

N. Modern Voting Rights: Women's Suffrage (1920)

1. We have already looked at the first grant of "civil rights" in the wake of the civil war in the form of the Reconstruction amendments (see page 15).
2. Following the combined disruption of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Americans then naturally looked for a "return to normalcy," in the sense that they simply wanted to return to their normal lives, free from the violence and the profound social challenge of changing their government and society for former slaves.
3. As a result, although there was a newly stated "right" to vote for former slaves, in the South, this "right" was limited by new kinds of laws, and the issue was not treated as fundamentally important.
4. Meanwhile, all Americans were adapting to the transformation created by the "Industrial Revolution" (which we will pursue in detail in the next segment of the class). New modes of transportation, communication, food production and medicine were all radically changing human life.
5. One change was that traditional family life, and especially the role of men and women within their families, was no longer expected to be the same. Where women had traditionally stayed in the home and cared for children, and husbands represented their households in the wider world, the new industrial world was allowing women to play new roles and express their own independence as individuals.
6. Although the change was gradual, and is even ongoing to this day, women increasingly proved themselves willing and able to do work previously restricted to men, and with the rise of technology, men's ability to perform forms of physical labor that women generally cannot perform as well became less important.
7. The women's suffrage movement, led by a former abolitionist, Susan B. Anthony, campaigned for women's right to vote, and after many decades of activism, obtained the passage of the *Nineteenth Amendment* in 1920, guaranteeing the right to vote for adults regardless of sex.



Women began to perform new kinds of jobs in the industrial revolution, such as working as "switchboard" operators for new *telephone* companies.



In traditional American families, as depicted in the once popular *Little House on the Prairie* television series, women stayed home and cared for the children and managed the household. Men represented the family in the wider world. Changing roles for women in society led to the Women's Movement, and the push for Women's Suffrage.