality of what they conceived and uttered."¹⁸⁰ Although the League platform insisted that its

¹⁷⁹ The *Times* account varies somewhat from the official record given in the published proceedings, suggesting an effort to downplay dissent among the meeting attendees. See *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held in New York, May 14, 1863*; "The Ladies' League: Meetings at Dr. Cheever's Church and Cooper Union," *New York Times*, May 15, 1863.

¹⁸⁰ "Address to the President," in *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held in New York, May 14, 1863*, 53-4.

underlying purpose was to “educate the nation into the true idea of a Christian Republic,” each document they produced either explicitly or implicitly reinforced the women’s right to petition Congress, advise the president and soldiers, and generally participate in the political solutions to the war.

Following the founding meeting, the League held only one other major gathering – an anniversary convention one year later. However, the fourteen-member Business Committee met regularly, and the League put fundraising efforts into effect immediately.¹⁸¹ Thanks to support from anti-slavery groups and from many Republican newspapers, the League’s message circulated widely. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* printed lists of contributors, and many papers reported state-by-state signature tallies as the petitions grew. Local agents wrote letters to the editors of newspapers, explaining the mission of the League, and giving instructions for supporting the petition effort. In her letter to the *Chicago Tribune* titled “The Loyalty of Woman,” Josephine S. Griffing wrote:

The women of the National Loyal League have for their grand object the restoration of the national idea, the equal rights of all men to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ the principle on which we rebelled against the British throne and established our independence, which the Revolutionary Fathers struggled and died to secure, the names of whom we honor, and history writes above those of conqueror and king.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ As Dudden has described, because of conflicts with Wendell Phillips, the primary trustee on both funds, the League was forced to finance its work with very little support from the Jackson and Hovey Funds, at one point running over \$5,000 in debt. Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 53.

¹⁸² In describing the League, both members and modern scholars have used “Women’s National Loyal League,” and “Women’s Loyal National League” as the group’s official title. Throughout this chapter, I use the former, following Griffing’s use and the name given in the published proceedings. Josephine S. Griffing, “The Loyalty of Woman,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1863.

Griffing insisted that despite women's unequal status as citizens, "woman is a patriot, and if not misled by rebel sympathizers, will do, and dare, and die, to save free homes, free labor, free schools, and a free government for all."¹⁸³ She drew on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to remind readers of their duty to support freedom (read as abolishing slavery) as an essential outcome of the Civil War. Griffing encouraged readers to join the League and to sign the "mammoth" petition.

On February 9, 1864, Senator Charles Sumner presented the first 100,000 signatures the League gathered to Congress in a speech later known as the Prayer of the One Hundred Thousand. He persistently introduced League petitions until the summer recess. Although they did not reach their initial goal of one million signatures, in less than two years the League collected nearly 400,000 signatures from both men and women on over 40,000 petitions asking Congress to abolish slavery.¹⁸⁴ The League continued fundraising and collecting signatures until Congress passed the 13th Amendment in January 1865. They formally disbanded once the states ratified the amendment.¹⁸⁵

During the war, woman's rights activists used the WNLL as a venue for further demonstrating women's political capacities by engaging in petitioning, fundraising, and publicly advising the president and soldiers. League texts used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to emphasize the historical precedent for women's wartime agitation and equal

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*.

¹⁸⁵ The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States and its territories, except in the case of punishment following a criminal conviction. See "Amendments to the Constitution of the United States," in *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2002), 48.

engagement as citizens. That a majority of the 400,000 signers of the WNLL petitions did so with the intent to support such a position is doubtful, but League leaders, particularly Cady Stanton and Anthony, were clear from its inception that the League was a women's political organization. However, in keeping with its position of support for the Union and the war effort, League publications remained circumspect in their rhetoric, never directly pushing for women's enfranchisement or elaborating on the failings of the founders to address the injustices that eventually led to the war.

The Return of the Conventions

Many activists began transitioning back to woman's rights work toward the end of the war, even before the League formally ceased its operations. However, the broad focus on woman's rights that had distinguished conventions before the Civil War was gone. The renegotiation of the meaning of citizenship during Reconstruction led activists to disagree over the future direction of the movement. Woman's rights advocates' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric for the next decade was shaped by these divergent purposes and intra-organizational conflicts. On Christmas Day, 1865, Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Stone released a "Petition for Universal Suffrage" on behalf of the National Woman's Rights Committee.¹⁸⁶ They hoped to build on the League's success with a national petition drive for woman suffrage.

On May 10, 1866, the National Woman's Rights Committee convened the eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention. The convention met at the Church of the

¹⁸⁶ For publication of the petition, see "Political Rights of Woman," *Liberator*, December 29, 1865; "Universal Suffrage in Earnest," *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, December 27, 1865; "Universal Suffrage in Earnest," *Ohio Plain Dealer*, December 28, 1865.

Puritans in New York City, continuing at the location that had hosted League gatherings and myriad reform conventions before the war. On the surface, the meeting been carefully planned as a return to the regular pattern of annual woman's rights gatherings that had been interrupted by the war. In fact, organizers secretly planned to use the meeting as a continuation of a leadership coup at the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) meeting held the day before. A group of woman's rights activists including Anthony, Cady Stanton, Stephen Foster, and Lucretia Mott planned to wrest control of the AASS away from Wendell Phillips, in part because of conflicts over disbursements from the Hovey and Jackson funds. They planned to change the organization's existing focus on anti-slavery (which, according to Phillips now meant working exclusively for black male suffrage) to universal suffrage that would include women. Phillips was aware of the discontent, and tried throughout the spring to convert opponents to his perspective. Then he used deception and procedural rules to defeat all motions for changing the organization at the convention. This left the woman's suffrage advocates to try to salvage their plans for an equal rights association the next day through the Women's Rights convention.¹⁸⁷

Following the morning's hastily revised speeches, Anthony presented a resolution on behalf of Lucretia Mott, suggesting that the Committee expand its goal of female suffrage to universal suffrage, and rename itself the American Equal Rights Association (AERA).¹⁸⁸ The motion passed unanimously. The new association, which chose Mott as

¹⁸⁷ For more on the conflict, see Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 74-83.

¹⁸⁸ *Report of the Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention* (New York: Robert J. Johnston, 1866), 50.

its first president, welcomed men and women, allowed both sexes speaking and voting privileges, and while predominately white, included a small number of prominent black members, including Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Robert Purvis, and Frederick Douglass. Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry Blackwell, accepted positions as a member of the executive committee, and recording secretary, respectively. Suffrage had been a primary movement goal even before the war, but the conflict with Phillips and the AASS pushed all other issues further into the background for the national organization. The organized movement for woman's rights became the woman suffrage movement.

Shared opposition to the Fourteenth Amendment might have plastered over the conflicts between Phillips and the woman suffrage advocates in 1866. The version of the amendment that emerged after months of argument in Congress contained components offensive to both sides: while it made freedpeople citizens, it did not directly tie voting rights to that citizenship and it added the word "male" in relation to voting for the first time.¹⁸⁹ Rather than legislating black suffrage, the amendment simply punished states that did not allow black men to vote by reducing the state's Congressional representation. Abolitionists saw the Fourteenth Amendment's provisions as wholly inadequate guarantees, while woman's rights advocates objected to the insertion of gender as a seeming qualification to voting. Both sides lobbied against this language while the

¹⁸⁹ Section two of the Fourteenth Amendment includes the provision that "when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State." See "Amendments to the Constitution of the United States," 48-49.

amendment was under construction in Congress, but once it passed in June 1866, their only recourse was to campaign against its ratification on a state-by-state basis. They continued to draw on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric when arguing for more expansive understandings of national citizenship.

In exchange for Anthony's agreement to lead a campaign in New York, Phillips agreed to support the AERA with \$300 from the Jackson Fund, and \$3,000 from the Hovey. The AERA sent out teams of lecturers in mixed-race, mixed-gender groups to advocate against the Fourteenth Amendment and in favor of universal suffrage. Although Phillips ultimately failed to provide all the promised funds, when Stone and Blackwell traveled on a lecture tour in New Jersey, they went as paid agents of the AERA, arguing for woman's and black men's voting rights.¹⁹⁰

The debates over the meanings of freedom, citizenship, and political rights versus privileges during the first years of Reconstruction provided an opening many woman's rights advocates expected to use to secure universal (male and female, as well as black and white) suffrage. Although the war provided myriad examples of women's sacrifices on behalf of the national good, activists also continued to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to support their position. Under the aegis of the AERA and as individuals, activists spoke out in favor of federal amendments and changes to state laws to remove restrictions on female suffrage.

In March, 1867, Lucy Stone addressed the New Jersey state legislature, arguing for the necessity of changing the state's voter qualifications to include black men and all women. She began:

¹⁹⁰ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 90-95.

I am to speak to you of Suffrage. In any other country, it would be necessary to show that political power naturally vests in the people. But here the whole ground is granted in advance. When our fathers came out of the war of the Revolution, made wiser by those seven years of suffering, they affirmed these truths to be self-evident: "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." "Taxation without representation is tyranny."

The Declaration of Independence, affirming these self-evident truths, was unanimously adopted by the representatives of the thirteen United States. The descendants of those representatives have held these principles in theory ever since. We have called it "The Immortal Declaration." It has been read in every State, on every Fourth of July, since 1776. We have honored its authors and the day that gave it utterance, as we honor no other day and no other men. Not only we, but, the wide world round, men suffering under hoary despotisms, by a quick instinct turn their longing eyes to this country, and know that in the realization of our self-evident truths lies the charm by which their own bonds shall be broken.

New Jersey, in her State Constitution, in the very first Section of the first Article affirms that, "All men are, by nature, free and independent, and have certain natural and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness." Again in Article 2. That, "All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for the protection and benefit of the people, and they have a right, at all times, to alter, or reform the same, whenever the public good may require it."

Gentlemen will see it is no new claim that women are making. They only ask for the practical application of admitted, self-evident truths. If "all political power is inherent in the people," why have women, who are more than half the entire population of this State, no political existence? Is it because they are not people? Only a madman would say of a congregation of negroes, or of women, that there were no people there. They are counted in the census, and also in the ratio of representation of every State, to increase the political power of white men. Women are even held to be citizens without the full rights of citizenship, but to bear the burden of "taxation without representation," which is "tyranny."

"Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Not of the governed property-holders, nor of the governed white men, nor of the governed married men, nor of the governed fighting men; but of the governed. Sad to say, this principle, so beautiful in theory, has never been fully applied in practice!

Seven times in the address Stone reminded her audience about the "self-evident" nature of her claims, drawing on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric throughout her speech. While Grimké Weld wove the heroes of the Revolution into a larger narrative of Christian progress, Stone placed the sacrifices of "the Revolutionary fathers" and the deceptions of

“Tory priests” within an argument based on natural rights philosophy. Her questions about the utility of suffrage paired the characters of the Revolution with those currently working for suffrage and labor rights throughout Europe, as well as with her own AERA.

Like Grimké Weld, Stone used careful transitions between first, second, and third person pronouns to draw her listeners into a position as joint inheritors of the Revolutionary legacy, then shifted to oppositional phrases with “gentlemen” versus women and white male versus black and female would-be voters. “Our” shared fathers came out of the Revolution, and “the descendants of those representatives” create the “we” who call the Declaration immortal and honor its authors. In the opening paragraphs of her address, Stone ignored sectional divisions over founding ideals, instead describing a united America of “we” who are joined by “longing eyes” “the wide world round” in fighting despotism.

Midway through her address, Stone returned to Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, using the cultural pressures of the war to undermine the common argument that a majority of women did not want to vote:

Now, as there can be no argument against a self-evident truth, so none has ever been attempted. But ridicule, without stint or measure has been so heaped upon those who claim political equality, that many women have been induced to deny that they desire it, lest “the world’s dread laugh,” which few can bear, should burst upon them as unsexed viragos, “strong-minded women who wish to drive men to the nursery while they take the rostrum.” As, in the days of the Revolution, Tory priests sought to weaken the hands of our fathers by the Scripture, iterated and reiterated, “Honor the King,” so now the haters of human liberty hurl texts at women and do not know that the golden rule, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,” — that central truth round which all other divine utterance revolves — would settle this question in favor of women.

We are asked in triumph: “What good would it do women and negroes to vote”? We answer: “What good does it do white men to vote? Why do *you* want to vote, gentlemen? Why did the Revolutionary fathers fight seven years for a

vote?”¹⁹¹

Stone compared the “ridicule” and social conventions against women’s political participation to the “Tory priests” of the Revolution who chastised “our fathers,” collapsing past enemies and current norms into unchristian “haters of human liberty” who misused religious texts. Transitioning into the next paragraph, she separated the “our” of the Revolution’s descendants into opposing groups, positioning herself as part of a “we” of women who were the victims of oppressive critiques, and dividing the “gentlemen” in her audience from “the Revolutionary fathers.”

Stone continued her speech by inventorying the ways existing laws in New Jersey unfairly treated women in determining inheritance, property rights, child custody, taxation, and access to education. She addressed several of the most common arguments against woman suffrage, then continued her earlier historical line of argumentation by laying out the history of suffrage in New Jersey, using the previous record of woman suffrage in the state as proof of its viability and social success. Stone carefully noted that the first law allowing woman suffrage passed two days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence and praised the state’s Provincial Congress of 1776 as composed of “Quaker and Puritan elements” far superior to those who came later. She described the successful thirty-one year period when white women and black men and women voted in the state, but noted that because “New Jersey remained a Slave State,” without adequate schools, “Society retrograded” and “Slavery smothered the spirit of liberty” causing the 1807 legislature to restrict suffrage once again. Unlike Grimke

¹⁹¹ Lucy Stone, *Woman Suffrage in New Jersey: An Address Delivered by Lucy Stone, at a Hearing Before the New Jersey Legislature, March 6th, 1867* (Boston, MA: C.H. Simonds and Co., 1867), 3-24.

Weld's critique of the limitations of the founders paired with a positive trajectory, Stone's analysis moved in reverse, citing the initial strength of the New Jersey patriots that gave way to corruption from slavery's influence. In so doing, she offered the current legislators the opportunity to redeem the state, and their body, from the failings of the past through a return to their shared Revolutionary heritage.

Stone was direct in expressing her demands for universal suffrage to the assembled legislators, but the tone of her rhetoric mirrored the more conservative Revolutionary heritage rhetoric of the WNLL, celebrating the sacrifice and heroism of the founders. Following Stone and Blackwell's campaign in New Jersey, they traveled to Kansas, where the Republican-controlled state legislature had passed two changes to the state's constitution, in favor of woman suffrage and black male suffrage. The legislature wrote the two measures as separate changes, thus each required independent ratification by voters to take effect. Both propositions badly needed support from eastern activists if they were to pass.¹⁹²

The Collapse of the Universal Suffrage Coalition

The competition between working for voting rights for black men versus for all women in the late 1860s ultimately split reformers apart. Cady Stanton herself had supported a moratorium on Woman's Rights conventions during the war, over Anthony's objections. Cady Stanton's reasoning was strategic, however, rather than an ideological shift. Both women, and many of their woman's rights allies, remained committed to

¹⁹² The Kansas legislature could have merged the two changes into a single bill, thus forcing supporters of one measure to vote in favor of the other as well, rather than offering two separate ballot questions.

universal suffrage and prioritized woman suffrage over black male suffrage. At the anniversary meeting of the AERA in 1867, much of the convention was spent in heated debate between arguments for taking whatever progress was possible in the name of expediency, versus maintaining a unified demand for universal suffrage. From Kansas, Stone revised her New Jersey speech into a letter for the convention, arguing for continued unity in pressing universal suffrage and protesting the way activist newspapers had criticized those who voted against black male suffrage in New Jersey, but remained silent about those who voted against woman suffrage. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Anthony proposed resolutions decrying the Republican party's emphasis on black male suffrage as "a cruel abandonment of the slave women of the South, a fraud on the tax-paying women of the North, and an insult to the civilization of the nineteenth-century."¹⁹³ Other speakers criticized some members' willingness to cooperate with Democrats to gain support for woman suffrage. Unbeknownst to the members of the AERA, their debates at the convention were a perfect reflection of the divisions that played out in Kansas politics, and ultimately undermined both suffrage campaigns in the fall election.

The Kansas Republicans who controlled the state legislature and passed the two suffrage amendments were deeply divided between conservative and radical factions, each with large opportunistic groups. The party's previous leadership had crumbled with scandals and a suicide. Although the state was generally heavily Republican, the split within the party left both suffrage measures vulnerable. Conservative Republicans

¹⁹³ *Proceedings of the 1st Anniversary Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association, May 9, 1867, New York* (New York: Robert J. Johnston, 1867), 18.

opposed woman suffrage, while Democrats attacked black male suffrage. When Stone, Blackwell, and the AERA allied with the radical Republicans in an attempt to support both amendments, they unwittingly challenged the conservative faction's party leadership and joined forces with several self-serving and controversial characters. They simultaneously courted Democratic support, thereby undermining the trust of their radical Republican associates. Unwilling to support a campaign which paired woman's and black male suffrage, Phillips blocked the AERA from using any of the trust fund monies for Kansas, and the Association's attention was predominately focused on the implementation of black male suffrage concurrently happening under Radical Reconstruction in the south. Stone and Blackwell traveled to Kansas on their own funds, as did Cady Stanton and Anthony in September. The AERA was only able to fund one well-known speaker, Rev. Olympia Brown, through the summer of 1867, and the reformist New York newspapers (which had wide circulation in Kansas) largely ignored the campaign. Conservative Republican and Democratic papers in Kansas engaged in a series of increasingly negative attacks, each trying to set the two suffrage groups against one another through smear tactics.¹⁹⁴

Stone and Blackwell sent optimistic reports to the AERA convention in May. However, Anthony's report as the Association's Secretary at the same meeting insisted that the effort was fragile and in dire financial need.¹⁹⁵ When Cady Stanton and Anthony arrived in the fall, the situation was already desperate, and they responding by reaching

¹⁹⁴ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*. For more on the Kansas campaign, see Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 122-128.

¹⁹⁵ *Proceedings of the 1st Anniversary Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association*.

out further to Democrats. By the time the flamboyant, openly racist showman George Francis Train joined the debate, only two weeks before the election, the suffrage coalition was in shambles. Lacking the necessary local political leadership as well as outside funding and support, the Kansas campaign never successfully united supporters of black male suffrage and woman suffrage advocates. Following the dual defeats in the election, angry at Phillips's maneuvers to withhold financial support and feeling abandoned by their AERA colleagues, Cady Stanton and Anthony accepted Train's offer to finance a woman suffrage newspaper and join them on a fundraising lecture tour.

While a large number of their eastern reform friends blamed them for the defeat in Kansas, Anthony and Cady Stanton redirected their efforts into the newspaper, *The Revolution*. Longtime abolitionist and woman's rights advocate Parker Pillsbury joined Cady Stanton as co-editor, while Anthony was the paper's official owner. Train contributed start-up costs, frequent editorials, and additional financial support until he was arrested and jailed in England for supporting the Irish Fenian movement.

The tension between leaders within the woman's rights movement reflected more than simple personal ambition or animosities between particular individuals. (Although Cady Stanton and Anthony's battles with Phillips over leadership roles and financial support certainly did not help the movement.) Well-concealed, and perhaps often unknowingly, most white, middle-class woman's rights activists harbored strong feelings of their own racial or cultural superiority over non-whites, despite their simultaneous commitments to abolition and universal suffrage. Alternately, male supporters of woman's rights could believe in female advancement without necessarily rejecting patriarchy or accepting women as intellectual equals. When political expediency, partisan

maneuvering, and limited financial support forced activists to choose between (white) female suffrage and black (male) suffrage, those underlying beliefs in inequality emerged in the choices and alliances individuals made, as well as in the rhetoric they used to justify those decisions. Both sides continued to use Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, adapting it to reflect their own perspectives.

“Those Rights Were Asserted by Our Fathers”

At the tenth national convention in 1860, delegates noted the recent announcement by the New York legislature that the state would hold a convention to revise its constitution in six years and began plans for an education and petition drive. In January 1867, in advance of the election of delegates to the convention, Cady Stanton addressed the judiciary committees of the state legislature, and the AERA held meetings and conducted a statewide petition drive in favor of a universal suffrage amendment.¹⁹⁶ However, longtime abolitionist and woman’s rights supporter (and editor of the influential *New York Tribune*), Horace Greeley, privately counseled Cady Stanton and Anthony to let the convention focus on adding only black (male) suffrage to the constitution, reiterating Phillips’ earlier pronouncement that it was the “negro’s hour” and that woman suffrage could wait. Cady Stanton and Anthony refused; in response, Greeley announced he would publicly reverse his support for woman suffrage. Once the convention opened, the Committee on the Suffrage received petitions and memorials

¹⁹⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Address in Favor of Universal Suffrage, for the Election of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, Before the Judiciary Committees of the Legislature of New York, in the Assembly Chamber, January 23, 1867* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1867.)

suggesting changes in voting privileges ranging from removing the \$250 property qualification for black men, to disenfranchising impoverished men of any race, to woman suffrage. In hearings, Greeley and others reinvigorated the argument that “the ballot and the bullet go together,” insisting that black men had earned the right to the ballot by their service in the Civil War, and claiming women were unfit for suffrage because they could not fulfill the concomitant responsibility of military service.¹⁹⁷ The committee eventually issued both majority (opposing woman suffrage) and minority (favoring black male suffrage, but withholding comment on woman suffrage) reports to the full convention. Many of those who favored expanding suffrage were quick to draw on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, while those in favor of further restrictions argued that individual rights paled in comparison to the overall good of society. Committee member and woman’s suffrage advocate George William Curtis gave an address, which was later published in a collection of suffrage tracts. Curtis reminded his fellow delegates:

This summer air that breathes benignant around our national anniversary, is vocal with the traditional eloquence with which those rights were asserted by our fathers. ... Thomas Jefferson of Virginia summed up the political faith of our fathers in the Great Declaration. Its words vibrate through the history of those days. ... our fathers, compelled to explore the whole subject of social rights and duties, derived their government from what they called self-evident truths. Despite the brilliant and vehement eloquence of Mr. Choate, they did *not* deal in glittering generalities, and the Declaration of Independence was *not* the passionate manifesto of a revolutionary war, but the calm and simple statement of a new political philosophy and practice. The rights which they declared to be inalienable are indeed what are usually called natural, as distinguished from political rights, but they are not limited by sex.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ For more on the split with Greeley, see Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 269-70.

¹⁹⁸ George William Curtis, “Equal Rights for Women: A Speech,” in *Woman’s Suffrage Tracts* (Boston: Charles K. Whipple, 1869), 6-7.

Curtis continued, quoting James Otis and James Madison, before moving on to arguments based on expediency, insisting that women voters would improve the state and nation. Although Curtis and other supporters of woman suffrage succeeded in bringing the issue to a vote before the full convention, the amendment was soundly defeated, 19 to 125.¹⁹⁹ In a desperate, but ill-conceived move to discredit the suffrage committee's majority's (and Greeley's) claim that most women did not want to vote, Cady Stanton arranged to have a suffrage petition from Greeley's wife and three hundred other women presented just before the final vote. Cady Stanton's effort to publicly humiliate Greeley cemented his new animosity toward the woman's suffrage movement.

Without directly discounting the sacrifices of the Revolutionary mothers, Greeley and others who emphasized the connection between military service and voting rights effectively positioned the examples of women during the Civil War as more indicative of women's wartime contributions than the women of the previous generation. Unlike during the build-up to Independence, nineteenth-century (Northern) women had not, in large groups, participated in dramatic public demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, or embraced boycotts to prove a political (or moral) point.²⁰⁰ Although many women may

¹⁹⁹ For more on the convention proceedings, see also Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Suffrage Reports in the Convention, Letter from Mrs. Stanton," *Evening Post*, July 2, 1867; "The Convention. Petitions - Animated Debate in Committee on the Suffrage Report," *New York Tribune*, July 10, 1867; and *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 269-309.

²⁰⁰ Even the most staunch abolitionists often struggled to support the "free produce" movement, whether due to lack of product availability, higher costs, or unbelief in the efficacy of boycotts. While important symbolically, boycotts of slave-made goods was never widespread enough to produce political change. For more, see Carol Faulkner, "The Root of the Evil: Free Produce and Radical Antislavery, 1820-1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27:3 (2007): 377-405.

have experienced social costs for supporting anti-slavery, and poured countless hours into petitioning, anti-slavery, and sanitary commission activities, there were few visible images of women sacrificing and suffering for the national good. While advocates of woman suffrage continued to use the founding mothers as examples to counter Greeley-style arguments, they were also began to identify more clearly women's contributions during the recent conflict for further evidence. Other speakers, like Curtis, responded by combining Revolutionary heritage rhetoric with present social benefits, insisting that, properly understood, the Declaration of Independence was not a radical firebrand text, but rather a well-reasoned philosophy which elevated the common good. Greeley was a powerful enemy for the woman's rights movement to struggle with, but it was larger shifts in American culture, including critics' new emphasis on the connection between military service and suffrage, paired with expediency arguments, that led many activists to re-frame the way they invoked the Revolutionary legacy.

"Daughters of Adams, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry"

Cady Stanton came to the 1869 convention in Washington, D.C. as an honored invited guest, but not as an organizer. The gathering was the work of the Washington Universal Franchise Association, headed by Griffing.²⁰¹ Held at Carroll Hall, the first woman's rights convention to be held in the nation's capital met the nineteenth and twentieth of January, with Mott serving as President and Senator Pomeroy from Kansas presiding for the first portion of the morning session. Correspondents to *The Revolution* reported representatives from the Democratic and Republican parties present at the

²⁰¹ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 147.

convention, although they declined to provide names.²⁰² Although the Convention did not publish their proceedings, Cady Stanton kept a record of her speech, which she later included in her edited collection, *The History of Woman Suffrage*. Her first presentation of the address was shorter than the version she gave five months later at the AERA convention, but both opened with this deployment of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric:

Those who represent what is called “the Woman's Rights Movement,” have argued their right to political equality from every standpoint of justice, religion, and logic, for the last twenty years. They have quoted the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Bible, the opinions of great men and women in all ages.... Such arguments have been made over and over in conventions and before the legislatures of the several States. ... the same old speeches we have heard these twenty years. It would be safe to say a hundred years, for they are the same our fathers used when battling old King George and the British Parliament for their right to representation, and a voice in the laws by which they were governed. There are no new arguments to be made on human rights, our work to-day is to apply to ourselves those so familiar to all; to teach man that woman is not an anomalous being, outside all laws and constitutions, but one whose rights are to be established by the same process of reason as that by which he demands his own. When our Fathers made out their famous bill of impeachment against England, they specified eighteen grievances. When the women of this country surveyed the situation in their first convention, they found they had precisely that number, and quite similar in character; and reading over the old revolutionary arguments of Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Otis, and Adams, they found they applied remarkably well to their case. The same arguments made in this country for extending suffrage from time to time, to white men, native born citizens, without property and education, and to foreigners; the same used by John Bright in England, to extend it to a million new voters, and the same used by the great Republican party to enfranchise a million black men in the South, all these arguments we have to-day to offer for woman, and one, in addition, stronger than all besides, the difference in man and woman.

...

While in England men are coming up from the coal mines of Cornwall, from the factories of Birmingham and Manchester, demanding the suffrage; while in frigid Russia the 22,000,000 newly-emancipated serfs are already claiming a voice in the government; while here, in our own land, slaves, but just rejoicing in the proclamation of emancipation, ignorant alike of its power and significance, have the ballot unasked, unsought, already laid at their feet — think you the daughters of Adams, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, in whose veins flows the blood of two Revolutions, will forever linger round the camp-fires of an old barbarism, with no

²⁰² “National Suffrage Convention,” *The Revolution*, January 28, 1869.

longings to join this grand army of freedom in its onward march to roll back the golden gates of a higher and better civilization?²⁰³

Similar to Grimké Weld's use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to place emancipation and woman suffrage within a framework of Christian progress over time, in this speech Cady Stanton used the Revolution as a tool to locate woman suffrage as the next step in a world-wide progression away from aristocracies of all kinds (including sex) toward republican government. Moving from the success of the founders through the emancipation of Russian serfs and the end of slavery in the United States, Cady Stanton swallowed much of her usual rancor over the Fifteenth Amendment, treating it as a already accomplished step, and directing her audience to focus on the need for a Sixteenth Amendment guaranteeing woman suffrage.

Speaking to a predominately female audience, and one which was already supportive of her cause, Cady Stanton did not engage in the complicated pronoun maneuvers Stone and Grimké Weld used; reminding them of the previous two decades of arguments, there was little need to encourage her listeners yet again to identify themselves with embattled colonists.

Unlike Stone's combination of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric with universal natural rights, Cady Stanton's address and her adaptation of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric drew heavily on racialized, gendered arguments of difference. Although she paired the founding fathers with contemporary European suffrage/labor activists, as well as the Republican party's work for black male suffrage in the south, much of her

²⁰³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Speech by Mrs. Stanton," in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 348-355. See also Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *The Revolution*, May 13, 1869.

argument for a Sixteenth Amendment relied on claims of women's moral superiority to men. Cady Stanton claimed and celebrated Revolutionary-era men, "our Fathers," while simultaneously blaming men as a sex for political corruption, moral decay, and violence of many types. Indeed, she insisted: "The male element is a destructive force, stern, selfish, aggrandizing, loving war, violence, conquest, acquisition, breeding in the material and moral world alike discord, disorder, disease, and death."²⁰⁴ In order to reconcile these seemingly contradictory positions, Cady Stanton argued that the current state of society was due to men's repression of "the female element" and the increasing aristocracy of sex in American government, which was a "desecration of the last will and testament of the fathers."²⁰⁵ While the Revolution had once placed American government at the forefront of freedom throughout the world, Cady Stanton claimed that other nations, whether via female monarchs and nobles or limited woman suffrage, now left the United States lagging far behind. Delving into the racist, elitist rhetoric she increasingly relied on, she insisted that educated white women voters were the only solution that would prevent the immigrant "dregs" of other societies from further eroding the ideals of the founders.

Cady Stanton's version of racialized Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, although incongruous with the movement's earlier emphasis on equality, was, in many ways, less radical and more in keeping with new social science theories of racial hierarchies. Rather than criticize the founders, as upper-class, educated, white men, she elevated them as progenitors of a racially and culturally superior group of Americans. Responding to

²⁰⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Speech by Mrs. Stanton, 1869", in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 351.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 354.

opponents' claims about the social disruptions woman suffrage would cause, Cady Stanton combined racism with expediency and the Revolution all by insisting that the highest public good would be achieved through enfranchising particular kinds of women.

From Equal Rights to Woman Suffrage

In May 1869, the AERA held its annual convention in Steinway Hall in New York City. Although the official proceedings were never published independently, the account given by Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Pillsbury in *The Revolution* seem to be drawn from minutes recorded as the meeting progressed.²⁰⁶ Mott remained the organization's nominal president, but she did not attend the meeting and Cady Stanton chaired in her role as first Vice-President.

Following the disastrous campaign in Kansas, the failed national campaign against the Fourteenth Amendment, and Cady Stanton, Anthony, and Pillsbury's alliance with George Train, the gathering was rife with both ideological and personal conflicts. When the Committee on Organization presented its report on officers for the upcoming year, Stephen Foster objected, suggesting that those who could not fully support or properly represent an organization should resign from leadership roles within it. When pressed, he insisted that Cady Stanton's affiliation with Train via *The Revolution* made her unfit as an Association officer because of Train's support for educated, rather than universal suffrage, and her own public stance against the Fifteenth Amendment. Henry Blackwell countered with a critique of *The Revolution*, but argued that since Train was no

²⁰⁶ "Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association," *The Revolution*, May 20, 1869. See also *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 378-398.

longer financially backing the paper, Anthony and Cady Stanton were not formally associated with him, and should remain in good standing with the AERA. When the vote came, the roster of officers including Anthony and Cady Stanton passed, but not unanimously.

Later in the morning, Frederick Douglass opened his speech by referring again to the hostility toward black men in *The Revolution*, and in Cady Stanton's particular use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric:

There was in the address to which I allude [Cady Stanton's] the employment of certain names, such as "Sambo," and the gardener, and the bootblack, and the daughters of Jefferson and Washington, and all the rest that I can not coincide with. I have asked what difference there is between daughters of Jefferson and Washington and other daughters. (Laughter.)²⁰⁷

Whether or not Douglass intended his comments to be humorous, enough members of the audience found it to be either truly funny, or pointedly uncomfortable, that the record indicates laughter as the crowd's response. His comments also suggest that this was not the first time he had publically raised such a critique of Cady Stanton's racialized variant of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Douglass continued his address by insisting upon the primacy of black male suffrage and support for the Fifteenth Amendment as AERA goals, citing the horrific violence occurring in southern states.

It is difficult to gauge what effect Douglass's critique may have had on other woman's rights activists' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, particularly the racial connotations in "Jefferson and Washington's daughters." Certainly, Cady Stanton continued unabated, leaving her "daughters of Adams, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry" line,

²⁰⁷ "Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association," *The Revolution*, May 20, 1869. See also *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 382.

as well as the derogatory depictions of black and immigrant men unchanged when she presented her address to the Congressional Committee on the District of Columbia in January 1870. For the woman's rights movement, the overall consequence of the raucous May convention was the final fragmentation of the abolitionist-suffragist coalition. At the evening session, Rose proposed changing the AERA's name back to the Woman Suffrage Association, which Lucy Stone said she would oppose until black male suffrage was secured. An unnamed man then suggested the name "Universal Franchise Association," but Cady Stanton, in an ironic nod to Phillips' 1866 maneuver, declared the discussion moot on procedural grounds.²⁰⁸ The meeting continued with periodic personal jabs amid debate over the necessity of supporting or opposing the Fifteenth Amendment, and over prioritizing suffrage for one group over another. By the third day, the announced session at the Brooklyn Academy of Music became an organizational meeting for the faction in favor of continuing to work for woman suffrage. The group held a series of meetings over the course of the following week, eventually forming the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), with Cady Stanton as president, Josephine Griffing, Paulina Wright Davis, Anna Dickinson, and others as state Vice Presidents, and Rose and Anthony on the Executive Committee.²⁰⁹ The NWSA pledged itself to working for a Sixteenth Amendment to provide for woman suffrage at the national level, although,

²⁰⁸ Like the American Anti-Slavery Society's constitution, which required three-months advance notice to amend its constitution, the AERA's constitution required a month's notice. Since Cady Stanton took an active part in re-forming the Woman Suffrage Association two days later, and was the victim of Phillips's silencing on the same grounds at the AASS convention in 1866, it must have grated on her to end the proposed name change on procedural grounds. See *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 378-398.

²⁰⁹ Cady Stanton announced the NWSA's formation and officers in *The Revolution*, "Mass Meeting at the Brooklyn Academy of Music," *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869.

despite the angry pronouncements at the AERA meeting, it did not take a stand opposing the Fifteenth Amendment. The new organization allowed male members and granted them voting privileges, but barred them from holding office.

In response to the creation and platform of the NWSA, Stone, Blackwell, and other woman's suffragists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment formed the rival American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) that fall. The division certainly reflected philosophical disagreements, but was also a result of longstanding tensions between Boston and New York suffragists for primacy in the leadership of the movement, as well as personal animosities between Anthony and Stone, some of which arose from Anthony's alliance with Train. Disturbed by Cady Stanton and Anthony's racism, the overall radicalism in *The Revolution*, and still committed to the state-level strategy which brought success with women's property rights, many activists sided with Stone and the AWSA.²¹⁰

As woman's rights advocates wrestled individually and collectively with the challenges of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the place of woman suffrage alongside their emancipation work, their understanding of the meaning and legacy of the Revolution continued to shape their responses. At the AWSA's founding convention late in 1869, Hannah Tracy Cutler opened the evening session with a speech in which she reminded her audience that the toleration of slavery which led to the Civil War was a violation of the principles of the founders. This violation continued until: "At last War said to us, 'These people have not been remembered in their bonds, and our sons and

²¹⁰ For more on the NSWA/AWSA split, see Dudden, *Fighting Chance*; Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*; VanBurkleo, *Belonging to the World*, 150-155; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 154-155.

brothers are now called from us, and we must offer them upon the altar of sacrifice!’

And, wondering, we read anew the Declaration of Independence, and swore fealty to its precepts, now to be written with a pen of iron dipped in the hearts' blood of our sons.”²¹¹

Cutler continued:

But there is one thing yet to be done in order that our country may come fully within the provisions of the well-nigh inspired expression of our forefathers, "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." The women of America pay taxes for the support of the Government, and their consent should be had in matters affecting their welfare and their lives. We have been making our work known for years, but it has been to no purpose, and we have come to the conclusion that the only way to remedy the evil is to get the ballot. . . . There is nothing to be asked for now but the ballot. I shall never ask for anything less than that while I live.²¹²

In claiming that there was nothing to be asked but the ballot, Cutler was not suggesting that the movement had fully achieved its educational, legal, and vocational goals for women (the “work” the movement had “been making known for years”), but echoing increasing fears among activists that without suffrage all other gains might eventually be lost. Such concerns seemed especially fraught in light of the Fifteenth Amendment’s insertion of the word “male” in relation to voting qualifications – even activists willing to support black (male) suffrage as a step toward universal suffrage generally viewed the language of the amendment as a grave setback for women.

The trepidation over losing hard-won steps toward legal equality Cutler gave voice to bolstered the trend in both national organizations to focus exclusively on (white) woman suffrage, decisions which further alienated activists of color, labor organizers, and those primarily concerned with educational access or pay equality. The collapse of

²¹¹ “Speech of Mrs. Hannah Tracy Cutler,” in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, 773-4.

²¹² *Ibid.*

the AERA and the breakdown into rival national suffrage organizations, was a marker of how fully the movement's previous commitment to race, class, and nativity, not just gender equality, had deteriorated. Without at least a devotion to true equality in principle, if not always in action, movement rhetoric shifted increasingly toward new forms of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric that were grounded in racism and nativism, rather than a shared universal inheritance.

"Those Grand Primal Truths of Democracy"

As divisive as the split between the NWSA and AWSA was, those two organizations only represented a portion of the woman's suffrage movement nationwide. State and regional organizations could choose to affiliate themselves with either, or both, national groups, or remain entirely independent. While activists in Illinois or Ohio might choose to invite leaders from the national organizations to their conventions, local women held the offices, set the agendas for convention sessions, and controlled publication of the proceedings. In no way were they obligated to parrot the rhetorical choices of eastern speakers, and the changes in Revolutionary heritage rhetoric and the increasing racism in the movement were not immediately reflected in Midwestern convention addresses.²¹³ However, because northeastern newspapers, particularly those from New York, circulated nation-wide, activists throughout the country were forced to respond to criticisms of the movement from eastern editors, including Greeley's.

²¹³ This is not to suggest that the Midwestern movement was free from racism, simply that Cady Stanton and Anthony's new, racialized version of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric was slow to take hold.

In the Midwest, the latter part of the 1860s brought a flurry of conventions and organizing. When the Western Convention in Favor of Woman's Rights met in September 1869 in Chicago, it was the third of four woman's suffrage conventions held in the city that year. (As elsewhere, the gatherings were partially a response to the state's constitutional convention.) Anthony, Stone, and Blackwell attended, and Garrison sent a letter of support on behalf of the North East Woman's Suffrage Association, but the gathering was primarily one of midwestern delegates.²¹⁴ One of the letters read during the afternoon session was from Representative George W. Julian, from Indiana, describing his attempts to introduce bills for woman suffrage in Washington D.C., in the territories, and a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution which would have enfranchised women.

Drawing on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, Julian noted:

Ever since I was old enough to form an opinion on public questions, I have believed in the right of women to the ballot. This right depends on those grand primal truths of democracy which our fathers declared to be self-evident, and the denial of which is necessarily fatal to all government by the people. 'Taxation without representation is tyranny;' and this is only one mode of expressing the truth that the citizen who is taxed and governed without any voice in the governing power is a slave.²¹⁵

Eastern activists (and most politicians) largely stopped making dire predictions about the failure of representative government because of a lack of adherence to founding principles after the Civil War. However, Julian's letter followed the common pre-war pattern of abolitionists and woman's rights advocates: suggesting that political and social inequalities undermined the very foundation of government by the people, and comparing

²¹⁴ *Boston Traveler*, September 6, 1869; "Women in Council. Western Convention in Favor of Woman's Rights," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 10, 1869.

²¹⁵ G.W. Julian, "Letter to Mrs. Livermore," in "Women in Council. Western Convention in Favor of Woman's Rights," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 10, 1869.

disenfranchised (white) women to enslaved people. Julian's language echoed the equality-based invocations of the Revolution most common in the early movement.

Although Julian invoked the founders as the source of women (and men's) right to vote, when other speakers addressed Greeley's claim that suffrage was linked to the ability to defend the nation, they turned not to the women of the Revolution, but to criticisms of contemporary men as unwilling or unfit warriors. They recounted stories of wealthy men who hired substitutes for themselves during the Civil War, or hired doctors to falsify medical reports claiming they were unfit for service. Activists also commented on the high rates of general physical disqualifications from service among eastern (urban) men, rightly pointing out that such men still qualified for full political rights. These contemporary, race-neutral, but regional and class-driven arguments were the opposite of the elitism appearing in eastern activists' Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Moving from critiques of wealthy men's lack of patriotic sacrifices to a broader response to those who paired masculine martial abilities with suffrage, Lucy Stone asked "who perils her life when the soldier is born?" and noted: "the mother is his quarter-master until he is capable of finding his own rations."²¹⁶ Whether or not the men of the Civil War were as brave and self-sacrificing as those of the Revolution, both generations of men were indebted to women, and could not have performed the military service which supposedly entitled them to suffrage without women's support. Arguments that described such gender interdependency helped to counter not only Greeley-type opposition, but also replied to

²¹⁶ "Women in Council. Western Convention in Favor of Woman's Rights," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 10, 1869; "The Women in Council. Western Convention in Favor of Woman's Rights. Second Day's Proceedings - Speeches by Mrs. Roberts, Bishop, and Others," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 11, 1869.

critics' who based their claims on predictions of social upheaval. Like political arguments nationwide, they relied more on current and forward-looking perspectives, rather than historical grounding in the Revolutionary past.

"These Points He Studiously Avoided"

At the same time that activists within the woman's rights movement began moving away from Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in favor of claims based on women's support of the Union war effort, race privilege, and women's supposed moral superiority, interested commentators outside the movement increasingly identified the connection with the founders as an essential component of the pro-suffrage platform. When opponents limited their counter-arguments to religious principles and failed to address the Revolution-based portion of women's claims, book reviewers and lecture reporters began to criticize their presentations as incomplete. At the constitutional convention in Vermont in 1869, a special committee appointed to consider the issue of woman suffrage produced a report favoring woman suffrage. In their explanation, the committee primarily justified their decision using Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, while also citing the additional religious, natural rights, and expediency arguments made by John Stuart Mill, Henry Ward Beecher, and George W. Curtis from recent publications.²¹⁷ Following the committee's presentation of the report to the convention body, delegate C.C. Dewey responded, arguing against their findings. Dewey also offered his arguments in a public lecture. A reporter for the *St. Albans Messenger* summarized Dewey's position: that woman's sphere had already been enlarged beyond its Divinely appointed boundaries, his

²¹⁷ "Report on Woman Suffrage," *Watchman*, August 4, 1869.

opposition to married women owning any property, and his argument that suffrage was not, in fact, a natural right. The *Messenger's* article continued:

Nowhere did he attempt to answer any of the main points made by the friends of the measure. Nowhere did he show that the declaration of our fathers that 'all just governments must depend on the consent of the governed' could not apply to woman as well as man. Nowhere did he attempt to disprove that other fundamental principle of our Government that 'taxation without representation is tyranny,' except by denying to woman all property rights whatsoever. Nowhere did he recognize any difference between a 'government of the people, and by the people, and for the people,' and governments like those of Scripture times which depended on that long since exploded falsehood and fraud of the 'divine right of kings to rule.'" These points he studiously avoided.²¹⁸

The *Messenger* noted that while the audience appreciated Mr. Dewey's presentation, most seemed to find his logic lacking, and that "some were heard to say that if such were the only or best grounds of opposition, or if the logical sequences of opposition are feudalism and slavery, that then the proposed 'reform' must be worthy of their serious consideration." Despite the flaws in Dewey's reasoning, a majority of the convention delegates agreed with his position, voting down the proposed change.²¹⁹

In 1869, Horace Bushnell, a theologian and former Congregational minister, published a brief volume titled *Woman Suffrage: The Reform Against Nature*. In it, he used religious, historical, and philosophical arguments to argue against woman suffrage, but in favor of greatly expanded educational and vocational opportunities that he claimed would best reflect women's divinely appointed sphere. Perhaps responding to the absence of other anti-suffrage responses on the issue, Bushnell devoted his second chapter to the argument that women were entitled to vote based on natural rights and the ideals of the

²¹⁸ "Mr. Dewey's Lecture," *St. Alban's Messenger*, October 22, 1869.

²¹⁹ "Woman's Rights in the Vermont Legislature," *Watchman*, December 1, 1869.

Revolution. He noted, “In a campaign raised for woman suffrage, it was to be expected that the argument would take its beginning at our American doctrine of rights; or, as is sometimes put, of equal rights, natural rights, rights of natural equality.”²²⁰ However, he insisted, the philosophy on which those doctrines of rights were based were fatally flawed; Rousseau and Voltaire, and even Locke, were mistaken in their ideas about liberty, because they did not include the intentions of a divine creator. Bushnell continued:

[O]ur fathers of the American revolution, long ago taken by these catch-words of liberty, fell into their use, more easily than was to be desired, in their manifestoes and public declarations. And the phraseologies thus adopted were what Mr. Choate very properly... called ‘glittering generalities.’ They are just what led Mr. Calhoun into his miserably delusive state-rights sophism.... Bitterly have we paid for this very cheap imposture of philosophy, in our late dreadful war of rebellion, and now it is to be seen, whether it may plunge us again down this other, deeper gulf of woman’s suffrage.²²¹

Bushnell further insisted that the basic claim that women are the equals of men and therefore have an equal right to vote contained two “quite plainly untrue conclusions”: women were not equal to men (although he insisted that they were neither inferior nor superior), and second, that even men had no natural right to suffrage.²²² Rather, he argued, even in the United States, male suffrage had always been predicated on particular factors such as property ownership, tax paying, military service, or because of class and

²²⁰ Horace Bushnell, *Woman Suffrage: The Reform Against Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1869), 32.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²²² *Ibid.*, 32-48. For an expanded analysis of Bushnell’s work, see Vacca, “A Reform Against Nature,” 56-62.

educational status. In relation to the slogan: “taxation without representation is tyranny,”

Bushnell argued:

How little government there has been in the world that had even a thought of representation as connected with taxation? – has there been no government, therefore, but only wrong? ... Our fathers in the revolution had a great deal to say of being taxed by the Parliament without being represented in it, and seemed almost to hang the vindication of their revolt on this one point of grievance. But there was a peculiarity in their protest which neither they nor we have always observed. ... It was really a protest against having this great, new world farmed and used, for the benefit of a little, far-off patch of island in the German Ocean, which had no consequence and could have no continental future at all. ... The real meaning was that such and so great a people are not to be kept for the fleece! And yet these same colonial fathers and patriots were every year taxing thousands, both of men and women, without any thought of a wrong, in not giving them a chance of representation.”²²³

The response to Bushnell’s work was quite mixed, even among conservative newspapers.

The *Albany Evening Journal* responded to the book with a positive review, noting: “Dr.

Bushnell thinks to take the conceit out of Americans. He agrees with Choate in

characterizing as ‘glittering generalities,’ several expressions commonly used with

parrot-like garrulity, and without any proper sense of their meaning.”²²⁴ Similarly, the

reviewer for Greeley’s *New York Tribune* agreed with Bushnell, insisting: “A great deal

of confusion of ideas about ‘natural rights’ and ‘natural equality’ has been brought into

our political literature by the unfortunate fondness of our Revolutionary ancestors for the

use of well-sounding phrases borrowed from the liberal philosophy of France....”²²⁵

Other papers mocked Bushnell’s suggestion that women improve their condition by

reducing their “false modesty” in courtship and taking the lead in proposing marriage to

²²³ Bushnell, *Woman Suffrage*, 40-1.

²²⁴ “Women Suffrage,” *Albany Evening Journal*, June 16, 1869.

²²⁵ “Dr. Bushnell on the Woman Question,” *New York Tribune*, June 25, 1869.

men, criticized his reading of history, or found his position on suffrage inconsistent with his arguments for greatly increasing women's educational and vocational opportunities.²²⁶ A few commentators directly challenged Bushnell's position on natural rights and suffrage, accusing him of lacking any faith in political freedom, or secretly not believing in suffrage for anyone.²²⁷

Bushnell was a prolific author. He followed his suffrage volume two years later with a four-hundred page treatise on parenting which emphasized women's roles as Christian mothers and nurturers in the family.²²⁸ Although Bushnell's overall corpus (most of which were theological works) formed a "new theology" that helped to define several influential Progressive-era anti-suffrage ministers, the radicalism of many of his suggestions in *A Reform Against Nature* tempered its appeal as a model for anti-suffrage arguments in the 1870s and 80s.²²⁹

Outside of Bushnell's text, opponents of woman's rights, and particularly woman suffrage, continued their previous pattern of ignoring activists' uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, whether equality driven or not. In the changing post-war culture that increasingly emphasized white, native-born, Protestant women's moral and cultural

²²⁶ For examples, see "Matrimonial Advances," *Oakland Daily Transcript*, July 26, 1869; "Literary: New Books," *Cleveland Leader*, July 16, 1869; "Books, Authors, and Art," *Springfield Republican*, June 19, 1869.

²²⁷ "Dr. Bushnell on Men and Women," *Massachusetts Spy*, August 13, 1869; "Letter from 'Warrington,'" *Springfield Republican*, July 24, 1869.

²²⁸ Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871.)

²²⁹ For more on Bushnell, see Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) 19, 83; and Vacca, "A Reform Against Nature."

superiority, religious arguments against woman suffrage emphasized the threat that political engagement posed to female purity and familial duties. Depicting enfranchisement as a worldly burden, rather than a political privilege neatly sidestepped the issue of rights and the heritage of the Revolution. Countering such arguments forced advocates of woman's rights to alter their own rhetoric accordingly.

Conclusion

The decade surrounding the Civil War and Reconstruction brought opportunities, but primarily disappointments to advocates of woman's rights. The cadre of leaders in Boston and New York who had previously organized national conventions splintered and divided from long-standing abolitionist allies. Activists' efforts to contribute to the political solution to the Civil War through the Women's National Loyal League, and the enormous support women around the nation provided for the war effort still had not changed the dominant public opinion about women's capacities and rights to full citizenship. Despite the magnitude of the changes that rocked the woman's rights movement, amid the ebb and flow of arguments driven by expediency, racism, and sexism, the rhetoric of the Revolutionary heritage remained a potent symbol of equality. Yet, for northern and Midwestern women, their own sacrifices and work for the Union during the Civil War provided equally relevant claims to the rights of full citizenship. Following the war, activists and authors outside the national organizations continued to gather in conventions and publish appeals, still frequently drawing on the founders as examples, but also incorporating new languages of race and class privilege.

CHAPTER 5

THE CENTENNIAL, RACISM, AND THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF MEMORY: 1873-1890

On May 14, 1870, the *Woman's Journal*, the official organ of the AWSA, published an article by Thomas Wentworth Higginson titled "Uses of the Declaration of Independence." The article informed readers that much like axioms in geometry, the principles of the Declaration "are taken for granted. Inasmuch as all the legislation of the country is supposed to be based in them – they stating the theory of our government, while the Constitution itself only puts into organic shape the application – we must all begin with them." Even the infamous Rufus Choate "could only sneer at them... which was equivalent to throwing down his brief and throwing up his case." Higginson continued: "Now the whole doctrine of Woman Suffrage follows so directly from these same political axioms.... This is the use of the 'Declaration of Independence.' Women, as a class, may not be quite ready to use it. It is the business of this journal to help make them ready. But so far as they are ready, these plain provisions are the axioms of their political faith."²³⁰

Five years later, the second annual report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee (WCEC) encouraged American women to loan family heirlooms from the Revolution to a Philadelphia fundraiser in support of the upcoming Centennial Exhibition celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the release of the Declaration. Committee

²³⁰ T.W.H., "The Use of the Declaration of Independence," *Woman's Journal*, May 14, 1870. Although the author is listed only as T.W.H., Higginson's affiliation with the AWSA, and his later use of the same "axiom" metaphor for the Declaration strongly suggest that he was the author.

president Elizabeth Duane Gillespie combined a call to remember the sacrifices of the Revolutionary generation, with exhortations to improve on the legacy they left:

Let us gather around us, if possible, the portraits of those who ninety-nine years ago were struggling for our freedom. Animated by the example of the men and women of the Revolution, we must hope for a better inheritance for our native land than now belongs to it. Let us devote our lives to restoring the purity and simplicity of 1776, and at the same time open the way for women to earn their bread by other means than the needle. Let each woman who has strength and means aid a weaker sister, and thus show to the world that the women of 1876 have signed their own Declaration of Independence.²³¹

Whether as “axioms of political faith” or a symbol of the “purity and simplicity of 1776,” the Declaration of Independence was a popular topic in the years leading up to the nation’s centennial. Gillespie and the members of the Women’s Centennial Executive Committee embraced the planned celebration of the nation’s founding as an opportunity to advance women’s educational and employment opportunities. Other woman’s rights advocates saw no reason for women to participate in the national observance, and insisted “It is as absurd for women to think of taking part in the Centennial celebration as it was for the slaves to rejoice in the exalted position of their masters.”²³² The differing opinions on the meaning of the centennial for American women mirrored divisions in the woman’s rights movement nationwide. Despite the divergence in their perspectives, these groups all drew on variations of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to support their work, at times producing surprising overlaps and collaboration, while at other times creating tension. Yet, by the end of the next decade, arguments based on racism, class privilege, and

²³¹ Elizabeth Duane Gillespie, *Second Annual Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee* (Philadelphia: Thomas S. Dando, Steam-Power Printer, 1875.)

²³² Margaret W. Campbell, “No Centennial for Women,” *Woman’s Journal*, July 25, 1874. See also H. Baxter, “No Centennial for Women,” *Woman’s Journal*, July 19, 1873.

female moral superiority effectively replaced invocations of collective memories of the founding era. Changes within the woman's rights movement, combined with nation-wide shifts toward commemorating local heritage, and the legal battles over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments permanently altered movement rhetoric and strategies. When suffragists did make arguments based on "rights," they more often invoked the political philosophy of natural rights, and when they drew upon the nation's past as a justification for woman's rights, the Constitution became the focus of their attention, rather than the Declaration.

The Fractured Woman's Rights Movement

The 1870s was a tumultuous time for reformers and their fractured movement. There were seeming successes in 1869 and 1870 when territorial legislatures in Wyoming and Utah passed woman suffrage laws, however, those changes came without the participation of either national suffrage organization. Women actively voting in the western territories served as shining examples for eastern suffragists, but both were tenuous victories subject to repeated challenges.²³³ Three key post-war developments

²³³ Female suffrage in Wyoming and Utah was far from secure. In 1871, partisan fighting in the Wyoming legislature prompted local Democrats to try to repeal woman suffrage. The governor vetoed the bill, and a further vote to override the veto failed by a single vote. In Utah, the issue of Mormon polygamy prompted persistent federal challenges to female suffrage, eventually resulting in Congress's passage of the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act, which disenfranchised male and female supporters of polygamy, and effectively ended female suffrage in the state. In 1895, guarantees of equal voting rights were incorporated in the new state constitution, and woman suffrage resumed. See Beverly Beeton, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995), 99-115; ———, *Women Vote in the West: The Woman Suffrage Movement, 1869-1896* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986.)

interacted to bring dramatic changes to the woman's rights movement in the 1870s: the expansion and commercialization of the lyceum circuit; increasing diversity among reformers over the focus and extent of their radicalism; and new economic positions and challenges for women due to industrialization. These tensions deepened the NWSA/AWSA split and spawned the creation of a host of regional suffrage organizations and non-suffrage women's groups, as well as driving myriad personal disagreements between reformers, and shaped the nature of woman's rights rhetoric throughout the subsequent decades.

Postbellum advances in transportation, communication, and advertising dramatically reshaped the lyceum lecture circuit from its antebellum beginnings as a locally controlled movement for education among civic-minded men into "the most popular form of public entertainment in the postwar period" among both genders, complete with booking agencies and extraordinary revenues.²³⁴ Unlike the hostility female speakers such as the Grimkés faced in previous decades, by the 1870s women orators, and woman's suffrage as a topic, were an accepted and anticipated part of lyceum seasons. One 1869 advertisement boasted over one hundred men and women available to present on the subject, and woman's rights advocates likely constituted a majority of the female speakers.²³⁵ Either as independent agents, or as contracted speakers for lecture

²³⁴ Ray, "What Hath She Wrought: Woman's Rights and the Nineteenth-Century Lyceum," 183–213.; ———, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States*; Tetrault, "The Incorporation of American Feminism," 103-5.

²³⁵ Tetrault, "The Incorporation of American Feminism," 103-6. Other female presenters included actresses, authors, vocalists, and women famous for their exploits during the Civil War.

bureaus, a large portion of woman's rights activists participated in the lyceum circuits at least periodically, some consistently, throughout the 1870s.

Many of the well-known suffragists supported themselves or their families with their lecture work, although their earnings varied substantially. This left them little time or inclination for unpaid speeches at reform gatherings. Simultaneously, the growth of state and local suffrage organizations and women's clubs produced a large increase in the number of conventions being held each year, thereby further heightening competition for popular orators. As a result, woman's rights conventions increasingly struggled to compete with each other and with higher paying venues. Admission fees that in the past had paid for the publication of convention proceedings were redirected to pay for prominent speakers, in the hope that fame on the lecture circuit would translate into larger crowds at the conventions' evening fundraising sessions. Even Stone, Anthony, and Cady Stanton insisted upon payment for their speeches, including when close friends (or they themselves) helped to organize a convention. The overall consequence of the expansion in the lyceum circuit was a mass diffusion of the woman's rights message but also of the movement's leadership and resources. The move from letters and annual conventions to the lyceum platform placed new demands on woman's rights rhetoric. Speakers hoped to persuade, but exhortation and radicalism had to be entertaining if a lecturer hoped to be well paid.

The second major postbellum challenge to the woman's rights movement came from the diversity of reform agendas among movement leaders. Industrialization and economic changes after the Civil War created increasingly visible groups of disadvantaged women. In the postbellum period, many woman's rights advocates

prioritized higher pay and access to jobs and education far above suffrage. Organizations that focused on improving conditions for women disagreed about the best coalitions, partisan alignments, and strategies to achieve that goal. Under Cady Stanton and Anthony's influence and unofficial leadership, the NWSA maintained a persistently radical approach to woman's rights when compared with the AWSA. In the early 1870s, Cady Stanton and *The Revolution's* critiques of traditional marriage, combined with the NWSA's brief affiliation with the flamboyant Victoria Woodhull culminated in a publicity disaster, drawing a cloud of sexual impropriety over both organizations.

Beginning in 1870, Woodhull and her sister's newspaper, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, began to supplant *The Revolution* as the primary organ of the radical suffrage wing and Woodhull served as highly visible donor and member of the NWSA and the suffrage movement generally. New York papers relentlessly detailed Woodhull's exploits, including dramatic courtroom family squabbles and her attacks on marriage and support for the "free love" movement. The papers at times collapsed all suffragists into the label "Woodhull's Women" and at others urged the national organizations to publicly censure her. By mid-1872, even the NWSA largely repudiated Woodhull after she attempted to co-opt the May convention to advance her own newly-formed Equal Rights Party and attempted to blackmail movement leaders into supporting her. In November, 1872, the *Weekly* published the lurid details of a sexual scandal involving Henry Ward Beecher (president of the AWSA) and noted NWSA member Elizabeth Tilton (wife of *Revolution* publisher Theodore Tilton.) The scandal caused membership drops of up to thirty percent in some pro-suffrage organizations, building owners to refuse to rent facilities for suffrage meetings, and, according to some scholars, hampered growth of the

movement for two decades to come.²³⁶ Through the *Weekly*, the sisters also championed workers' rights and the cause of socialism, printing essays from Karl Marx and public appeals from American and European socialist organizations. They especially defended the members and work of the Paris Commune in 1871, when the mainstream American press was most critical in its reports on the upheavals in France.²³⁷ The *Weekly's* pro-socialist position further alienated Woodhull from the majority of the suffrage movement, and gave weight to criticisms from opponents equating free love, socialism, and woman's rights.

Despite the loss of supporters due to the Woodhull debacle, the NWSA and its affiliated organization continued to support a strategy Woodhull championed, known unofficially as the "New Departure."²³⁸ Arguing that the franchise protections of Fourteenth Amendment implicitly included women, the New Departure tactics involved

²³⁶ See Amanda Frisken, "Sex in Politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American Public Woman, 1870-1876," *Journal of Women's History* 12:1 (2000): 89-111; ———, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution: Political Theater and The Popular Press in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone*, 164-178; ———, "White Women's Rights, Black Men's Wrongs, Free Love, Blackmail, and the Formation of the American Woman Suffrage Association."

²³⁷ Samuel Bernstein, "American Labor and the Paris Commune," *Science and Society* 15:2 (1951): 144-62. For more on Woodhull and the American socialists, see Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.)

²³⁸ Historians have alternately credited popular political beliefs, Virginia and Francis Minor, and Woodhull with first proposing the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment which grounded the New Departure strategy. See Ellen Carol DuBois, "Taking the Law Into Our Own Hands: Bradwell, Minor, and Suffrage Militance in the 1870s," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*; Angela G. Ray, "The Rhetorical Ritual of Citizenship; Angela Ray and Cindy Koenig Richards, "Inventing Citizens, Imagining Gender Justice: The Suffrage Rhetoric of Virginia and Francis Minor," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93:4 (2007): 375-402.

bringing lawsuits against election officials who refused to register women as voters (in the case of Virginia Minor), and in voting and then protesting any resulting adverse consequences (such as Anthony's arrest, trial, and conviction.) The New Departure campaign engaged women around the nation from 1869 through the mid-1870s, including Sojourner Truth, Abigail Scott Duniway, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and hundreds of others. It was radical in its civil disobedience, yet along with women's legal voting in Wyoming and Utah the strategy demonstrated that women would vote, and could successfully bring greater decorum to often unruly polling stations. However, both state and federal courts disagreed with the suffragists' interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment: Anthony was found guilty via a directed verdict and fined \$100, state and appellate courts denied any wrongdoing on the part of registrars who refused to register women, and in 1875 the United States Supreme Court settled the issue by ruling against Virginia Minor in *Minor v Happersett*.²³⁹

Concurrent with the New Departure strategy, the NWSA's primary goal was achieving suffrage on a national level via a Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This focus on a federal amendment meant they had to respond to a number of still controversial states' rights arguments, particularly claims that only states had the right to define voters, not the federal government. Since opponents could interpret the Declaration of Independence in ways that undermined their position (particularly in the style of Bushnell and Choate), activists increasingly turned to the Constitution, its

²³⁹ United States Supreme Court, *Minor v. Happersett*, 88 U.S. 21 Wall. 162 (1874). In addition to the sources above, see also Melanie Susan Gustafson *Women and the Republican Party, 1854-1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 51-53; VanBurkleo, "Belonging to the World," 150-155, 160-162.

Amendments, and federal laws when they argued for suffrage as a political right or privilege of citizenship. As NWSA members repeatedly testified, Congress had already demonstrated its authority to protect a category of national voters through the insertion of “male” in the second section of the Fourteenth Amendment. Similarly, they insisted that whether or not Congress intended the citizenship described in the first section of the Amendment to protect women, if federal laws could strip a woman of citizenship for marrying a foreign man and living abroad, then, by default, all women who had not entered such marriages were citizens, entitled to the voter protections of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In keeping with their federal approach, the NWSA held their conventions in Washington D.C. every year, petitioned Congress, and worked to gain supporters in both the Democratic and Republican national committees. Alternately, the AWSA remained committed to a state and local level approach to suffrage, working for changes to voter qualification laws when states held constitutional conventions, accepting smaller gains as positive steps forward (such as school board suffrage), petitioning state legislatures, and pushing for amendments by referendums submitted to voters. Because they did not generally engage in the federal versus state authority debates that members of the NWSA did, AWSA members, and supporters of woman suffrage who did not affiliate with either national organization were less abrupt in their turn from the Declaration to the Constitution.

While pursuing divergent strategies to full woman suffrage, leaders of the NWSA and AWSA also attempted to build their associations across class lines. They frequently encountered working-class women who were eager to work for women’s advancement

but valued economic gains far above voting rights. However tenuous their individual economic situations were, NWSA and AWSA leaders staunchly maintained middle-class perspectives on reform, which limited their partnerships with working-class women. Anthony founded a Working Woman's Association in 1868 and *The Revolution* decried poor conditions and low wages, however she, like most suffragists, refused to prioritize pay equity or other workers' demands on parity with voting rights. As a result, working-class women largely ignored Anthony's association, formed their own organizations and worked with labor-minded reformers and socialists, rather than suffragists.²⁴⁰

Myriad other woman's groups sprang up around the country in the late 1860s and 1870s, focused on woman's rights outside the arena of suffrage. In 1873, the New York women's organization Sorosis issued a call for a Woman's Congress that drew over 400 delegates from eighteen states. The meeting led to the formation of a national Association for the Advancement of Women. The group held Women's Congresses and met semi-annually for the next several decades. Suffragist Mary Livermore served as president for the first two years, with fellow suffragist Julia Ward Howe in the presidency after her, yet the organization's stated mission was not suffrage but rather "to receive and present practical methods for securing to women higher intellectual, moral and physical conditions."²⁴¹ In 1874 representatives from temperance associations in seventeen states

²⁴⁰ Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 77-97. For additional work addressing Anthony's work with the Working Woman's Association, see Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); and Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*.

²⁴¹ *Historical Account of the Association for the Advancement of Women, 1873-1893* pp 7-8. See <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/4075359?n=8&imagesize=1200&jp2Res=0.5&printT>

gathered to form the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which quickly grew into an expansive, well organized, and well-funded organization. These various clubs and reform associations expounded a view of women grounded in beliefs about sexual difference and female moral superiority; their emphasis on the ways women were different from men left them little use for gender-neutral rhetoric or shared national heritage.

Among the women's associations founded in the early 1870s were also a number of local and state groups which became the organized anti-suffrage movement. Composed largely of elite urban women who had personal connections to powerful men and who already held leadership positions within social reform organizations, anti-suffragists saw the expansion of the franchise as a threat to their own positions of privilege. Using the same language of racialized, Christian, female moral superiority that justified their own purported abilities to "uplift" other races and classes, the antis claimed that women's persuasive influence would be lost by mingling in politics, and that suffrage would be a terrible burden to place on American women. Despite their anti-political and domesticity-driven arguments, the organized movement supported traveling speakers, petition drives, and sent association members to testify at state and federal hearings.²⁴² Although antis occasionally published articles claiming that women had the

humbnails=no For more on the early years of the women's club movement, see Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, and Patricia Dawn Robinson, *From Pedestal to Platform: The American Women's Club Movement, 1800-1920*, (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1993).

²⁴² For more on the women's anti-suffrage movement, see Jane Jerome Camhi, *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism, 1880-1920*, (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1994); Thomas J. Jablonsky, *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States, 1868-1920*, (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1994); Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman*

“right not to vote,” much like the religious critics of earlier decades, the opposition movement generally ignored suffragists’ claims to the vote as a right of citizenship or political principle. Responding to this new wave of gendered, racialized, anti-suffrage rhetoric pushed advocates for woman’s political rights further away from the equality-based language of Revolutionary memory.

Historians of the struggle for woman suffrage often ignore movement history during the 1870s and 80s, categorizing those decades as part of a period labeled the doldrums (generally 1868/9 to 1890), an indication of how fractured the woman’s rights movement had become and how little progress they achieved on the national level. However, the same changes that impeded the movement also prompted activists to reshape their rhetorical approaches along with their political strategies, thus making it a crucial period of adaptation. By the time the AWSA and NWSA reunited in 1890, Revolutionary heritage rhetoric had been almost entirely abandoned, replaced by arguments grounded in recent Constitutional amendments, female moral superiority, and race, class, and nativity privilege.

Local Heroes and Reconstruction

The end of the Civil War produced many changes in Americans’ uses of collective memories of the Revolution. The pantheon of national heroes expanded to include those from the recent conflict and Revolutionary heritage rhetoric appeared less

Suffrage, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Manuela Thurner, “‘Better Citizens Without the Ballot’: American AntiSuffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era,” *Journal of Women’s History* 5:1 (1993): 33–60; and Vacca, “A Reform Against Nature.”

frequently in partisan debates. Once the Union victory ended the longstanding tensions over whether or not the nation-of-states would hold together, cultural memory at the federal level began to shift to celebrations of regional diversity. Postbellum Congressional art commissions changed from a pre-war fixation on the Revolution and colonial period to sculptures and paintings depicting notable regional heroes and events, ranging from Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans to scenes of warfare with indigenous people in the West.²⁴³ The attention to regionalism also fed a postwar trend toward collapsing the Revolutionary and colonial periods into a personalized, but distant, past. As part of the centennial celebrations, Revolutionary war descendents founded the hereditary association the General Society of the Sons of the Revolution. They were followed by the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (1889), the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (1890), the Colonial Dames of America (1890), the National Society of the United States Daughters of 1812 (1892), the General Society of Colonial Wars (1893), the General Society of Mayflower Descendants (1897), and numerous other associations.²⁴⁴ Such groups emphasized familial connections with colonial, founding era, and pioneer ancestors – rather than focusing on a national heritage of heroism condensed into collective memories, these societies claimed individual actors and events as personal inheritances. This trend was particularly evident in the state buildings at the Centennial exhibition, as objects from the

²⁴³ Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration,” 374–402. See also Kammen, *A Season of Youth*.

²⁴⁴ For more on the rise of hereditary societies and their forms of Americanism and patriotism, see Woden Sorrow Teachout, “Forging Memory: Hereditary Societies, Patriotism, and the American Past, 1876-1898” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003).

early colonial period to the present mingled in displays united only by their connection to a particular location.²⁴⁵

The post-war shift toward regional histories only solidified southerners' antebellum trends toward re-interpreting the Revolution through localist lenses. Southern white politicians laid new claims to the heritage of the Revolution in the mid-1870s, particularly in connection with the Centennial. White South Carolinian political leaders, who had been an exception to the general Southern antebellum and war-time reinterpretations of the Declaration of Independence, reversed themselves and began to embrace the Declaration as a justification for anti-federal and extra-legal violence.²⁴⁶

Northern collective memories of the Revolutionary War similarly interacted with current local politics and commemorations of more recent heroes – even Independence Hall in Philadelphia mingled portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and local

²⁴⁵ On the colonial revival's collapsing of historical events into a single "past" as well as the Centennial state buildings especially, see Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 25-150.

²⁴⁶ Andrew Slap notes that antebellum South Carolina politicians, unlike other Southerners, generally refused to endorse the natural rights arguments of the Declaration of Independence, even when presented with interpretations which seemed to bolster the secessionist position. Rather, they argued that the Declaration was a (flawed) philosophical, rather than legal, document, and laid no foundation for the structure of the nation. Andrew Slap, "The Spirit of '76: The Reconstruction of History in the Redemption of South Carolina," *Historian* 63:4 (2001). See also Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 57-58.

soldiers killed fighting for the Union with those of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.²⁴⁷

Outside of the mainstream press and major political parties, however, alternative forms of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric remained popular. The abolitionist press, which after the Civil War endured as advocates for black civil, political, and educational rights, continued their invocations of the founding principles as justification for racial equality. Labor and working-class activists also sustained their uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, including the newly organized American socialist party and its supporters.²⁴⁸ The postbellum rise of labor unrest, along with financial crises, the violence of the continuing revolutions in Europe, and the flood of immigration left a majority of Americans highly suspicious of socialism and any form of labor radicalism. Although ideologically woman's rights activists shared many goals with labor reform groups, the suffragists' class standing, and focus on political rights, frequently led to efforts to disassociate the two movements, particularly after the disaster of the Paris Commune in 1871.²⁴⁹ The Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in the radical labor press provided another

²⁴⁷ Mires, *Independence Hall in American Memory*, 124-5. For more on the trend toward collapsing colonial, Revolutionary, and early national histories, see Clarke, "Old Fashioned Tea Parties," and Kammen, *A Season of Youth*.

²⁴⁸ On the use of Revolutionary memories in the radical press, see especially Janice Hume, "Lincoln Was a 'Red' and Washington a Bolshevik: Public Memory as Persuader in the Appeal to Reason" *Journalism History* 28:4 (2003): 172-81; and ———, *Popular Media and the American Revolution: Shaping Collective Memory*, (New York: Routledge, 2013).

²⁴⁹ In 1871, a group of socialist and leftist Parisians established their own government in Paris, in defiance of a national election outcome favoring monarchists and an attempt by the French government to disarm the city following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Labeled the Paris Commune, they controlled much of the city for just over

impetus for some woman's rights activists to reshape their own arguments. Alternately, activists who participated in multiple movements were likely to continue their invocations of the founders, regardless of which audience they addressed at a given time.

When the early woman's rights advocates modeled the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments on the Declaration of Independence, they attracted a great deal of attention to the nascent movement, but the use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric in and of itself was not a demonstration of radicalism. By the mid-1880s, activists who invoked the Declaration risked being seen either as outdated in their arguments, or, consciously or not, placing themselves in company with some of the most radical groups in the nation, and well outside the rhetoric of mainstream political conversation.

"This Great Exhibition on This Great Anniversary of the Greatest Event of the World"

One way national Revolutionary heritage rhetoric continued in the postbellum period was as a symbol of unity and reconstruction. Amid still festering sectional and partisan divisions and the economic swings of the late 1860s, politicians and

two months, until the French Army recaptured the city. Thousands of Parisians, both supporters of the Commune and those caught in the occupied city, were killed in the conflict, and large portions of the city were damaged by fires. The movement was especially notable for its inclusion of women. For more on the Commune, see Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "Commune of Paris", accessed August 12, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Commune-of-Paris-1871>. On women and the American socialist movement, see Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*.

On the American mainstream press reaction to European socialism in the early 1870s, see Bernstein, "American Labor and the Paris Commune." On American anxieties about the labor movement generally, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). For more recent work on the connections between American efforts to restrict suffrage and fears of socialism, see Patrick G. Williams, "Suffrage Restriction in Post-Reconstruction Texas: Urban Politics and the Specter of the Commune," *The Journal of Southern History* 68:1 (2002): 31-64.

commentators around the nation began discussing the meaning and celebration of the upcoming hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. While several cities played prominent roles in Revolutionary history, as Representative Charles O’Neill argued, “There is no place so suited for the exhibition as the city of Philadelphia. . . .let us have this great exhibition on this great anniversary of the greatest event of the world in that place where that great charter of freedom was made and proclaimed.”²⁵⁰ In March 1871, Congress created an un-funded Centennial Commission charged with planning a celebration to be held in Philadelphia in 1876. The Commission incorporated and formed a Centennial Committee and Board of Finance, which began making plans and preliminary fundraising through sales of shares of corporate stock. In 1873, President Grant enlarged the scope of the celebration via a proclamation changing the event to an international exhibition, and although the event still lacked any federal funding, the Secretary of State sent official invitations to governments around the world.²⁵¹ When the Senate, divided along partisan lines, continued to delay federal funding for the Exhibition and stock sales failed to gather meaningful support, the Board of Finance formed a Women’s Centennial Executive Committee (WCEC), openly expressing their confidence in the women’s abilities as fundraisers and boosters. Elizabeth Duane Gillespie, a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin, and well known and well connected in Philadelphia from her work during the Civil War as matron of a

²⁵⁰ “The Centennial Exhibition. Remarks Thereon by the Hon. Charles O’Neil,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 7, 1871.

²⁵¹ On the development and general history of the Centennial Exhibition, see Brown, *The Year of the Century*; Post, 1876.

military hospital and with the Sanitary Commission, served as the Women's Committee president.²⁵²

The Centennial Committee initially promised the WCEC a portion of the main building to use as a display space for women's work in exchange for their fundraising efforts. Rather than simply a collection of handicrafts, Gillespie and the Women's Committee imagined an exhibit that would demonstrate women's talents as inventors and skilled workers in the developing industrial and professional trades. During the war, Gillespie had become familiar with the hardships many working-class women faced. Under the aegis of the Women's Branch of the Philadelphia Sanitary Commission, she organized a local out-work sewing system for military wives which reversed the trend of passing work through contractors, thereby doubling the wages the seamstresses received for their work.²⁵³ Ten years later, Gillespie and other members of the WCEC paired Centennial patriotism with a vision of the Exhibition as an opportunity to work for women's educational and vocational equality.

Although the exhibition was initially conceived as a celebration of the nation's history, it transformed into demonstrations of modern American industrialization, technology, and superior (white, Protestant, middle-class) culture. Historical displays clearly communicated that the sacrifices of heroic founders (from the colonial period forward) were important components of American exceptionalism. Re-creations of their primitive circumstances provided the perfect counterpoint to help visitors better appreciate the machinery and labor saving devices which dominated the exhibition

²⁵² Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance*, 270-276.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 110-111.

grounds. The strand of woman's rights activism which the WCEC deployed fit neatly into this model: young, attractive female workers operating steam engines, publishing newspapers, and displaying their patented inventions demonstrated women's intellectual and industrial capabilities in the new American economy, while still maintaining their middle-class femininity.

Preparing for the Exhibition was a mammoth undertaking, and enormously expensive. Partly through real conviction, and partly, perhaps, as a shrewd marketing strategy, the Centennial Committee and the WCEC presented the celebration and their fundraising efforts as filial duty to acknowledge the sacrifices of the founders and as a unifying balm that could heal the wounds of the recent war. In addition to buildings devoted to specific industries, the Exhibition planners offered space for each state to present a unique display. Using a commercialized version of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, the Women's Committee insisted that just as the thirteen colonies joined together in 1776, so the women throughout the states needed to come together to support an 1876 demonstration of American greatness, particularly the great accomplishments of American women. Gillespie stated in the first annual report: "We have before us the raising of the value of women's work, and, dearer to us than that, the assurance that even now our Southern sisters are one with us in our work, and the hope that, through it, peace may be a dweller within our borders."²⁵⁴ Peace and reunification therefore could come vis-à-vis a nationwide sisterhood of women, raising their collective position through patriotic fundraising for the Centennial celebration. WCEC officers helped to form state

²⁵⁴ *First Annual Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), 2.

and local auxiliary chapters around the nation, and sent out frequent Addresses to bolster support in states whose fundraising lagged behind. Writing to the women of Florida, but also to women throughout the South, Ellen Call Long, Commissioner for Florida in the WCEC's Auxiliary Association wrote:

The invitation of the 'Auxiliary Committee' to the women of the South to aid in glorifying our country's greatness is not a courtesy extended, it is a recognized right to which we are admitted. At Lexington, Camden and Yorktown our sires fought side by side, and gave their strength and lives to the *whole* country. In the city of Philadelphia, on the 4th of July, 1776, Congress *resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole*, to consider and to pledge themselves to the maintenance of a treasonable act; and [in signing the Declaration of] Independence,' Carroll, Jefferson, Lee and Rutledge put in jeopardy their lives equally with Hancock, Adams, Livingston, or Franklin. Therefore, by their valor and the shedding of their blood, our forefathers secured to us a birthright in this broad land, and it is our rightful heritage, which to reject is to entail countless evil upon our children, more direful than the vengeance of an unsatisfied Nemesis. We are the Nation's, and the Nation is ours. Whether our forefathers landed on New England's rockbound coast or Louisiana's sable shores, it was the one principle of freedom they sought and upheld, - making the new home an Eden of plenty and loveliness. We were one people then, - we are one people now. ...

A feature of the great exposition is to be a department exclusively for woman's work. ... Every woman can weigh for herself the advantages to her sex which must come from such an exhibition. But, deeply as we are interested in the success of this measure, so fraught with good to woman, there is a higher, grander object for us all to aim at in this celebration, which embraces men and women alike in its blessings.

Four years of civil war have left deep wounds in many hearts all over our broad land. To heal these wounds and to restore true peace and harmony is the noblest work that ever a beneficent God intrusted to women.²⁵⁵

Like other reformers' uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, Long's invocation of the founders was a call to action – the nation's dutiful daughters had an obligation to act in order to honor their "rightful heritage." However, rather than advocating work for political or civil rights, her message to the women of Florida was a summons to support

²⁵⁵ *Second Annual Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee* (Philadelphia: Thomas S. Dando, Steam-Power Printer, 1875), 20-25.

the Centennial Exhibition for the good of the country. Rather than using pronouns to make statements inclusive across gender lines, Long created generational divisions between past and present, while reinforcing the unity of each generation. By using specific names and battles associated with specific states, Long reinforced her argument that the founders were not an amalgamated mass, rather they were heroes who consciously fought “side by side” for the greater good of all, and deliberately united themselves into a whole. Jointly shared “our sires,” and “our forefathers,” rose above sectionalism; thus “their valor” created a heritage which the current generation was obligated to protect by likewise moving away from regional divisions.

Long’s descriptive place language (New England’s “rockbound coast” and Louisiana’s “sable shores”) reflected the postwar trend toward celebrations of local and regional distinctiveness, mirroring the Exhibition’s plan to have separate displays for each state. At the same time, her appeal positioned women throughout the nation as members of a single, homogeneous class, with a shared devotion to sex and country. Long’s rhetorical use of not only abstract references to founding fathers but also to specific battles and individuals similarly followed changes in the dominant uses of Revolutionary heritage in reform rhetoric throughout much of the country.

Through published appeals and private correspondence, the WCEC and state auxiliaries proved adept at raising public support for the upcoming Exhibition, and in boosting state legislatures’ contributions for the event. As the first annual report noted, although the women faced a “Herculean task” in some areas, the various states needed to work together “for the good of their common country, animated with the thought that, if the men of the Revolution were brave and long-suffering, the women were cheerful and

self-sacrificing.”²⁵⁶ The state of Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia, pressured to support the Exhibition in large part by the WCEC’s collection of 82,000 local signatures in favor of funding, jointly contributed \$1.5 million dollars.²⁵⁷ However, the Exhibition remained in dire financial need until Gillespie and thirteen associates traveled to Washington D.C. in the summer of 1875 where they addressed the Senate’s Appropriations Committee and presented letters from women around the nation expressing support for the celebration. Congress responded in February 1876 with an additional \$1.5 million appropriation.²⁵⁸

Despite the Centennial Committee’s earlier promise to reserve space for women in the main building, the day Gillespie returned from her travels to address the Senate, she found letters from the Committee retracting the offer and suggesting that the women raise additional monies to build their own building.²⁵⁹ Following an emergency meeting and a flurry of letter writing to state auxiliaries, the WCEC determined that it indeed had the financial support to fund a separate building, and construction began early in the fall of 1875. The women’s committee suggested that communities show their patriotism by planning “social entertainments for the coming winter... of such character as to recall the times and customs of our forefathers... the hardships, privations, and patience of men and

²⁵⁶ *First Annual Report*, 5.

²⁵⁷ Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance*, 297-299.

²⁵⁸ In 1877 the Supreme Court ruled that this appropriation was in fact a loan, not a grant, and required that it be repaid by the Board of Finance, thereby eliminating the profits that otherwise would have gone to the Exhibition’s shareholders. *Post*, 1876, 13.

²⁵⁹ Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance*, 311-316.

women who were then struggling to achieve *our* independence...²⁶⁰ Through outright requests for donations, tea parties, dinner dances, and sales of silver Martha Washington medals and 10,000 “Centennial tea cups” bearing a reproduction of John Hancock’s signature, the WCEC eventually raised approximately \$175,000.²⁶¹ Beyond the \$31,000 required to construct the Women’s Pavilion, the WCEC paid Richard Wagner \$5000 to compose a “Centennial March” for the opening of the Exhibition, built an additional structure to house a kindergarten behind their pavilion, and published a collection of regional recipes presented as the *National Cookery Book*, a biographic volume titled *Worthy Women of Our First Century*, a catalog of charities run by women world-wide, and a newspaper printed on-site for the duration of the Exhibition. Titled *The New Century for Women*, the eight-page weekly was available free of charge at various distribution points around the Exhibition, and by subscription through the mail. To edit the paper, the WCEC chose suffragist Sarah Fraley Hallowell, an editor for Philadelphia’s *Public Ledger*. Although one historian has labeled *The New Century for Women* “frankly propaganda” in its portrayal of the Exhibition, and dismissed it as “a stump speaker curbed by a ruthless moderator,” because of its limited lifespan, the paper’s intended focus was on promoting the Exhibition itself, as much as on the Women’s Pavilion or larger issues of woman’s rights.²⁶² Each edition carried descriptions of selected displays and buildings from throughout the Exhibition grounds, along with

²⁶⁰ “An Appeal to the Women of Ohio,” in *Second Annual Report*, 33.

²⁶¹ Deborah J. Warner, “The Women’s Pavilion.” In *1876: A Centennial Exhibition*, 163–173.

²⁶² Brown, *The Year of the Century*, 142.

reviews of local events, correspondence, and at least a full page devoted to commercial advertisements.

The leaders of the WCEC and the *New Century* identified the Centennial as an opportunity to heal the wounds of sectionalism and simultaneously advance the place of women as the nation moved into a new century. They used Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to justify their work and to encourage women to financially support the celebration. In keeping with their focus on unification, they refused to openly support the divisive issue of woman suffrage or the national suffrage organizations. As in other parts of the movement, divisions of class and race, as well as degrees of radicalism and focus points for reform split woman's rights activists and their rhetoric. More radical woman's rights advocates deployed the memories and rhetoric of the Revolution to call for sweeping political and social changes.

"Sam Adams, Could He Speak To-day"

The anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence was not the only milestone the nation (and woman's rights activists) celebrated in the 1870s. Along with re-enactments of battles, including those at Lexington and Concord, Boston marked the centennial of the Tea Party in 1873, and suffragists assembled in New Jersey in 1876 to note the one hundredth anniversary of American women voting. Despite their lack of access to the planning or execution of the official Exhibition, radical woman's rights activists still capitalized on the gatherings of people and the opportunities to contemplate the state of the nation that the celebrations created. Comparisons with the founders might have been an ideal tool to again draw attention to the problems American women still

faced, yet, divisions between organizations and the NWSA leadership's turn toward racism blunted the power of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Instead of maintaining a rhetoric of equality, some reformers attempted to merge the growing focus on the ballot (for white, Protestant, middle-class women) as a way to improve American society with their former celebrations of the Revolution as a legacy to live up to, and a guarantor of equal rights.

One day before the actual anniversary of the event, on December 15, 1873, the AWSA gathered at Faneuil Hall and held the first celebration of the centennial of the Boston Tea Party. As the *New York Times* reported, the "sentiments uttered from the platform" were typical of woman suffrage conventions. "It was a woman's wail on account of taxation without representation, and the present they thought a peculiarly [sic] fitting time to utter it, because their grievances are much the same as that which prompted the American people to make their first overt act against the Crown 100 years ago." Although the *Times* dismissed a majority of the speeches as repetitions of the usual movement rhetoric, the correspondent gave a detailed account of Wendell Phillips' speech. Endorsing not only woman suffrage, but also temperance, and financial reform, Phillips informed his audience:

I do not believe Sam Adams, could he speak to-day, would have anything to say at all on the simple question of taxation without representation. I think if he walked the streets of Boston to-day he would have three or four principles of this kind – Maine Liquor law, woman's voting, co-operation, and a system of finance broad as the continent... I think if he lived to-day he would stand exactly where he did stand, at the very head of the van of the reformers of his age. ... If, in the great arrangements of nature, it is possible that the fathers can look down upon

their sons and daughters, they are to-day giving us their blessings under these roofs.²⁶³

Phillips' insistence that the activists who most resembled the patriots of the Revolution were those who had moved beyond "the simple question of taxation without representation," reflected his own position of leadership in multiple reform efforts, but also the competing forces within the woman suffrage movement. Like many other suffrage advocates at this time, Phillips suggested that the right to vote was grounded in social improvement (the expediency argument), even as he redefined the founders themselves as social activists, rather than revolutionaries.

Shortly before the Declaration's centennial three years later, the NWSA affiliated Toledo (Ohio) Woman Suffrage Association launched a new suffrage paper, the *Ballot Box*, edited by Sarah Langdon Williams.²⁶⁴ In its April, 1876 inaugural issue, the paper's front page ran columns on the far left and right sides of the page headed "1776" and "1876," with the first column beginning in poetry, then transitioning to the second paragraph of the Declaration. The latter column listed several grievances related to women's disenfranchisement, ending with the comment: "In its [the vote] denial to them, and moreover in their punishment for its exercise, the spirit of the Constitution has been

²⁶³ "The Tea Party. Celebration by the Women of New-England. Speeches of Wendell Phillips and Others in Faneuil Hall," *New York Times*, December 16, 1873.

²⁶⁴ Williams ran the paper from April, 1876 to May, 1878, when Matilda Jocelyn Gage took it over and it became the official organ of the NWSA, moving from Ohio to New York and changing its name to the *National Citizen and Ballot Box*. For more on the history of the paper, see Gaylynn Welch, "The Ballot Box and the National Citizen and Ballot Box, 1876-1881: An Interpretation and Document Archive," *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*. Accessed August 18, 2015. <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/was2/was2.object.details.aspx?dorpid=1002976975>.

deliberately defied....”²⁶⁵ On the third page, the editor reprinted a tract responding to the previous year’s Supreme Court ruling in *Minor v Happersett*, by Carrie S. Burnham, of the Citizens’ Suffrage Association of Philadelphia. Burnham celebrated the first portion of the court’s ruling, which clarified women’s status as citizens. However, in regard to the further finding that suffrage was not “necessarily one of the privileges and immunities of citizens of this government,” Burnham expressed outrage. She warned men that such a ruling endangered their own liberty as well, noting:

[O]ur Supreme Court is unworthy of the confidence of the American people until it shall practically learn the meaning of the sacred word Republican, and be imbued with the eternal principles of democracy upon which our government is professedly based. A declaration by it, that so grievous a wrong as the disfranchisement of one-half of its citizens exists without a remedy, in the just construction of our National Constitution and laws, is a scandal upon this government and the memory of the Fathers who framed the Constitution and the immortal Declaration of independence.²⁶⁶

Like Phillips’ transmutation of the founders into social reformers, Williams and Burnham suggested that the court had, in effect, slandered the “memory of the Fathers” and “defied” the “spirit of the Constitution” by ruling that the original intention of the framers of the Constitution had not been to enfranchise all citizens. Far from earlier uses of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric which depicted the founders as creating a legacy which was yet to be fulfilled, or as setting a flawed, but bold example of resistance to tyranny, Burnham described heroes who already possessed a “clearer conception” of equality, “expressed in the Declaration of Independence by its proclamation of the natural and divine equality of all human beings in rights.” Unable to implement these ideals

²⁶⁵ *Ballot Box*, 4-1876.

²⁶⁶ Carrie S. Burnham, “Review of the U.S. Supreme Court Decision Concerning Suffrage,” *Ballot Box*, April, 1876.

immediately, the founders' beliefs in equality were "embodied in the Constitution in its guaranty of a republican form of government to the States, leaving it to be realized in its perfection by the demand of the people and the judicial power to construe "*all law in favor of liberty*." William's column and Burnham's tract reflected both the shift toward using the Constitution over the Declaration in rights-based claims to suffrage, and the tendency to collapse events of the past, such as the Revolutionary War and the later transition from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution.

Without stretching their interpretations as far as Phillips, Williams, and Burnham, both national suffrage organizations also attempted to use invocations of the Revolution at the Centennial Exhibition to spread awareness of their cause, resulting in quiet censures from the WCEC. The NWSA rented space in downtown Philadelphia to serve as a local office, with reading rooms and a lending library of suffrage material. As submissions poured in for display at the Exhibition, the AWSA contributed a large glass case with the theme "Taxation without Representation" containing petitions and documents from the three decades of the woman suffrage movement for the Women's Pavilion's displays. The WCEC rebuffed this gesture, placing the cabinet in an area of the Pavilion inaccessible to visitors, although they included the *Woman's Journal* and other suffrage literature among the publications by women displayed for perusal. In addition to editorials commenting on women's issues, suffrage among them, the *New Century* consistently printed announcements related to women's activities, including paid advertisements for the NWSA's local offices, its convention in the city in mid-July, and the Fourth Annual Women's Congress in October. However, when the AWSA held a meeting on July 2nd to celebrate the centennial of women's voting rights in New Jersey,

the *New Century* ignored the event, although Hallowell's Philadelphia *Public Ledger* ran notices before and after the gathering. Perhaps further reflecting the WCEC's unease with suffrage demands, the AWSA meeting took place in Horticultural Hall, rather than the Women's Pavilion at the exhibition.²⁶⁷ While the speakers and events of the Women's Congress received lengthy coverage, reports on the NWSA convention came only from letters to the editor.

Woman's rights activists were divided not only in the extent to which they advocated for suffrage versus educational and vocational equality, but also in their willingness to criticize the founders or the current government for those disparities. As a quasi-governmental organization, the leaders of the WCEC had particular interests in presenting women's issues as social, rather than political problems. Alternately, suffrage organization leaders persistently reminded their audiences that the founders, while well-intentioned, left a legacy that was incomplete, or had been corrupted (depending upon the speaker) and that demanded correction.

²⁶⁷ For announcements of the meeting, see Mary A. Livermore, "Woman Suffrage Centennial," *Woman's Journal*, July 1, 1876; "The Woman Suffrage Centennial," *New York Times*, July 4, 1876; "Woman Suffrage Centennial," *Public Ledger*, July 4, 1876. While the *Times* and the *Woman's Journal* listed the location only as "Horticultural Hall," the local *Public Ledger* announcement listed the site of the meeting as "Horticultural Hall on Broad Street." Broad is a historic street and major thoroughfare in Philadelphia, and does not run through the grounds where the Exhibition was located. I have been unable to find definitive evidence of a pre-Exhibition building known as Horticultural Hall in the city, but it seems likely that the AWSA gathering was held at a location outside the Centennial grounds. Although extant descriptions of both Exhibition buildings are focused on the contents, rather than the interior design of the buildings, neither the Women's Pavilion nor the Horticultural Hall at the Centennial seems to have had open spaces suitable to accommodate a sizable audience or space for seating. It is possible that because of the steam engine and assorted machinery demonstrations in the Women's Pavilion, Horticultural Hall (either on or off the Centennial site) was a more desirable venue simply based on acoustics and more moveable displays. I have found no records of correspondence related to the meeting between the WCEC and the AWSA.

“In That State, in Those Women, Culminated the Success and Significance of the American Revolution”

The AWSA celebration of the centennial of woman suffrage in New Jersey consisted of a morning and an afternoon session, with president Lucy Stone presiding at both. Julia Ward Howe, one of the founding members of the Association, co-editor of the *Woman's Journal*, as well as president of the Association for the Advancement of Women, spoke at the afternoon meeting. After opening her remarks with a discussion of the Christian obligation to aid others, and a condemnation of wealthy people who receive without giving in return to the poor, Howe extended the obligation to political rights, arguing:

As much worse is it with those who receive liberty and do not give it, as liberty is better than money. ‘Give me liberty, or give me death!’ says Patrick Henry. He receives it. Does he give it to his slave? No. To his wife? Still less. What does he have of it then? Only one-half, - the selfish half of possession, not the joyous and generous side of sympathy and participation.

These Jerseyites, it seems, were wiser than any in their day and generation. They saw the anomaly, the contradiction, between a free manhood and an enslaved womanhood. They saw it taking effect at the sacred hearth, beside the tender cradle. And they saw their way out of it. What they received and valued as the greatest of God's gifts, they gave to their women, rational human creatures like themselves, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, only made to exemplify that peaceable and loving side of human nature whose beauty has been always felt, and whose triumph is written among the eternal prophecies which time only fulfils. Honor then, to-day, to those truly brave and generous men, who, with their own hands unbound, were not afraid to unbind the hands of their wives and mothers! Honor, too, to the women who were intelligent enough to appreciate the gift, and wise and brave enough to use it. No scandal accompanied its exercise. There was no talk in that time of the women deserting their household fires, their tender children, to fulfill their duty to the State. In that State, in those women, culminated the success and significance of the American Revolution. Remember the other states did not think so, neither did the men or the women who planned the International Exhibition of to-day think so. But it was so, none the less. And we to-day must light our torches at that very topmost flame of freedom, or they will smoke, instead of burning.

One word more, and only one. The women lost their precious right, not through any wrong committed by them. But party spirit ran high, and foreign

elements changed the character of the State, first settled by Puritans and Quakers. The women stood their ground and voted for John Adams, whose great grandson jeers to-day at their successors in the struggles against injustice. And as the State was still a military organization, and the masculine wills and muscles could carry the day, they did so, and women were disenfranchised. What a state might we have had in New Jersey if it had been otherwise! What a shining model to the other states! But the light went out, and New Jersey, with all the other states, has to-day to foot up its adjourned bill, with the interest account.

But one thing more is true. The women of that day cannot have known the value of what they held for so short a time. But in the years which have followed, years of only partial success, honesty and glory, in so far as concerns the country, men and women both have had time and space to learn its value. And when the women next hold the suffrage in their hand, they will not hold it as a curious toy, as an unaccustomed jewel, worn on a few holidays and easily lost. They will grasp it as a weapon of defense for the hearth and the household, as a tool of workmanship for building the credit of their home and their country.... If rude hands should seek again to wrest the sacred privilege from them, they will cry 'liberty or death' in such good earnest that men shall know they mean it, and repeat, that death to the woman is simply death to the race.²⁶⁸

Much like Angelina Grimké Weld's speech of a decade prior, Howe located the heritage and accomplishments of the Revolution within a framework of Christian duty and progress. She described advancement in both genders' appreciation for political rights as "the greatest of God's gifts," which, like the "peaceable and loving side of human nature," would eventually bring the fulfillment of Revolutionary principles. The overall tone of her address was optimistic – although the masculine, partisan, "military organization" in New Jersey backslid from the full "success and significance" of the Revolutionary victory; and although "the men and women who planned the International Exhibition of to-day" did not think so, inevitably, women's rights would be restored and expanded, never to be lost again.

Like Grimké Weld, Howe both criticized and praised the founders, quoting Patrick Henry by name, while leaving out explicit mentions of Washington or Jefferson

²⁶⁸ Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol 2*, 847-848.

as she elevated the “Jerseyite” legislator-founders as the wisest of their generation. While Lucy Stone’s 1867 speech to the Republican controlled New Jersey legislature blamed the corrupting influence of slavery for women’s disenfranchisement, Howe cited the more abstract power of “party spirit” and “foreign elements,” reflecting the growing shift away from partisan alignments within both factions of the suffrage movement. Her comments were a direct rebuttal to the previous speaker, Henry Blackwell, who blamed New Jersey women for selfishly following the Federalist party line against enfranchising poor white men, thereby losing their own suffrage rights in partisan retribution when the Jeffersonian Democrats came to power.²⁶⁹

Unlike many other speakers who drew on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, Howe made almost no use of pronouns to create gender or generational oppositions between sides in her address: “those women” and “the women of that day” joined “the men or the women” of the present, and the “rude hands” which might challenge women in the future remained disembodied. The only collective “we” Howe asked her audience to imagine themselves part of was the “we of to-day” who “must light our torches at that very topmost flame of freedom.”

Though she did not use oppositional pronouns, Howe made clear comparisons between the men and women of the present generation and those of the Revolutionary era. While the “truly brave and generous men” of New Jersey’s past had been replaced by generations who failed to live up to their example, the “intelligent,” “wise and brave” female voters had been succeeded by those who were even more worthy, would use suffrage to greater effect, and would defend it more vigorously. While many suffragists

²⁶⁹ For Henry Blackwell’s comments, see *Ibid.*, 846-7.

quoted Abigail Adams' well-known letters to her husband insisting on women's political equality, Howe noted that John Adams (who owed an implied debt to New Jersey's Federalist female voters) had been followed by a "great grandson [who] jeers to-day at their successors in the struggles against injustice." (Notably, when the *Public Ledger* published excerpts from Howe's speech, an editor changed the phrase to "joins us to-day, in the struggle against injustice."²⁷⁰)

Emphasizing the importance of the centennial of women's enfranchisement in New Jersey fit well with the AWSA state-by-state strategy for winning (or re-winning) suffrage around the nation. Howe's jab at Patrick Henry was blunted by her praise for the early New Jersey legislators, and in keeping with the trend toward celebrations of local heroes. That later Jerseyites were the ones who then disenfranchised their own women made her argument all the more personal to her audience, and placed the burden of resolution squarely on the sitting state legislature as well. Alternately, the national strategy of the NWSA led them to largely ignore the New Jersey anniversary.

"Declaration of the Rights of the Women of the United States"

While the AWSA celebrated the New Jersey centennial, the NWSA focused exclusively on the national gathering in Philadelphia. At the annual convention in January, Gage and Anthony presented a draft version of a new statement of woman's rights for the delegates to approve, and announced their plans for a protest at the Exhibition. The rhetoric of the convention was considerably different from the Seneca

²⁷⁰ There is no indication of whether Hallowell, or another editor made the change. See "Woman Suffrage Centennial," *Public Ledger*, July 4, 1876.

Falls' Declaration of Sentiments, as the call for convention itself reflected. The organizers (Gage and Anthony) wrote:

That property has its rights, was acknowledged in England long before the revolutionary war, and this recognized right made 'no taxation without representation' the most effective battle-cry of that period. But the question of property representation fades from view beside the greater question of the right of each individual... to personal representation. In the progress of the war our fathers grew in wisdom, and the Declaration of Independence was the first national assertion of the right of individual representation. ... But while in theory our government recognizes the rights of all people, in practice it is far behind the Declaration of Independence and the national constitution.²⁷¹

The call and the later addresses at the convention reveal just how far the movement had shifted away from its earlier forms of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. While multiple speakers mentioned the Declaration, (something to be expected even more in the centennial year), every reference paired the Declaration with the Constitution as jointly being the sources of Americans' rights.²⁷²

The replacement of the lesser ideal of property rights with the higher aspiration of personal representation was both a response to opponents and a reflection of how far the movement had progressed. By the mid-1870s, activists had made progress in their earlier demands for changes in women's property rights: in much of the Northeast, Midwest, and West married women could hold property in their own names, had a right to their own

²⁷¹ Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. 3*, 3; and "National Woman Suffrage Convention," *Patriot*, January 14, 1876; *Times-Picayune*, 1-18-1876.

²⁷² For reports describing the meeting's speeches, see "Voice of the Oppressed, National Woman Suffrage Convention, Old and New Advocates Present Result of Their Labors for the Year; Speeches by the Shining Lights; Repetition of the Oft-Told Story; Views of an Opposing Masculine," *Daily National Republican*, January 28, 1876; "National Woman Suffrage Convention," *Patriot*, January 14, 1876; and Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 3*, 3-8.

earnings, and in some cases, had rights to their children in the event of divorce.²⁷³ Just as the “fathers grew in wisdom” over the course of the war, the middle-class, white activists positioned themselves as now recognizing that the vote (justified as much by natural right, as by the demand “no taxation without representation”) trumped all other demands.

In many ways, the NWSA’s Declaration of the Rights of the Women of the United States released at the Centennial Exhibition serves as an ideal counterpoint to the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments in measuring the development and decline of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric within the suffrage movement. The 1876 Declaration lacked the radicalism, the clarity, and the egalitarian principles of the 1848 text. Unlike the Seneca Falls gathering, and the resulting document, which drew national press commentaries and critiques at the same time that it introduced the movement, the 1876 protest and circular largely failed to gain widespread attention, either positive or negative.

Gage and Anthony produced several versions of the Declaration before the NWSA printed it as a circular for distribution on July 4, 1876, at the official Centennial celebration at Independence Hall. The organization as a body endorsed the document’s main components by vote at the annual convention, and Gage and Cady Stanton began corresponding with Centennial officials, seeking permission to present a copy during

²⁷³ On changes in property laws by year and state, see Evan Roberts, “Women’s Rights and Women’s Labor: Married Women’s Property Laws and Labor Force Participation, 1860-1900” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Economic History Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 14-16, 2006). Academia.edu (http://www.academia.edu/299657/Womens_Rights_and_Womens_Labor_Married_Womens_Property_Laws_and_Labor_Force_Participation_1860_1900.) Roberts drew his data from the works of Joan Hoff and Zorina Khan. See Joan Hoff, *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*, (New York: New York University Press, 1991); and Zorina B. Khan, “Married Women’s Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790-1895,” *Journal of Economic History*, 56:2 (1996): 356.

some portion of the Independence Day events.²⁷⁴ Denied a place on the official program, Anthony, Gage, and a few colleagues managed to obtain last-minute tickets to the celebration.²⁷⁵ Immediately following a reading of the original Declaration of Independence, the suffragists rose, proceeded to the podium, and presented acting Vice President Thomas Ferry with an embossed copy of the Declaration of the Rights of the Women of the United States, then distributed hundreds of printed copies throughout the audience as they departed. Once outside Independence Square, Anthony mounted a musician's platform in front of Independence Hall and read the Declaration aloud.²⁷⁶ Unlike the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, the 1876 document drew on points of constitutional law as much as on the rhetoric of the Revolution, and made little attempt to mirror the language of the Declaration of Independence. At the moment when national attention to the Revolution and the founders was at its height, the Declaration relied on arguments grounded in difference and racism far more than Revolutionary heritage

²⁷⁴ For details of the convention and the effort to join the official program, see Stanton, et al., *History of Woman Suffrage. Vol. 3*, 19-31.

²⁷⁵ Anthony and Gage were joined by Sara Spencer, Lillie Blake, and Phoebe Couzins. Scholars disagree about whether the women gained admittance via press passes obtained through Anthony's brother's newspaper or general admission tickets; the *History of Woman Suffrage* describes them only as "tickets of admission [which] proved open sesame through the military and all other barriers." See Brown, *The Year of the Century*, 152-153; Mary Frances Cordato, "Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107:1 (1983), 131; Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. 3*, 30.

²⁷⁶ Following the death of Vice President Henry Wilson in 1875, Ferry, as President pro tempore of the Senate, became the acting Vice-President until the Hayes administration took office in March 1877. President Grant participated in the Exhibition's opening ceremonies in May, but did not attend the July 4th celebration, making Ferry the highest ranking government official available to whom the women could present their Declaration.

rhetoric of equality and natural rights. Before listing “the principles of just government, acknowledged by the United States at its foundation,” the preamble lamented the “degradation” of women’s disenfranchisement “while all men of every race, and clime, and condition,” possessed the right of citizens.

Loosely following the structure of the list of grievances at the end of the Declaration of Independence, the body of the NWSA document was structured as “articles of impeachment,” arraiging “our rulers” “for the violation of these fundamental principles of our government.” The fourth section, “Taxation without representation,” demonstrated most distinctly the movement’s shift away from Revolutionary heritage rhetoric:

Taxation without representation, the immediate cause of the rebellion of the colonies against Great Britain, is one of the grievous wrongs the women of this country have suffered during the century. Deploring war, with all the demoralization that follows in its train, we have been taxed to support standing armies, with their waste of life and wealth. Believing in temperance, we have been taxed to support the vice, crime, and pauperism of the liquor traffic. While we suffer its wrongs and abuses infinitely more than man, we have no power to protect our sons against this giant evil. During the temperance crusade, mothers were arrested, fined, imprisoned, for even praying and singing in the streets, while men blockade the sidewalks with impunity, even on Sunday, with their military parades and political processions. Believing in honesty, we are taxed to support a dangerous army of civilians, buying and selling the offices of government and sacrificing the best interests of the people. And, moreover, we are taxed to support the very legislators and judges who make laws, and render decisions adverse to woman. And for refusing to pay such unjust taxation, the houses, lands, bonds, and stock of women have been seized and sold within the present year, thus proving Lord Coke's assertion, that “The very act of taxing a man's property without his consent is, in effect, disfranchising him of every civil right.”²⁷⁷

While the section began and ended with a cloak of Revolutionary language, Anthony and Gage pointed exclusively to women’s moral superiority as both the justification for

²⁷⁷ Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. 3*, 30.

women's need to vote, and for the heightened injustice of denying them the protections of suffrage. Ignoring their own work with the WNLL and wartime cries against accepting a compromised peace, the suffragists insisted on women's opposition to war and the use of military force. Although the NWSA had sent petitions and delegates to party conventions less than a month before, the Declaration painted "political processions" and partisan struggles as evidence of masculine political corruption. While every suffrage convention included celebrations of women's small advances into government appointments such as postmistress positions, Gage and Anthony ignored female members of the "dangerous army of civilians" gaining government jobs through political patronage.

Unlike arguments that drew on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to stir a sense of patriotic affiliation with the cause in their audience, Gage and Anthony's language created distance from the past. Far from Cady Stanton's dramatic language in 1850, describing how "Our forefathers, *full of righteous indignation*, pitched King George, his authority, and his tea-chests, all into the sea..." the 1876 Declaration was cold and impersonal.²⁷⁸ Without any reference to familial, generational, or patriotic connections through personal pronouns "the rebellion" of "the colonies," seem to have little connection to "the [present] women of this country."

In the sixth section, titled "Special legislation for women," Anthony and Gage included critiques of divorce laws, remaining gaps in married women's property rights, and women's limited access to higher education, noting "many of the proudest institutions in the land deny them admittance, though the sons of China, Japan and Africa

²⁷⁸ See chapter two: Stanton, "Letter to Mary Anne W. Johnson and the Convention of the Women of Ohio," in *The Salem, Ohio 1850 Women's Rights Convention Proceedings*, 37-39.

are welcomed there.” Once again, rather than appeal to universally shared rights of citizens, or the equal sacrifices of founding mothers, their argument rested on claims of superiority driven by racism and nativism. Similarly, in the second segment “The right of trial by a jury of one’s peers,” Anthony and Gage decried all-male juries composed of the “native and foreign, educated and ignorant, virtuous and vicious.”

Rather than making a direct comparison between the Revolutionary past and suffragists’ present work as parallel struggles to overthrow tyranny, the eighth section, “Universal manhood suffrage,” suggested that monarchy and European aristocracy were perhaps justified, and in fact more reasonable than the existing American system:

[A]n aristocracy of sex, imposes upon the women of this nation a more absolute and cruel despotism than monarchy... The aristocracies of the old world are based upon birth, wealth, refinement, education, nobility, brave deeds of chivalry; in this nation, on sex alone; exalting brute force above moral power, vice above virtue, ignorance above education, and the son above the mother who bore him.

The Declaration concluded with a reminder that women had “not submitted in silence and resignation.” In the document’s closest use of traditional suffrage Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, Gage and Anthony insisted:

From the beginning of the century, when Abigail Adams, the wife of one president and the mother of another, said, “We will not hold ourselves bound to obey laws in which we have no voice or representation,” until now, woman's discontent has been steadily increasing, culminating nearly thirty years ago in a simultaneous movement among the women of the nation, demanding the right of suffrage. ... It was the boast of the founders of the republic, that the rights for which they contended were the rights of human nature. If these rights are ignored in the case of one-half the people, the nation is surely preparing for its downfall. Governments try themselves. The recognition of a governing and a governed class is incompatible with the first principles of freedom. Woman has not been a heedless spectator of the events of this century, not a dull listener to the grand arguments for the equal rights of humanity. From the earliest history of our country woman has shown equal devotion with man to the cause of freedom, and has stood firmly by his side in its defense. Together, they have made this country

what it is. Woman's wealth, thought and labor have cemented the stones of every monument man has reared to liberty.²⁷⁹

Although the *Evening Post* of New York insisted that the presentation of the Declaration was “the most important part of the day’s proceedings,” it claimed that the Associated Press had omitted any mention of the women’s actions in their reports, and Massachusetts’ *Springfield Republican* identified the presentation as “an episode which seems to have escaped general notice.”²⁸⁰ Despite the *Post*’s accusation, the *New York Times* (a member of the Associated Press) did run an article describing the protest’s interruption of the Centennial ceremony, and briefly quoted the Declaration.²⁸¹ Anthony and her colleagues distributed several hundred copies of the Declaration at the gathering, and the NWSA circulated many more through their meeting and parlors. However, when compared to the conventions of 1848, the predominating media silence on the Centennial protest denied the suffragists the variety of adversarial reprintings the original Declaration of Sentiments had enjoyed. While the New York papers the *Evening Post* and the *Daily Graphic* both printed positive descriptions of the presentation and the ensuing suffrage meeting, neither published the text of the Declaration.²⁸² The AWSA printed the Declaration in full in the *Woman’s Journal*, yet although the article ran with the title

²⁷⁹ National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration of the Rights of the Women of the United States*, as reprinted in “Good Use of the Fourth of July,” *Woman’s Journal*, July 15, 1876. See also Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage*. Vol. 3, 31.

²⁸⁰ “An Incident of the Centennial Fourth,” *Evening Post*, July 6, 1876.; *Springfield Republican*, July 6, 1876.

²⁸¹ “Woman’s Rights,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1876.

²⁸² “An Incident of the Centennial Fourth,” *Evening Post*, July 6, 1876; “How the Women Celebrated,” *Daily Graphic*, July 6, 1876.

“Good Use of the Fourth of July,” it omitted any mention of the protest, noting only that the document was read at a meeting of “Miss Anthony’s society.”²⁸³

Amid the cacophony of voices claiming, manipulating, and hawking the Revolution and the Centennial, woman suffrage justified by the Declaration of Right’s half-hearted invocation of the Founders did not stand out as radical enough to be newsworthy for most papers, nor persuasive enough to be generally adopted. In addition to declining press attention to their protests, the woman’s rights movement of the post-war period also struggled against new opponents, some of whom at long last addressed activists’ claims based in Revolutionary heritage rhetoric.

“Government by Doctrines of Abstract Right ... Involves Enormous Danger and Injustice”

Much like in the years before the Civil War, a majority of the criticism leveled at the woman’s rights movement in the postwar years was grounded in religious doctrines or arguments about woman’s essential nature. Outside of Bushnell-type dismissals of suffrage as a natural right for anyone, few opponents addressed women’s claims based on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric. Those who did generally repeated Greeley’s assertion that suffrage and potential military service were inherently linked, or returned to the pre-war discussion of how literally the statements of the Declaration of Independence should be interpreted. Occasionally, critics attempted to re-define the meaning behind Revolutionary slogans, without dismissing them outright.

²⁸³ “Good Use of the Fourth of July,” *Woman’s Journal*, July 15, 1876.

In the July 1871 issue of the popular literary magazine, *Scribner's Monthly*, the editors turned their attention in the "Topics of the Times" column to the issue of woman suffrage. The essay made three arguments against expanding women's political rights, the third of which addressed women's claims based on the principle of "no taxation without representation." Rather than using the "virtual representation" argument (that women were represented in the votes of their male relatives), in this case the author claimed that women who owned property were not the ones to be represented, but rather the property itself. Since "business men whose pursuits have specially fitted them to be the guardians of the wealth of the State," served in legislatures and also held a majority of the wealth, women could have no hope of contributing any further wisdom to the management of the collective wealth, and the property itself was well represented. Furthermore, he insisted, women who held property had neither "produced this wealth, or won it by legitimate trade," and the property was thereby represented by the votes of the men who must have first obtained the property for the current female owners.²⁸⁴ While such claims were easy enough to contradict with specific examples of women who had succeeded in business and produced their own wealth, many activists also argued with the editor's basic premise linking representation to property, rather than persons, as in the NWSA convention call above. However, the critique remained problematic because it raised the divisive issue of property owner suffrage (or the related limitation of educated suffrage) versus universal suffrage.

²⁸⁴ "Topics of the Time," *Scribner's Monthly, An Illustrated Magazine For the People*, 2:3 (1871): 316–17.

In 1879, the *North American Review* ran two sequential essays on the “Woman Question.” The first, by noted author Francis Parkman, argued against women’s political rights, once again raising the specter of socialism and insisting that interpreting the Declaration literally was dangerous radicalism. “Government by doctrines of abstract right, of which the French Revolution set the example and bore the fruits, involves enormous danger and injustice. . . . A government of glittering generalities quickly destroys itself.” Parkman insisted that governments existed to achieve the most good for the greatest number of people, and that “Neither liberty nor the suffrage are the end; they are nothing but means to reach it,” making woman suffrage “a practical question, and not one of declamation.”²⁸⁵ To prove that woman suffrage would not produce practical benefits for the nation, Parkman devoted the bulk of his article to arguing that women’s essential characteristics made them unfit for political rights, insisting that even the female monarchs often used as examples of women’s leadership capacities had actually been immoral or cruel rulers. Countering suffragists’ claims that women would uplift politics, Parkman argued that the opposite was true – women’s emotions would corrupt male reasoning, and as legislators they could lead the country into wars they, themselves, would not have to wage. Echoing Greeley, he insisted: “The right of voting and the duty of fighting should never be divorced. Women, though non-combatant, are abundantly combative when excited.”

The *Review* followed Parkman’s essay with a rebuttal the next month from noted members of the suffrage movement. In a reflection of how fractured the woman’s rights

²⁸⁵ Francis Parkman, “The Woman Question,” *North American Review*, 129:275 (1879): 303–21.

movement had become, each contributor submitted a distinct essay, rather than collaborating on a single document. In addition to defending suffrage for American women, Wendell Phillips and Julia Ward Howe both responded to Parkman and other critics' arguments that the excesses of the French revolutions proved the dangers of taking Revolutionary slogans too literally, and of allowing women into politics. Howe asked:

To what authority can the concrete institutions of government appeal, of not to the principles of abstract right? The work the French Revolution and our own essayed to do was to rectify concrete abuses by a return to the principles of ideal justice. While neither of these great efforts can be said to have been entirely successful, the measure of success which they did achieve is the most important attainment of the century which came to an end three years ago.²⁸⁶

Phillips echoed Howe's comparison of the two countries' revolutions, reminding readers:

“The precedent of our fathers, in 1776, confiscating Tory estates, covers and sanctions every act of ‘mob law,’ so called, in Paris.”²⁸⁷ In their portions of the response, Thomas Higginson and Lucy Stone reused portions of texts they had written previously, Higginson from his “Uses of the Declaration” article, Stone from her 1867 address to the New Jersey legislature. Both chose excerpts that contained Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, although Higginson's blended memory with republicanism. Taking aim at Parkman and other critics of the movement, Higginson quoted a speech from Senator Hoar, who “once pointed out... that he had never heard a man argue against it [woman suffrage] for ten minutes without abandoning all the fundamental principles of republican

²⁸⁶ Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Wendell Phillips, “The Other Side of the Woman Question,” *North American Review* 129:276 (1879): 413–46. Howe's “three years ago” comment referred to the first century after the *Declaration*, which ended in 1876.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 442.

government.”²⁸⁸ Cady Stanton invoked both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, closing her segment with the insistence that: “To deny this principle [that suffrage is a natural right] takes all significance from the great debates of the century on human rights that culminated in our civil war! In the most celebrated document which has been put forth on this side of the Atlantic, our ancestors declare that ‘governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.’”²⁸⁹ Although she identified the Declaration of Independence as “the most celebrated document” in the nation’s history, it was sufferings of the Civil War, rather than the Revolution, which demanded further shifts toward equality to honor the loss. Despite her own racist language elsewhere in arguing for white women’s superiority over black and immigrant male voters, in this case, in keeping with the position of her co-authors, Cady Stanton was firm in arguing that suffrage was a natural (and therefore universal) right.

Despite the fractured structure of the essay, the four authors were successful in presenting a unified response (to Parkman, and opponents generally) from the woman’s rights movement. Unlike pro-suffrage arguments in reform papers or small regional publication, the well-respected *Review* had a wide circulation, and, despite Phillips and Howe’s defenses of the French socialists, the essay as a whole used a Revolutionary heritage rhetoric that was not particularly radical or combative. Yet, it was also one of the last texts from movement leaders that deployed the Revolution, its actors, events, or documents as key justifications for woman’s rights. Arguments grounded in equality no longer expressed the philosophy and goals of a movement surrounded by, and at times,

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 439.

endorsing, doctrines of American exceptionalism, nativism, and white, Protestant cultural and racial superiority.

“The Descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, Are Not Even to Ask for the Right of Suffrage Lest the Scandinavians Should be Offended”

At NWSA’s annual Washington convention in 1879, Matilda Joselyn Gage informed the audience that suffragists understood the “foundation principles of our government” better than the politicians in Washington did. Responding to the argument from *Scribner’s* and elsewhere about property representation, Gage noted:

It is a curious anomaly in the history of the world that the rights of property have always been recognized before the rights of person. The revolution had for its war-cry, “No taxation without representation.” What our forefathers wanted was simply protection of property, and at the meeting of the first Congress, Washington indignantly disclaimed the intention of the colonists to frame an independent government.²⁹⁰

Gage continued her historical explanation for the tendency to place property rights over personal, citing the debates among the framers of the Constitution, and their final resolution in favor of personal rights, in contrast to English law. Thus, she insisted, those modern men who were only in favor of suffrage for tax-paying women “are more English than American.” The bulk of Gage’s address was an analysis of women’s right to vote and to serve on juries, not based on the promises of the Declaration, but on technical aspects of the Constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Matilda Joselyn Gage, “Mrs. Gage’s Speech at the Washington Convention,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 7:24 (1879): 244–46.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

In January 1880, the United States Senate and House of Representatives both allowed members of the NWSA to present arguments before their respective Committees on the Judiciary. NWSA members from around the nation were already gathered in the capital for the annual convention, and thus the association was able to send a wider range of speakers than in previous hearings. They presented 250 petitions, with over 12,000 signatures, asking for a constitutional amendment for woman suffrage.²⁹² In their testimony, the activists argued not only for women's rights to vote, but also, like Gage the year before, that Congress did, via the Constitution, and the Fourteenth Amendment, have the power and precedent to create categories of national voters. Although they referred to the founders, the Revolutionary heritage rhetoric they used was deeply laced with racism. Mary A. Stewart, of Delaware, argued: "The negroes are a race inferior, you must admit, to your daughters, and yet that race has the ballot, and why? It is said they earned it and paid for it with their blood. Whose blood paid for yours? The blood of your forefathers and our forefathers."²⁹³ Rather than turning to the Declaration, Lillie Devereux Blake carried in a copy of the Constitution and federal laws – she cited the Civil Rights Bill and the Enforcement Act as proof of women's status as citizens deserving equal protection under the law. Instead of specifically mentioning Revolutionary-era events, Blake reminded the Committee: "we ask for that which is our right. We ask it as due to the memory of our ancestors, who fought for the freedom of this

²⁹² Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage. Vol. 3*, 154.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

country just as bravely as yours did.”²⁹⁴ By using the phrase “our ancestors,” Blake invoked not only the founding generation, but also the entire colonial era and those who fought in more recent conflicts, while emphasizing the shared “Americanness” of both the delegates and their audience.

Similarly, at the 1889 NWSA convention, after railing against the unfairness and dangers of foreign born men having voting rights, while native born women remained disenfranchised, Olympia Brown argued:

When we remember that the first foot to touch Plymouth Rock was a woman's — that in the first settlement of this country women endured trials and privations and stood bravely at the post of duty, even fighting in the ranks that we might have a republic — and that in our great Western world women came at an early day to make the wilderness blossom as the rose, and rocked their babies' cradles in the log cabins when the Indians' war-whoop was heard on the prairies and the wolves howled around their doors — when we remember that in the last war thousands of women in the Northwest bravely took upon themselves the work of the households and the fields that their husbands and sons might fight the battles of liberty — when we recollect all this, and then are told that loyal women, pioneer women, the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, are not even to ask for the right of suffrage lest the Scandinavians should be offended, it is time to rise in indignation and ask, Whose country is this? Who made it? Who have periled their lives for it?²⁹⁵

Brown's references to the women of “our great Western world” and the brave “women of the Northwest” celebrated the exceptionalism of white, Pilgrim-descended women, not the universal inheritance they created by their sacrifices. Her address echoed not only the growing national tendency to collapse colonial, Revolutionary, and pioneer history into a single “past,” but also increasing nativism and concern with the influence of non-western European, non-Protestant immigrants. Indeed, what a number of newspapers found most

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 167.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 148.

noteworthy about the entire convention was Brown's assertion that Catholic and immigrant schools were in danger of replacing public schools in her home state of Wisconsin.²⁹⁶

With the transition from Revolutionary memory to a rhetoric of nativism and white, Protestant American exceptionalism, woman's rights advocates re-established a message that had a broad appeal to disinterested audiences, and simultaneously gained press attention for their speeches, conventions, and goals.

The End of Revolutionary Heritage Rhetoric

The ways in which the NWSA and AWSA responses to the anniversaries of 1876 deployed the heritage of the Revolution as rhetorical tools were indications of what was to come in suffrage movement arguments. Gage and Anthony's "Declaration," with its overall emphasis on inegalitarian claims of race and gender superiority, represented the shift away from invocations of founding principles and the Revolutionary tradition. Simultaneously, the AWSA rejection of the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in favor of a celebration of the anniversary of woman suffrage in New Jersey reflected a transition toward identifying specific women from the colonial and founding eras as exemplars of female morality as much as patriotism.

²⁹⁶ See for example: "Advocates of Woman Suffrage. Held Their 21st Meeting at Washington - Letter of Regret from Elizabeth Cady Stanton - Address by Senator Blair," *Springfield Republican*, January 22, 1889; "Woman Suffrage Convention," *Sun*, January 22, 1889; "Woman Suffrage. Opening Session of the Twenty-First Annual Convention," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 22, 1889; "Woman Suffragists," *Boston Herald*, January 22, 1889; *Elkhart Daily Review*, January 22, 1889.

After more than two decades of tension between the NWSA and the AWSA, Anthony and Stone began leading their organizations toward reconciliation in the late 1880s. Over several years, and many rounds of negotiation between committees from both groups, the two associations eventually merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890. The new organization allowed local affiliates to pursue either regional or national strategies, but the NAWSA itself, under Anthony's initial leadership, continued to prioritize the federal amendment path laid out by the NWSA.²⁹⁷ While Carrie Chapman Catt and a new generation of leaders soon emerged, the choice of a national focus, their alignment with the WCTU, and the necessity of responding to the growing anti-suffrage movement dictated that speakers elevate certain rhetorical choices over others. In such a climate, no place remained for secular, class- and race-neutral Revolutionary heritage rhetoric that argued for equal inheritances of rights for all Americans.

The woman's rights movement of 1848 had become a series of movements by the late 1880s, despite the AWSA/NWSA reunification. Suffragists in local, regional, and national organizations embraced a white, native-born, Protestant, middle-class depiction of gender difference as the justification for women's voting rights. When legal or political arguments were needed, the Constitution supplanted the Declaration as the most likely guarantor of citizenship rights. Less radical middle-class women created educational clubs and worked for increased access to schools and trades. Black and working-class women were largely shut out of the former groups and formed their own

²⁹⁷ For more on the NWSA/AWSA merger, see Kerr, *Lucy Stone*, 224-228. Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, 145-166; Anthony and Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 4, 158-174.

women's clubs and mutual aid societies. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric and arguments grounded in equality were replaced by racism, nativism, classism, and declarations of female moral superiority.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

On a January evening in 1838, Mr. Amasa Walker debated Mr. T.P. Smith at the Boston Lyceum on the question: “Would the condition of society and woman be improved by placing the two sexes on an equality in respect to civil rights and duties?” This question, which prioritized the good of society first, with the good of woman secondary, lay at the heart of Americans’ debates over women’s political and civil rights for the rest of the century, and beyond. Walker argued in the affirmative, and reminded his audience “of the injustice of taxing the property of females, while they were shorn of their civil privileges. They were not represented, and – ‘taxation without representation’ was the origin of the war of the revolution.”²⁹⁸

Walker’s language – grounded in the shared heritage of the Revolution – was a common rhetorical approach in the mid-nineteenth century. In the decades before an organized woman’s rights movement appeared, American activists, male and female, used Revolutionary memories to advance a number of causes, and those who gathered at Seneca Falls made similar use of the legacy of the founding era when they held a convention in 1848 to begin an organized woman’s rights movement. As strong-minded female abolitionists and other reformers also became woman’s rights advocates, they relied first on Revolutionary heritage rhetoric to legitimate their efforts, to attract attention to their cause, and to motivate other women to join them.

²⁹⁸ “Discussion at the Boston Lyceum,” *New-Bedford Mercury*, 1-19-1838, Vol. XXXI, No. 31, 4.

One of the common opposition responses to the first generation of women's push for equality was the argument that, at least in the United States, women's lot in life was already superior to men's: once married, women's needs were provided for by hard-working husbands; they were represented in government by their male relatives; and they were free to live sheltered lives focused on their divinely appointed callings in their families. Woman's rights activists used both modern and Revolutionary examples to demonstrate the fallacy of those idealized accounts. Many speeches included stories of desperate wives left unable to support their children when their husbands' became lazy or drunkards, virtuous women driven to ruin because they could not earn a living wage, widows living in poverty while their sons inherited the fortune that had once been theirs, and countless female intellectuals stymied for want of an education. Beyond dramatic accounts of specific women, activists used the Revolution to counterpoise the positions of American women generally with suffering colonists oppressed by king and Parliament.

The Declaration of Sentiments approved at the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 listed eighteen grievances, and called for woman's rights advocates to work for improvement in women's political, educational, and civil rights, and for changes in social and religious mores. By 1890, the movement, fractured though it was, had made meaningful progress in all these areas. Thirty-three states and territories had laws granting married women legal rights to their own earnings, and thirty-five allowed married women to own their own businesses as sole traders (independent of their husbands' control).²⁹⁹ Women were admitted to the bar, or practiced law informally, in at

²⁹⁹ Evan Roberts, "Women's Rights and Women's Labor: Married Women's Property Laws and Labor Force Participation, 1860-1900" (paper presented at the annual meeting

least five states; several Protestant denominations had ordained female ministers; and numerous women had established successful medical and dental practices. Women had suffrage rights in school and municipal elections in various locations, and full suffrage in Wyoming.³⁰⁰ Regional and national suffrage convention speakers celebrated these victories and lauded the individual women involved, as did Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's *History of Woman Suffrage*, (the first three volumes of which were released in 1881 and 1883). Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, deployed in woman's rights tracts, legislative petitions, convention addresses, fundraising efforts, and Congressional testimonies, helped to achieve these gains. Yet, by the late 1880s, such rhetoric had all but disappeared from movement dialogue, replaced by claims of (white, native-born, Protestant) women's moral superiority, and class and race privilege. While suffragists sometimes celebrated particular heroines from the American past, they collapsed Revolutionary figures together with women from the colonial and early national periods – combining Molly Pitcher and Lydia Darrah with Pocahontas and Sacagawea.³⁰¹ By the

for the Economic History Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 14-16, 2006). Academia.edu (http://www.academia.edu/299657/Womens_Rights_and_Womens_Labor_Married_Womens_Property_Laws_and_Labor_Force_Participation_1860_1900.) Roberts drew his data from the works of Joan Hoff and Zorina Khan. See Joan Hoff, *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*, (New York: New York University Press, 1991); and Zorina B. Khan, "Married Women's Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790-1895," *Journal of Economic History*, 56:2 (1996): 356.

³⁰⁰ In 1890, women could no longer exercise their previous rights to vote in the Utah and Washington territories, due to the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887 and a Washington Territorial Court ruling in 1888, respectively.

³⁰¹ Stories of Sacajawea emerged with an 1893 edition of the Lewis and Clark journals in anticipation of the centennial of their expedition in 1893; the woman's rights movement

turn of the century, heroines from the Civil War added to the pantheon of “the inspired women of the past” described in pro-suffrage history texts such as Kate Sweetser’s *Ten American Girls from History* (1917), and Grace Humphrey’s *Women in American History* (1919).³⁰²

Beyond the woman’s rights movement, memories and claims to the legacy of the Revolution were also successful parts of voting campaigns for poor white men in the 1830s, in garnering support for secession among antebellum Southerners, and in supporting the war effort during the Civil War in both the North and South. Why then did it fail to draw widespread support for the key issue of woman suffrage? Why did movement critics so often fail to respond, and the general public refuse to act, on women’s claims to the political privileges of the Revolutionary heritage?

A somewhat simplistic answer would be that Americans’ commitment to maintaining gender roles (particularly in the arena of political participation) outweighed their dedication to fulfilling the vision of the founders as activists presented it. Exploring the question more thoroughly, I have suggested here that the movement’s own divisions

embraced her as a symbol of female heroism (and, like Pocahontas, her demonstration of indigenous women’s “natural” affinity for the civilizing influence of white American men). NAWSA affiliates supported efforts to further commemorate her role in Lewis and Clark’s expedition. On the emergence of Sacagawea stories in American popular culture, see Donna J. Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea: A Euro-American Legend* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1996); Sally McBeth, "Memory, History, and Contested Pasts: Re-Imagining Sacagawea/Sacajawea," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003); Asebriet Sundquist, *Sacajawea & Co.: The Twentieth-Century Fictional American Indian Woman and Fellow Characters: A Study of Gender and Race* (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991); Ronald W. Taber, "Sacagawea and the Suffragettes," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1967).

³⁰² Grace Humphrey, *Women in American History*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919); Kate Dickinson Sweetser, *Ten American Girls from History* (New York: Harper, 1917.)

over which goals to pursue and which women's needs took priority undermined the influence of their invocations of the Revolution. These tensions ultimately resulted in dramatic changes in their rhetoric, introducing racism, nativism, and classism, and thus corrupting the very ideals of equality that gave references to the founding their persuasive power. As seemingly "self-evident" and irrefutable as the heritage of the Revolution was, it was also inextricably linked to the radicalism of the movement's stated commitment to racial and class equality – equal access to education, work opportunities, and bodily integrity, as well as political rights.

To the extent that woman's rights activists pursued inclusive, egalitarian goals with the stated intent of benefitting society, their movement (and their use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric), was successful. Reminders of the sacrifices and heroism of Revolutionary mothers and fathers helped stir women to action, as the record of conventions, petitions, and fundraising demonstrates. Similarly, invocations of the founding generation were integral parts of the petitions, tracts, and Congressional testimonies that persuaded state legislators to change laws and state constitutions in favor of women's legal rights. By the time the first generation of activists stepped aside or passed away, they had achieved enormous gains in overturning many legal forms of coverture and social prohibitions on women's activities. While these advances certainly benefitted middle-class white women disproportionately, rights to control individual earnings, child custody, and access to expanded labor and education opportunities were issues also valued by black and white working-class women, as well as elite whites. However, to the extent that members of the woman's rights movement chose to focus exclusively on suffrage (while downplaying all other concerns) their efforts, and their use

of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric, had few victories, and many disappointments, in the period between 1848 and 1890. While activists certainly described benefits to society from woman suffrage, their arguments were too often tinged with exclusionary, inegalitarian tones.

Any analysis of rhetoric inevitably raises issues of audience reception and thus questions remain: were memories of the founding era more, or less, persuasive than arguments grounded in Christian principles? Than appeals to republicanism and natural rights? One of the complexities (and delights) of movement texts is authors' willingness to use a multiplicity of rhetorical styles and arguments, even when claims in one portion of a text contradict later statements (what one scholar has described as "arguing in the alternative".)³⁰³ Resolving questions of preeminence in persuasive effects would require an array of sources with insights far beyond simple newspaper accounts – after two days of addresses at a woman's rights convention, only the most dedicated diarist might be expected to parse out which arguments she or he found most appealing. Thus, many aspects of Americans' reception of woman's rights activists' use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric lie outside the scope of this project. Despite this limitation, activists' repeated use of certain language and imagery, along with the republication and frequent commentaries in newspapers is indicative that such rhetoric was striking a chord.

Revolutionary heritage rhetoric was one of the first tools woman's rights activists used as they began to present their ideas to their communities, beginning with the famous Declaration of Sentiments, which mirrored the Declaration of Independence. They freely

³⁰³ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 194. Although Dudden was specifically describing Cady Stanton's combination of egalitarian and race/class/nativity-based arguments, a number of other movement leaders used similarly contradictory rhetorics in their suffrage texts.

admitted that their arguments were repetitive, yet speaker after speaker drew on memories of the Revolution to rouse and engage their audiences. Reformers' ongoing use of Revolution-based rhetoric demonstrates their beliefs that such arguments remained useful, even as others around them used similar arguments for very different purposes. When activists needed to be most concise and most persuasive, they relied on emotional, patriotic language invoking the nation's birth.

Activists' early commitment to gender equality was paired with equally radical (if imperfect) visions of race and class equity. During the Civil War, they used these arguments to exhort women to support the war effort through political means, as well as traditional home front activities. They hoped to expand this political engagement into ongoing support for woman suffrage after the war. When hostilities ceased, a renewed woman's rights movement coalesced for a brief period, then fragmented, with each side ultimately prioritizing one particular groups' needs over another, or one type of rights above others. The movement's use of Revolutionary heritage rhetoric followed this trajectory, appearing most powerfully when the movement was most inclusive, then declining and fading away when those devoted to suffrage, educational access, conditions among the white working-class, and African American rights divided. References to the Revolution and such slogans as "no taxation without representation," could be inclusive or exclusionary, depending upon how they were used and who used them. In the opening decades of the woman's rights movement invocations of the shared Revolutionary heritage reflected a larger commitment to racial, class, and gender equality. "No taxation without representation" changed from a demand for universal suffrage to one which, at times, encompassed only property-owning (and therefore middle or upper-class),

presumably white, women. Simultaneously, radical labor activists and American socialists continued and expanded traditional working-class invocations of the founding, creating an even more radical version, particularly when paired with some woman's rights activists' calls for reforms in marriage and divorce laws. Revolutionary heritage rhetoric largely disappeared from the organized suffrage movements' arguments by the late 1880s, but its decline began when some activists began using racialized or Socialist variations in the immediate postbellum period. Activists' invocations of the founding era were inseparably linked to their own commitments to universal equality: when portions of the woman's rights movement morphed into a (white) woman suffrage movement, they abandoned that equality along with Revolutionary heritage rhetoric.

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National Aegis (Worcester, MA)
National Anti-Slavery Standard
New Bedford Mercury (New Bedford, MA)
New Century (Philadelphia, PA)
New-York Daily Tribune (New York, NY)
New York Herald (New York, NY)
New York Times (New York, NY)
New York Tribune (New York, NY)
North American Review (Boston, MA)
Oakland Daily Transcript (Oakland, CA)
Ohio State Journal (Columbus, OH)
Patriot (Harrisburg, PA)
Pennsylvania Freeman (Philadelphia, PA)

Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)
Plain Dealer (Cleveland, OH)
Portland Advertiser (Portland, ME)
Public Ledger (Philadelphia, PA)
The Revolution (New York, NY)
Rochester Advertiser (Rochester, NY)
Scribner's Monthly (New York, NY)
Seneca County Courier (Seneca Falls, NY)
Springfield Republican (Springfield, MA)
St. Alban's Messenger (St. Alban's, VT)
Sun (Baltimore, MD)
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