The Hard Earned Vote:

7 Decades Was Too Long

Francois Botha



Florence Nightingale Graham reading on her porch outside of Toronto, Canada.[2]

Circa 1905 (age 27)

A time with style.

One thing people thin they know about women in the early 20th century is that they had style. It was certainly a time when things started to change and move away from the stiffness of Victorian decorum. A new beauty industry sprung up. It was finally a time for women of all ages to be seen.

"The successful female entrepreneurs of the era often worked in the business of beauty—one of the first parts of the economy where a woman could be investor, owner, and boss."[1]

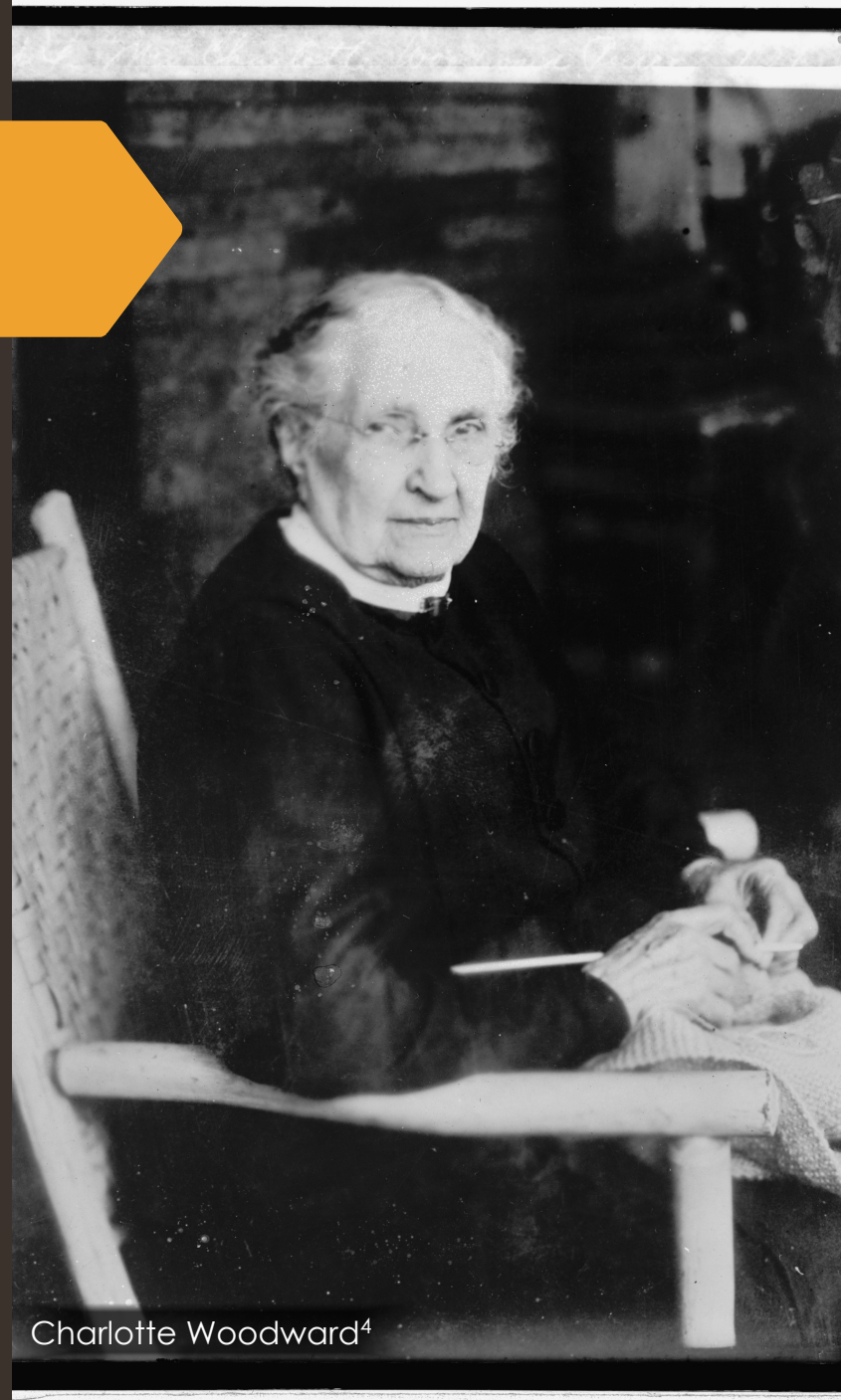
[1]Collins, Gail. "13: Turn of the Century: The Arrival of the New Women." Essay. In *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*, 289. New York, NY: HarperCollins e-books, 2009.

[2]Johnson, Louise. "Florence Nightingale Graham (Young Elizabeth Arden) 1905." Louise Claire Johnson, April 11, 2021. https://louiseclairejohnson.com/words/florencenightingalegraham-youngelizabetharden.

A lifetime's work

But what they should understand about the suffrage movement is that it took so long for women to get the vote that nearly an entire generation of suffragettes would not see it happen in their lifetime. Women had gained many other freedoms; work, sports, socializing with the men, land ownership. Yet they remained unable to vote until 1920. Many heroic women had passed on.

"In November 1920, Charlotte Woodward, who had driven as a teenage girl to the famous gathering at Seneca Falls, cast her first vote for president of the United States. She was the only person who had been there at the beginning and lived to see the end."[3]



Charlotte Woodward[4]

[3]Collins, Gail. "14: Reforming the World: Suffrage, Temperance, and Other Causes." Essay. In *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*, 306. New York, NY: HarperCollins e-books, 2009.

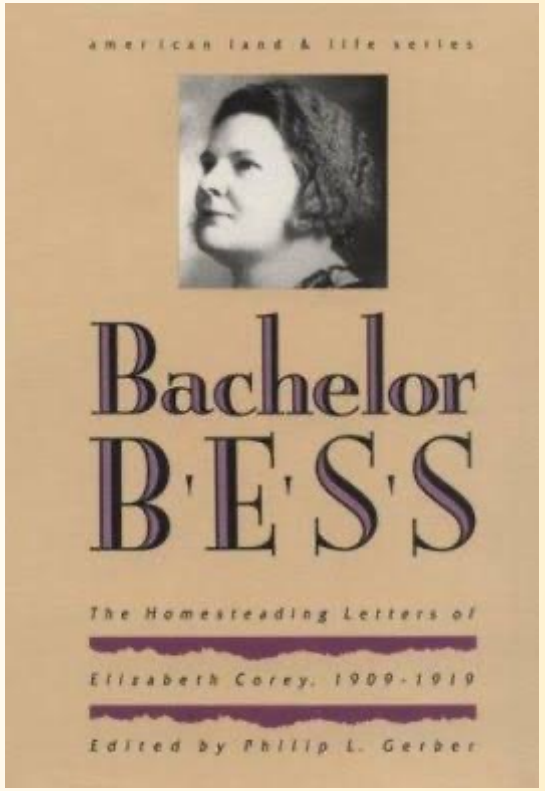
[4] *Mrs. Charlotte Woodward Pierce*. February 10, 1921. Photograph.

Women's Undeniable Worth

Chapter 12 of *New Women in the Old West* echoes the most important influences in the suffrage movement. It contains the same names as *America's Women*, with a slightly different perspective. I got additional insight into the AWSA, NWSA, and the eventual merger to form ANWSA. *New Women in the Old West* uniquely addresses the populist movement.

The following Quote from chapter 13 captures the essence of grass-root swells necessary to bring about real change:

"Elizabeth Corey, a teacher and an independent in Stanley County, South Dakota, underscored that connection in a letter to her mother back in Iowa. The woman who styled herself "Bachelor Bess" and prided herself on her financial independence and land ownership was vexed that she had to pay property taxes but could not vote. "Say, I've changed my politics," she wrote. "I'm going to work for 'Woman's Suffrage' tooth and toe nail and then I'm going to have 'em make a law." Based on her contributions to her community as a teacher and her success as a homesteader, fair-minded male neighbors surely found it increasingly difficult to disagree."[5]



5 Gallagher, Winifred. "Thirteen: New Women Squared." Essay. In *New Women in the Old West: From Settlers to Suffragists, an Untold American Story*, 189. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2022.

Iconic

I enjoyed reading about Julia Morgan in chapter 14 of New Women in the Old West. Her signature architecture is an inescapable part of California, from rows upon rows of bungalows in midcentury neighborhoods to the iconic Hearst Castle. Her designs were unexpected and unlikely successors to the Victorian architecture in the state.

"Women played an important role in developing the West's distinctive aesthetics. Julia Morgan, California's first female architect, and other designers in the trendsetting Bay Area rejected the fussy Victorian sensibility popular in the East. To develop a home suited to the fresh, contemporary, western way of life, they borrowed from the earlier British Arts and Crafts movement."[6]

[6] Gallagher, Winifred. "Fourteen: The East Looks West." Essay. In *New Women in the Old West: From Settlers to Suffragists, an Untold American Story*, 196. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2022.

[7] Sood, Sandhya. "El Campanil." SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS: SAH ARCHIPEDIA, April 20, 2023. https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/CA-01-001-0021.
Photograph by Sandhya Sood



[7] Mills College Bell tower

In context



The most important thing I learned from the online exhibit/website *She Resisted* was the timeframe. Seeing a map and timeline can bring things into perspective. Seeing the map drove home how the West led the movement. It really helps to get a sequence and context to events. The significance of the Western movement did not sink in till I viewed this presentation.[8]

[8] "She Resisted." PBS. Accessed February 9, 2024. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/interactives/she-resisted/sb/introduction/1.

Picture That

The most important primary source the website *She Resisted* used was photographs. At the end of the 19th century, we see photographs becoming commonplace. I was surprised to see some video. First-hand reports capture the heart of a situation, but being able to see it brings a different dimension. I find my personal picture collection that I meticulously archive is my journal. It brings context and time to my memories. Some day, I might look back and make a picture memoir. I found a colorized picture showing the contrast of the white dress striking.[8]



[8]"She Resisted." PBS. Accessed February 9, 2024. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/interactives/she-resisted/sb/introduction/1.

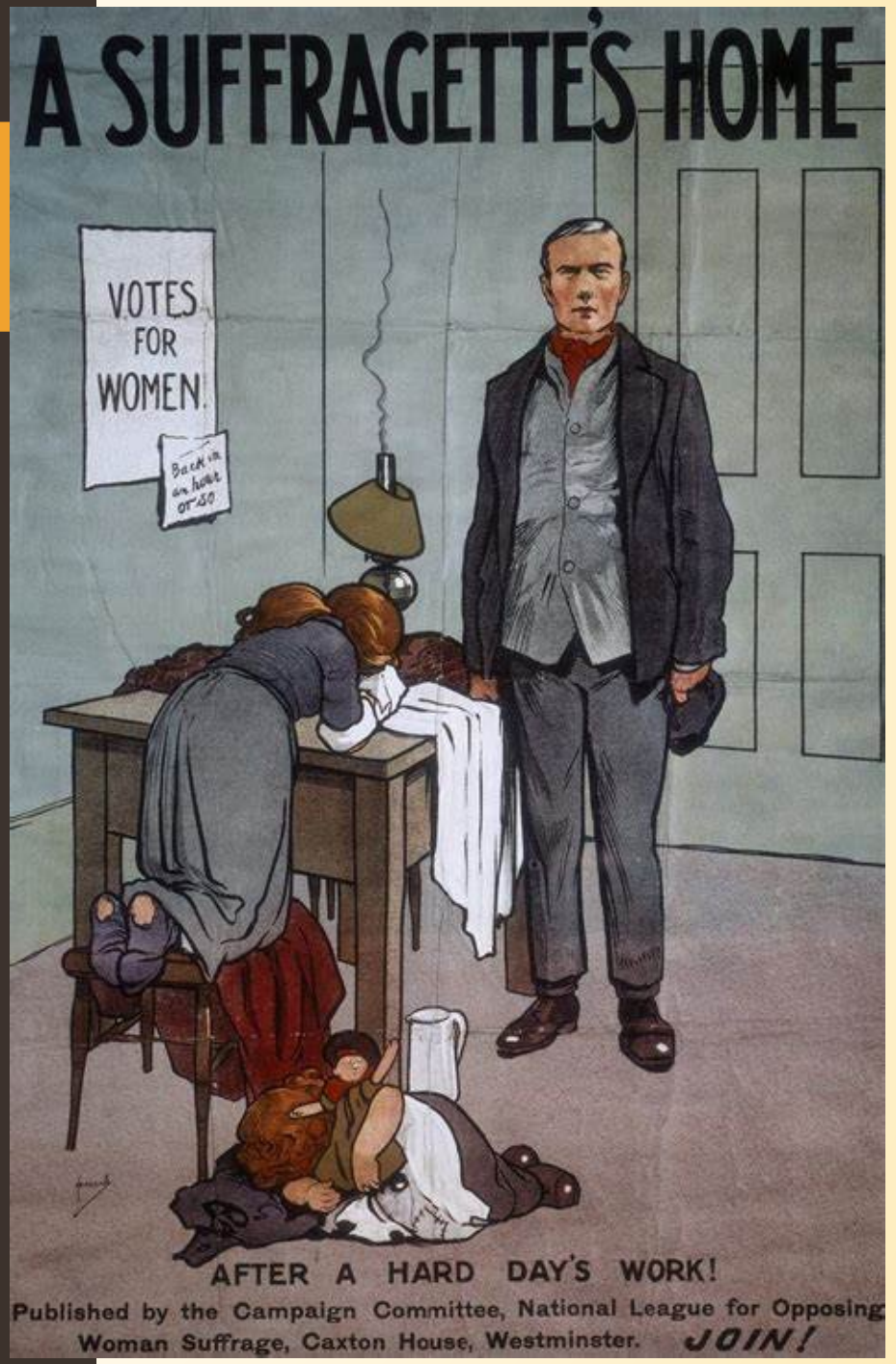
It was messy

The most important thing I learned from the guest lecture by Elaine Weiss was how most people, like myself, are somewhat naive about how women's suffrage unfolded, how challenging it was, and how long it took, most of a century, an incredibly long time.

“That social change is slow and, political change is hard, and that the struggle to expand our democracy is ongoing. That reform movements are imperfect…It's complicated. It's messy.” –Elaine Weiss

Neglected

There was a perception that a woman who got too busy with other things neglected her family. It also reflects the notion of the time that men had no parental responsibility but financial responsibility. They did not help with the household.



[9]Davaney, Susan. "This Is How Misogynists Tried to Stop Women from Winning the Vote." stylist.co.uk. Accessed February 9, 2024. https://www.stylist.co.uk/visible-women/misogynists-anti-suffragette-illustrations-stop-women-win-vote-history-features/187998.