

Sioux City and Susan B. Anthony: 1871, 1877, and 1888

By Russ Gifford

This paper shows readers Sioux City as it moves from a frontier town to a regional agricultural center, and to Susan B. Anthony, who today is the iconic leader of the suffrage movement, but then was a front lines foot soldier in the battle. We will try to see each in the perspectives of their times using their actions and their words.

Susan B. Anthony stepped down from the Sioux City and Pacific railroad train into the full heat of the day. It was June 13, 1871, it was noon, and the depot thermometer read 98 degrees in the shade. Despite the heat, the station at Second and Nebraska streets bustled with hotel runners working to get a fare. Porters hustled to unload baggage and freight from the huffing train while it took on water and fuel. To many, the huffing trains always sounded impatient. Passengers took note and pushed to get on board. Heat be damned – there was work to be done and a timetable to be met!

The same was true everywhere in this city that ran on the schedules of trains and steamboats. Heat could not slow the pace of work. While customers might fall in front of shops due to heat stroke, as one did that week, the laboring man did not have that option. Sioux City, at the time one of the fastest growing towns on the edge of the Great Plains, would not be sidetracked or slowed for any reason. At the levee that day stood three steam ships, perhaps waiting passengers from this train. The steamboats, anxious to begin their battle up the unruly river, also huffed, as the fires built up steam in their boilers. They could not wait long. Each day, the river depth fell. Time really was money in Sioux City.

While the porters located her luggage trunks, Anthony stood erect and unbowed in the noonday sun. On her arrival in Sioux City, Anthony is dressed as she usually dressed, as all women of the day dressed: in a full long skirt, blouse, jacket, hat and of course the many requisite uncomfortable undergarments. As is usual in travel, Anthony is also wearing black.

Though Anthony fully endorsed dress reform for women in the 1850s and embraced the freedom dress – shorter dresses and pantaloons - it was a fashion that could not be sustained. The upheaval over the style "sacrificed the greater questions" of the women's movement as the public focused on

the outrage and never heard a word about the issues. Thus, Anthony and others had long discarded the bloomers – "Oh that hated name!" as counterproductive over a decade before.

Those standing close to Anthony on the platform would note her piercing eyes scanning her surroundings through her steel rimmed glasses. She was neither smiling nor scowling, simply observing everything around her. There was much to see, from the surrounding dirt streets and wooden one- and two-story buildings across the street, to the steamboats at the river levee two blocks south. She could also see the houses dotting the surrounding hillsides, filling the natural bowl between the loess hills that make up the bluffs along the Missouri river.

Sioux City in 1871

Anthony's view of buildings near the depot showed smart looking stores in the traditional downtown areas of Sioux City, stretching from the river on the southern edge of the city. That natural flat landing allowed the creation of a superior levee for steamboats to dock and made it easy to load and unload the many steamships that called at Sioux City.

That flatland, bounded by Prospect Hill on the west, and the Floyd river and its industries on the east, provided a natural city setting. To the north, the hills rose beyond the downtown, populated with nice homes. These housed the retailers and shopkeepers, business owners and bankers, and their growing families. The industrial workers lived in more frugal houses, closer to the plants where they worked, such as the flood plain of the Floyd river, or the rough Missouri riverfront before the steep southern face of Prospect Hill – an area referred to as 'Hell's Half Acre.'

From the depot, though, Anthony could see the tops of the newer multistory brick buildings that would be downtown Sioux City's future. With the arrival of the railroad in 1868, Sioux City transformed as multiple steamboat lines immediately moved their offices – and their ships – to Sioux City. Almost overnight Sioux City leaped forward in regional prominence. Now warehouses near the depot and the docks filed with materials bound for the forts and the Indian agencies stretching from the Dakotas and Montana territories. To start from Sioux City immediately cut 20 days and over a third of the costs from the trip!

It was not only about saving time, but cargo – the regions north of Kansas City alone holed and sunk scores of steamboats. It is said a single cornfield near Onawa is home to nine sunken steamboats! Cutting off these passages cut dangers and costs.

In the three years since 1868, Sioux City tripled in population. While the 1870 census said 5000 people called Sioux City home, promoters and locals basted 7500 by 1871, when Anthony arrived. Usually such statements might be suspect when made by people who gained money by land speculation. But this time, there is likely something to the claims. The extra jobs required by the steamboat industry meant good jobs for locals. A massive dry dock that repaired the holed hulls needed repairmen. Warehouses required workers to transfer the goods from the railroad to the warehouse to the ships. And the work for other various ad hoc labor provided quick work and pay for a tremendous number of jobbers. This was the economic development of the industrial revolution, and the local businesses boomed in response.

In 1867, the first three story brick building in Sioux City rose at the northwest corner of Second and Pearl. The Sawyer Block building, completed in 1868. The building housed Kirk's Dry Goods, and a millinery shop, and stood at the end of the block near the station. On the same block, greeting all Sioux City arrivals via boat or train, stood the Palace Billiard Hall, promising a 'cool draught of genuine Dubuque Lager.' Hotels offered accommodations, and Anthony would stay at the Northwestern hotel, where many people stayed while passing through on the steamships, or in town for business. It sat less than two blocks from the depot. Daily reports in the Sioux City newspaper shared the names in residence each night as a badge of honor. In an era when bedbugs were a fact of life, and physical safety in an overnight accommodation was not a given, the reputation of the Northwestern was high indeed.

One of Sioux City's latest achievements was but a few months old. The Academy of Music stood on the south side of 4th street, between Douglas and Pierce. This brick building with terracotta window caps on the face displayed cast iron columns on the main floor, with a mansard roof. Opened a few months before in January of 1871, it towered over 4th street. The post office, other government offices and commercial stores occupied most of the building, but the performing hall dominated the second floor, and above. Recently, a rising star named Mark Twain spoke there in support of his first book, 'Innocents Abroad' which would become his first of many bestsellers.

It was this venue where Anthony would annoy so many Sioux City residents the next evening.

The Academy would not be the only hot spot in Sioux City during Anthony's visit. A house a few doors away would burn on the hot night before her talk. Also, two women would attempt suicide that day. While both events would

be greatly discussed in town, the story would not be seen in the pages of the newspaper until a letter forced the issue into print later – as the women in question were prostitutes, and the house was well known as a location for similar workers.

These events would provide Susan B. Anthony with a telling footnote in her speeches. This fact, and others, would make more than a few men in Sioux City burning mad at 'Maid' Anthony, as they called her, for some time to come.

Why Anger?

What were women's rights in 19th century America?

Short answer: None.

That may sound ridiculous, but so was the situation. Laws in almost all the states showed women had no right to hold property – it belonged to their husband. If their husband died, they held the property – until they could remarry, when it all became the property of their new husband.

Why not simply hold the property, and refuse to re-marry? That became problematic, as laws stated women could not enter into binding legal agreements. While one might manage to keep a house that way, 'Doing business' became possible only if the people you dealt with were honorable, because a woman could not find local judges to enforce contracts or allow a lawsuit.

Marriage proved to be less than salvation for many women, as laws did not recognize violence against a wife as an offense. Beyond physical violence or abuse, there was also the reality that women had no legal say in the choice of having children, or sex, with a husband.

In an era when the few birth control methods existed were deemed illegal and likely immoral, and in time when yet another pregnancy could be a death sentence to a woman, these were not minor issues. This is also why temperance became a women's crusade in the 1840s on, as drinking clearly worsened these problems.

Separate Spheres

Society claimed men and women occupied separate spheres and worked to keep those spheres separated. Men inhabited the world where physical strength and endurance decided a man's worth. Interactions in that sphere were by nature contentious and physical, involving danger of injury and possibly death in the pursuit of an income to allow the man to keep a household that would include a wife and children, and any amenities.

In that world, the women's sphere was limited to the home, and the church. It drew on the concept that women were more 'moral' by nature. Her job, her duty, was to raise a family of moral children, and look after the household. This was in an era before any devices like automatic washers or vacuum cleaners, and for many, before the gas range cook stove. Looking after a house, or children, generally while pregnant, was no easy chore.

The sphere for women also meant women's work and efforts were constrained. Their jobs were decided for them. How 'perfect' that most of the jobs for women in the first half of the century were as servants and household help! But those jobs paid only room and board – and thus were impossible to sustain a woman if she had children to support, which as the century wore on, more women were supporting their household, as men were increasingly injured, losing limbs, if not their lives in an increasingly industrialized America where no safeguards existed in the factory.

If conditions forced it, they could be teachers – but never Superintendents. They could work in the church, but they could not be ministers. In short, they could not be leaders.

Until 1840, it was outrageous to think a woman could address a mixed gender audience! Now consider how drastic the idea of a Women's Rights Conference with 300 men and women in attendance was in 1848!

It is in this world that Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton dared to make their stand – but they refused to stand still. They would take their fight to the enemy, to spread information, and sow the seeds of knowledge. They did not particularly care if they were welcomed.

Anthony Arrives – This Time, for Real!

A crowd of well-wishers gathered to welcome Anthony to Sioux City, and among them was W.B. Wilkins, who had arranged to bring her to the hotel, and to show her the city. One suspects he was also the promoter. It appears lecturers in this era agreed to speak in locations for a fixed fee. The promoter, then, bore the risks and the profits of the turnout. Likely, it was Wilkins who had arranged the notices to the newspapers, which had alerted everyone to her pending arrival.

Tall by nature, Anthony's perfect posture was notable at a distance. Though her hat and scarf hid her face, Wilkins had no difficulty picking her out. Few women would take the train in these days, and it was unheard of for an unescorted woman to ride the train. Of course, Susan B. Anthony was known for doing things others refused to consider.

Wilkins, and newspaper publisher Charles Collins came forward to greet Anthony, and offer her transportation to the hotel. Anthony's height and bearing were noticeable, but up close most strangers always commented on her piercing eyes behind the stainless-steel glasses. More noticeable, though, was the mouth that neither smiled nor frowned. One paper would write, "the firm, massive under jaw of the lady is indicative of her stern will." And that person was sympathetic to her efforts! Some of that look was her dentures, which often gave her pain, though she never complained to anyone but her diary. Even then, the complaints were limited to times when it forced her to derail her plans to find a dentist – as happened at the very first day leaving Rochester, New York for this trip.

Thus, many say Anthony had a commanding demeanor. It was not always said as a complement. With her hair pulled back, she looked like the demanding school teacher she had been for many years – until she realized a male teacher with far less skill and experience was being paid four times what she earned, simply because he was a man. For two decades since, Anthony had worked to inform and to educate, to discuss and debate, and most of all to demand equality for women. Originally society – the male dominated society – had limited women's ability to receive an education. This was much of Anthony's focus, and why she chose the methods of speaking and writing articles. They all possessed the potential to educate.

As women learned more, the world would change. The limits moved on to the jobs that allowed women workers, which also effectively prevented women from making a living. That, too, was changing, but as with the changes Anthony had helped push through in the 1850s, they could be rolled back at any moment at the whim of the current legislature or local judge. Exactly that happened in 1862, rolling back the New York and Pennsylvania reforms they had worked so hard to pass.

Only a few years before, in 1868, Anthony felt the pain of the betrayal of old friends. Congressional allies walked back their agreement to include women in the push to bring the vote to the newly freed slaves. Anthony and Stanton wanted their organization to lobby against the amendment to get one that allowed men and women. But that plan faltered when Fredrick Douglas rejected their call to ensure at least ex-slaves got the right to vote. The Suffrage movement was torn. Most of the women involved had begun in the abolition movement, and the goal of enfranchisement for the freedmen was very much an end goal they had held for decades. But others understood and followed Anthony and Stanton, who knew dropping women would result in pushing women's suffrage decades into the future. The

resulting recriminations saw the amendment pass – and the Women's Suffrage organization split into two groups in the fight.

With that, Anthony knew nothing would really change for women until women could wield the vote and make the legislature recognize the pain they would suffer in lost votes in any future betrayals. But for now, with the organization shattered, and the newspaper Anthony and Stanton published pushing women's rights now running deeply in the red, the key was to plan anew, and go forward.

Thus it was that in 1871, as the Spring skies cleared, Anthony and Stanton embarked for the far distant lands of California and beyond. Trains made everything easier, faster, and better – but not everywhere was served by trains!

Anthony had a hard path to Sioux City, due to her many stops along the way. She had detoured at Erie, to travel first by train Pittsburg and then into the mountain regions to speak to groups that had asked her to come spread the message. The carriage rides were arduous, with "wind in our faces, and oh, the dust." She slept when she could with these bumpy 8 hour carriage rides, and still found herself waylaid by errant train schedules when she returned. Disease also thwarted her efforts with an outbreak of small pox holding down the turnouts at these Pennsylvania locations. Still and all, she persevered. She spoke through Ohio, and on into Chicago to celebrate the events in the women's movement there. She also joined Elizabeth Cady Stanton there – who would rejoin her in Council Bluffs before they leapt into the new lands beyond as they headed to spread the word in California.

It allowed the two to reach new audiences, at the edge of the newest states, to continue to bring the message to men, to women, and to legislators, that women deserved the right to vote. In fact, Anthony continued to argue women had already been given that right, based on the 14th and 15th amendments on citizenship.

But she knew only continued efforts by women would lead to that result, and her trip this time was to work on the states that stretched to the Pacific Ocean to attempt to persuade legislatures of these newer states that now was the time to award women the right to vote.

Sioux City, on the edge of the frontier, had asked her to speak. She had left Council Bluffs at 5:50 a.m., to arrive a day early to see the town' – and her host Wilkins started to do just that. 'He took me around town' she wrote, 'to be seen and be sociable, I suppose.' But between the heat and the lack of rest, after two hours of riding in the midday heat, she asked to postpone the

sightseeing tour until the next morning, when they could get an early start. Reaching the hotel, she would 'sleep until Tea time' she said, and call for papers to learn what she could of this frontier city.

She spent the evening in correspondence, writing letters to groups and contacts she would meet in the coming days. These were important letters. She lauded women for their continuing efforts, building bridges to new people, and creating strong future leaders. One such letter to a woman in Nebraska a few years later is a fine example:

"Such women as you ... have individual work to do -to lift the world into better conditions- & I hope you will not allow anything to estop [sic] you from doing what seems to be your duty- I long to see women be themselves -not the mere echoes of men." She goes on to say, "For you- & every woman to tell what you are doing-helps to rouse other women to do likewise-"

Her correspondence, and her reading, is massive. In Sioux City she would also grouse to her diary that it annoyed her that the hotel had no access to current papers, meaning newspapers from beyond Sioux City.

In her diary, Anthony often sounds annoyed or perhaps cranky. Yet her letters, while filled with the drive of purpose, never strike her readers as irritated or exasperated. Plus, women who know her, and those who meet her and talk with her on her travels find her intelligent, charitable, and caring. There she is warm and nurturing, and many women, and some men of her time who first make her acquaintance by the written word, speak of her in those terms.

But her speeches also convey an attitude that many listeners find neither warm nor nurturing. While those favorable to her say she is simply logical and precise, her verbal statements seem contentious to some, and set many men aflame – and not with passion, as we will see in Sioux City.

At 9 a.m. the 14th, W.B. Wilkins returned with the carriage, and Anthony notes he took her "to see the bluffs" and the "grand" view from the burial area of the "Big Sioux Indian Chief." A post marked the burial spot of War Eagle in 1871, and the bluff offered a view of the confluence of the Big Sioux river and the Missouri river. She could see the panorama of northwest Iowa, the northeast corner of the new state of Nebraska, plus the vast 'Dacotah' lands stretching to the north and west. Wilkins took her across the military bridge over the Sioux river into what was then Indian lands, and then returned her to her hotel as the heat of the day arrived in the afternoon. She seemed to feel well rewarded with her travel to the territories.

The Talk – and the Buzz

That evening, June 14, 1871, the Academy hosted Susan B. Anthony's talk. She met with supporters and likely got a good night's sleep in Sioux City following the talk, before heading on to speak at Cherokee, Iowa.

But her Sioux City lecture certainly roused the listeners, according to the newspaper reports.

In the Sioux City *Daily Times*:

"Miss Anthony's lecture was a decided success, judged either by the number and intelligence of those present or the able manner in which she discussed the salient points pertaining to woman suffrage. She displayed an ability, conciseness and force that must have carried conviction to every impartial listener . . . Her visit here has done more to advance the cause of woman suffrage than can now be fully appreciated. She has sown the germ of a movement which can not fail to inoculate our people with a belief in the justice of her cause and the injustice of longer depriving the more intelligent, purer and consequently better portion of our inhabitants of that greatest of boons, the ballot."

Not all the papers agreed. Another Sioux City paper, *The Sioux City Daily Journal*, according to Anthony, stated:

"Miss Anthony had insulted the respectable women of Sioux City and thus if she ever came there again she would be treated to a coat of tar and feathers."

Why the difference?

Anthony's lectures always used examples pulled from the newspapers of the time to make her points. She frequently commented about local events in her speeches. Sioux City provided an event that would gain a special place in Anthony's talks, and it clearly rankled some members of the community. That was fine with Anthony. She would feature it in her talks for some time to come.

As we noted, the rail connection to Sioux City in 1868 fueled Sioux City's tripling in size by 1871. The railroads and riverboats also drew travelers that would stay in the city for a short time, and they required food, lodging, and entertainment. Saloons and licensed gambling houses catered to those needs, but Sioux City also had other less advertised businesses in the community. One such business had suffered a setback the night of her arrival and was the talk of the town on the morning of June 14. Anthony noted it in her speech. As she reported it later in one of her lectures beyond the Missouri river:

"In 1871 I went by invitation of a Lecture Bureau to speak at Sioux City, Iowa on my usual theme. On my arrival there in the morning I noticed a good deal of a stir and excitement and asked what it was about. I was told that the decent women of the town had during the night set fire to a house in which their husbands and brothers had domiciled a half dozen demimondes whom they had brought up from St. Louis. In my lecture that evening I made a point to this incident and described the terrible position of the wives who were forced by the laws and by consideration for their children to live with men whom they knew were faithless to their marriage vows, and spoke of this condition in which no self-respecting woman could live. The next morning's papers said that Miss Anthony had insulted the respectable women of Sioux City...."

'Demimonde' refers to a class of women on the fringes of respectable society supported by wealthy lovers.

This story became part of her lectures. She used it to clearly demonstrate the proposed spheres of men and women cannot be kept separate, as there is only one sphere, shared by both genders. The actions of one gender would impact the other. The idea that men were protecting women by placing them in a separate sphere was ridiculous. They were placing women there to limit women's ability to impact the actions men wanted to take.

To Anthony and Stanton, while they embraced the idea that men and women were different in reactions, emotions, and physiology, it was clearly not gender, but laws made by men to limit women prevented women from achieving equality.

As one of her speeches would note, "It is said women do not need the ballot for their protection because they are supported by men. Statistics show that there are 3,000,000 women in this nation supporting themselves."

Susan B and Sioux City, Six Year Later

Anthony would return to Sioux City six years later, in November of 1877. This time, additions to the rails sent her from Chicago to Leavenworth, Kansas, where her brother, Daniel Anthony published the Leavenworth newspaper. Though Daniel was popular – he served on the city council – his newspaper statements often placed him into punishing physical altercations. That did not stop him from speaking out, and the fights continued. Clearly, lack of fear is a family trait.

(Daniel Anthony would continue to push tough issues in Leavenworth and would get him shot the following year. It looked to be a fatal wound, but Anthony rushed to Leavenworth and provided care that would see him through.)

But there were no fights in 1877. After her lecture in Leavenworth, Susan Anthony followed the new rails west for talks in Topeka and Lawrence before turning north to enter Nebraska. She would speak in Fairbury, Nebraska City, and on to Lincoln. After a reunion with Bloomer in Council Bluffs, and speaking there, she would return to Sioux City to speak at the "same Opera House" she noted.

No one showed with the previously promised coat of tar and feathers, fortunately. But like her earlier talk, this visit would again become a part of her lectures that year.

From her Diary:



In her diary (above) Anthony notes she had been in Sioux City six years before, and she mentions a legal case. Her comments in another talk, this time in Nebraska, she explains:

"Six years afterwards I was in the city of Sioux and happening to take up a paper the very first article struck was a complaint against one Mme. Shaw, for keeping a house of ill fame. That grand jury was out thirteen hours and a half and when they came in the verdict was no cause for complaint to bring in a bill of indictment. And this Mme. Shaw was the very woman whose house was burned

down by the good wives of that city six years before. Women of Nebraska, do you think if those good wives had been on that grand jury that such a verdict of no cause could have been brought in?"

This would become a staple in Anthony's lectures, showing the importance of having women on juries. Sioux City provided an excellent example a decade later.

Sioux City Proves Anthony's Point?

Unfortunately, despite her two warnings, in 1871 and again in 1877, Anthony's point about allowing women on juries to improve the moral caliber of the jury pool was ignored or dismissed. A decade later in 1887, Sioux City would become famous for the moral failings of a jury.

The brutal murder of the crusading anti-liquor leader Rev. George Haddock in 1886 occurred at Third and Water Street in Sioux City, not far from where Anthony had spoken years before. When the trial to convict the killers of Rev. Haddock ended in a hung jury, because one man on the jury would not be bought, Sioux City became notorious. Newspapers across the country highlighted the re-trial. Derision was heaped upon Sioux City when the second jury found the accused not guilty. Many noted that the entire jury then gathered at a saloon – for a portrait with the defendant.

One headline would ask "Does God rule, or the Devil, in Sioux City?" Newspapers began highlighting the fact that in 1886, Sioux City had 11 public schools and 18 churches, but it also had 75 saloons, 2 breweries, and several licensed gambling houses. Perhaps that was not unheard of but considering the state of Iowa outlawed alcohol and was considered a 'dry' state, it did raise eyebrows. The stories became a national embarrassment to a city trying to attract investment dollars for buildings and businesses, projects and progress.

Would Sioux City have been spared this nationwide distain if Anthony's prescription of inclusion of women into jury pools been followed?

Looking Deeper into Anthony's Message

In Anthony's 1871 lecture, she said things that were all but unmentionable in that era. She stated she not only wanted women on juries, but on the police force! This brought a laugh from the audience - but the papers noted the change as she finished the explanation. "Unfortunate women are arrested and imprisoned every day. They are dragged to the station," where there are no women matrons on the police staff, she stated. "These prisoners are turned over to guards, and "the men are not of the highest morals."

By this point, the audiences had quickly sobered. Her finishing point met with quiet approval: "It is horrible to put women in prison where there are no good women to protect them." To punctuate her point, she noted the same is true for women locked into mental institutions.

While women in the audience might never contemplate falling far enough to be arrested, the specter of women being institutionalized for 'hysteria' – an ailment that doctors only found in women – was all too common in those years. Many knew hysteria could be continuing to disagree with one's husband, or moody behavior, or – whatever the male judge said it meant.

Anthony then tackled another major issue always brought up as the reason the vote cannot be given to women:

"Now, about this everlasting objection that women cannot fight in defense of their country. At the constitutional convention of which Horace Greeley was a member and chairman of the committee on suffrage, at the close of Mrs. Stanton's address, Mr. Greeley arose and said, 'Miss Anthony, the ballot and the bullet go together. If you have the vote, are you ready to fight?' I said, 'Yes, Mr. Greeley, exactly as you fought in the late rebellion, at the point of a goose quill....'"

The audience's laughter showed their approval, and she had made her point. But a further response gratified her far more. A Reverend in attendance stated, 'he often heard lectures, but last night, he heard an argument.' Anthony took pride in that accolade which praised her logical thought process.

It was a preview of her speech a year later when she defended her actions during the famous trial in New York for illegally voting in the 1872 Presidential election:

"It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people - women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government - the ballot."

She went on to say:

"Webster, Worcester, and Bouvier all define a citizen to be a person in the United States, entitled to vote and hold office.

"The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens; and no state has a right to make any law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several states is today null and void[.]"

There is a reason Susan B. Anthony became a literal icon in American history. Her logic echoed the forefathers, and defied lesser thinkers a place to hide. The judge in her 1873 trial found her guilty but she refused to pay the fine. The judge declined to order her arrest, which would have given her standing to appeal her case to the Supreme Court. It was a wise decision, as the Supreme Court would have clearly been forced to deny the words of the founders to decide against her – which they would have.

Sioux City and Anthony in Later Years

These two lectures are the only cases of Anthony visiting Sioux City to speak. However, the Sioux City Journal noted in 1888 that Anthony passed through Sioux City again, this time on the way to lecture in Algona, Iowa. But the circumstances lead one to ask if she might have visited more often?

"SUSAN B. ANTHONY PASSES THROUGH SIOUX CITY: The noted female suffragist, Susan B. Anthony, was a Sioux City visitor while on her way to Algona to deliver a lecture. It was 11 years since the lady had been to Sioux City, delivering a lecture at that time on the same topic on which she yet speaks. While here she was the guest of her nephew F.M. Mosher, 215 Kansas St."

It is interesting to think of Anthony seeing Sioux City move from early frontier town in 1871 to a city on the move in 1888. Sioux City, likely four times the size it was in 1871, stood on the edge of its most expansive boom years, 1888 to 1893. The spark for that boom is often attributed to the expulsion of the less desirable liquor and gambling establishments following the humiliation of the embarrassing coverage of Rev. Haddock's death and those failed trials. The City's successes include many storied buildings and projects which arose in this time frame:

The Peavy Opera House debuted in December of 1887 – might her nephew arranged a tour for Anthony? The Peavy far outclassed the Academy of Music where Anthony, Twain and so many others had spoken.

The Missouri River Railroad bridge opened in December of 1888, an important link to Nebraska for the railroads.

The Sioux City Pontoon Bridge also opened for foot and wagon traffic. It connected Pearl Street to the tiny town of Stanton, Nebraska, on the

Missouri's south bank – where much of the 'undesirable' businesses had fled. One paper called it 'a row of boats with a large thirst at one end and a beer saloon at the other.' No doubt tolls paid the bills of the pontoon company.

The famous Sioux City elevated railroad - only the third in the country – would tie Morningside to downtown. Sioux City Rapid Transit would be under construction from 1889 to 1891, with electric trolley cars taking people from the downtown businesses into the hills where the nicer homes still seen today were being built.

The original structure to house the University of the Northwest would be built in Morningside in 1890, bringing higher education to the frontier. It is the beginnings of Morningside College.

While the Charles City Hall on Morningside campus still stands, other ephemeral buildings make a name for Sioux City at the end of the 19th century. The famous Corn Palaces would soon rise to promote the city's importance as a regional agricultural center.

Sioux City reflected the growing trend in the United States at that time – the growth of cities over rural areas. The Industrial Revolution meant factories, and required a workforce nearby, which created cities. With the explosive expansion of the major cities in America, Chicago, New York City, and others depended on the increased output of agriculture in the form of grains and meats. Regional agriculture centers like Sioux City became important connections. As a trading hub for the farmers and a rail connection to the major cities, Sioux City shipped every kernel of increased output the farmers could provide. Booge's packing plants which sent only processed meat, not the entire cow, were a similar step forward, increasing the purchase and sale of local beef to be shipped to the cities. All this brought dividends and jobs to the growing town of Sioux City.

While the steamboat decreased in importance, industrialization in the form of factories manufacturing finished goods found root in places like Sioux City. This, too, impacted the women's movement.

When the farm was the major employer, the value of a worker was based on strength: how much could they carry, and how far? On farms, men would almost always win this competition, and women were consigned to the supporting roles of cooking and cleaning. But by 1890, with the rise of manufacturing, equally important was accuracy and endurance. While it started slowly, women began infiltrating the larger workforce, breaking out of the 'sphere' they were assigned by society. First, women gained the

clerking positions left by men moving to the industries. Later, they would move into the factories as well.

The changes would progress, and eventually the sphere would be shattered. But even at this late date, men fought back. Most unions denied women membership, and thus protection. Courts, too, denied women any rights, echoing the same thinking. Famous Supreme Court cases would declare women 'are a delicate flower' and 'must be protected.' Women are unfit for work outside the 'domestic sphere... The paramount destiny of women are to be wife and mother.' There were no dissenting votes.

In the end, there were no organizations that could 'help' women achieve equality. Only women, and their continuous effort to break this cycle, would be the answer. That would only happen when women heard the arguments made by women like Susan B. Anthony. This demonstrates the education factor that Anthony always embraced. Until women chose to ignore the demands of society and were willing to bear the discomforts society heaped on them for speaking out, women would remain limited and confined. Even as the Industrial Revolution allowed women into the workforce, the same lack of a ballot meant women's demands could be ignored. "The disfranchised must always do the work, accept the wages, occupy the position the enfranchised assign to them," Anthony thundered from the lectern. "The disfranchised are in the position of the pauper."

Susan B. Anthony chose to educate, to inform, to contend, to discomfort, and to demand. She accepted the discomforts her choices cost her. She would remain true to that cause her entire life. But did it matter?

Icons Remain

The corn palace days are long gone, and much has changed for Sioux City. But the Corn Palace remains an icon in Sioux City. The Corn Palaces gave Sioux City an identity in that era and drew crowds that included a sitting U.S. President, and thus gained some support for the needs and wants of their constituents.

All these years later, Anthony is also long gone. She, too, drew crowds, but she failed in getting women the right to vote. Nor did she see them achieve equality. So, what did Anthony achieve, considering many newspapers declared her persona non grata, an agitator, a troublemaker?

Sioux City's Political Equality Club, formed in the era of clubs when clubs were a woman's only outlet, was dedicated to achieving women's suffrage. One member recalled Anthony's visits brought them attention. The club would see gains in membership. "Susan B. Anthony was not enthusiastically

received in Sioux City, but she was universally talked about." Everyone who wanted to see her could come, said Rose Taylor.

One could claim a Sioux City newspaper also showed they believed in equality— after all, they offered Anthony 'a coat of tar and feathers' – something previously only offered to men.

Yet, the newspapers also quoted the truth: "We have no doubt that she will have a large and appreciative audience. Those who ridicule the idea of women suffrage might be present and receive a little of the light and true freedom upon their benighted souls."

Anthony would never see the passage of the amendment she had worked so hard to achieve. But she lived long enough to notice that by 1900, she had become almost universally respected for her efforts, "and widely loved," as one supporter said looking back 50 years later.

That perspective is important. Today, almost 150 years since her first visit to Sioux City, we recognize the truth of her statement that "the woman of the future will far surpass the one of today. This will come from making the sexes co-equal." Her reasoning? "[W]hen women associate with men in serious matters... both will grow stronger, and the world's work will be better done."

Anthony's talks would circulate the name of Sioux City, but never to single it out for shame or derision. Her point showed clearly this was not a Sioux City problem, but a universal one. All cities and communities in America shared this weakness because they intentionally worked to hobble and segregate women to 'their sphere.' This 'sphere' so widely spoken of in social and legal passages was not designed to protect women, but to limit them. And it would.

The stories Anthony told in her speeches may today seem nonsensical, because they seem too ridiculous to believe. But older listeners know many of the same problems remained in force for women almost 50 years after the voting amendment passed. It was not until the social upheaval of the 1960s that many of the restrictive codes against females began to fall, a result of an attempt to undercut the 1964 Civil Rights Act by adding discrimination based on gender illegal.

The plan backfired, because unlike in 1869, in 1964 the allies of women did not flinch, and held the vote with gender still in the law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act became the engine to finally give the Courts the laws needed to begin opening jobs and so much more to women.

As predicted by Stanton, it had taken almost a century to overcome the use of gender in the 14th and 15th amendments.

But that it happened at all is due to the points Anthony had made repeatedly:

"The question with you, as men, is not whether you want your wives and daughters to vote, nor with you, as women, whether you yourselves want to vote; but whether you will help to put this power of the ballot into the hands of the ... wage-earning women, so that they may be able to compel politicians to legislate on their favor and employers to grant them justice."

While little changed when women got the vote in 1920, a later generation of woman availed themselves of the hard-earned right to vote to change the reality of their lives. As they did, it would be into the late 1970s before women would see massive changes on access to professional jobs, and increased equality – as Anthony predicted.

Anthony's points should remind today's listeners that the issues of inequality were about men's ability to wield power over a group of people. Gender was the easy classification, much as color was the easy identification for slavery. Do we see similar issues we should be wary of today? Do our organizations promote us, or are they designed to limit us to socially acceptable behavior? Don't we see the same things today in society? What about people who speak out? Are they embraced, or shunned? Lauded, or lambasted?

How would social media react to Susan B. Anthony? How would Anthony react to social media?

In many ways, perhaps we already know?

The era of the late 19th Century America is a time when everything changed: The Industrial Revolution changed how people worked. The steam engine that powered that revolution also changed how people traveled. Travel empowered changing methods of communication, with speakers spreading their view of the world further afield via lectures. And the responses to those effective but elusive lectures captured forever in the newspapers of the day.

But it is more accurate to realize that these are not 'newspapers' as we know them, but more accurately, advertising fliers wrapped with the personal opinions held by the publisher, the writers, and the readers. Each day is filled with more passion than perspective, more invective than insight, more hubris than humility.

In short, newspapers of this era are the social media of their day. Which may also provide us with important insights to our future.

A Guide, or an Impediment?

History also shows why change is so difficult. Any group that holds absolute power will always fight sharing that power. As Anthony proclaimed, the eventual power sharing by the sexes would improve the lives of both men and women. But only the demand for the vote, and the eventual use of the vote to elect lawmakers that owed their positions to women as well as men, would cause the exclusionary processes to change. Only when judges had laws and guidelines that demanded equality would these exclusionary practices be broken and finally remove one gender's rigid hold on power.

Yet as with slavery, this required a long and rigorous application of the vote. It required the powers commanded by the vote to erode the intentional use of classification as a method to demean those subject classes. The process created a gradual change, because outside of war or a major threat, societal approval is slow to change established practices. Anthony's efforts require generations to simply achieve the vote. It has required more generations to remove the old laws and practices. It is still not complete, which testifies to the weight exerted by the past.

The inertia of historical precedent outweighs everything, until the penalties cause far more personal pain than the changes.

Which is to say: No matter how much sense it makes to get out in front of change rather than being ground to dust by its eventual success, vested interests cannot seem to reach that conclusion until they are forced to do so.

Thus, change will only be achieved if there are people like Anthony, and Stanton, and others, willing to travel far and suffer verbal abuse, and physical discomfort, to make certain others will hear a differing point of view. The trip to the west coast did not create a ground swell of approval. Far from it – San Francisco was a terribly negative experience for Anthony. Anthony was largely dismissed by local critics, which was hardly a novel moment for her. However, she had never faced such angry crowds. Papers labeled her an agitator and printed unflattering photos akin to wanted posters. She made no headway and moved on up the coast. Oregon was also lukewarm, and her trip by steamer was a terrible passage. But Anthony never gave up. Her determination to continue to bring the message to the people, to practice continuous engagement and constructive protest, no matter how much effort it required, meant that gradually the weight of the

opinions would shift in her lifetime Her logic and her eloquence brought people to her side of the argument.

But we fail to consider the other reason that this moment in time resonates with us. The question of how the original opinions formed so deeply in those audiences that it would require decades and generations to overcome?

It is by continuous repetition of misinformation, to audiences of like-minded individuals. If no one argued against the idea that women and negroes were inferior, then the idea that 'protecting' them by using laws might seem acceptable. Once that is accepted, claiming the reason they need protected is because neither had the mental capacity to competently wield the vote might be credible. Yet then those same laws demanded education be off limits for both parties. How can that be considered right? Only because the experience of what happened repeatedly when people like Douglass, like Anthony, like Stanton, like countless others achieved when they were educated threatened the established social order. Then only continued dismissal, or actual intimidation could stem the tide.

Anthony, Stanton, Douglass, and countless others lived in the world that such a mindset had limited their rights. No one could confront that thinking without risking discomfort, or worse. But beatings and lynching would become the accepted social practice to keep Freedmen compliant, or to force them to flee. Some bitter irony is the main accusation that would cause the lynching of a black man was the rape of a white woman. Yet it is estimated that 20 black women were raped by white men for every accusation of rape against a black man. Thus we also see the 'use' of women as a tactic to achieve a social end – yet another bitter irony of the times.

Women faced intimidation, verbal abuse, social shunning, and in some cases, abuse from spouses to keep them in line. Does any of this sound familiar in our social discussions today? Does the effort to split groups by posing them as 'threats' to the overall success of society? These are still accepted methods for defeating social change today, isn't it?

Douglass and the Freedmen, when offered the 15th Amendment, would step away from the very women that had kept their cause alive for the 20 to 25 years prior. The choice Douglass made is understandable; Lucy Stone's decision to back the 15th amendment and split the women's movement is also understandable. Our goal is not to judge their choice, but to see the similarities with today's attacks on those who step out, and the internal strains that cause groups to break apart in the heat of the struggle.

It is also important to see neither Anthony or Stanton gave up, nor did they retreat an inch. As Douglass achieved his goal, he did continue to speak out for women. But age caught up with him, and having achieved his goals, his reach was diminished. Stanton also eventually espoused concepts far too radical for many women's groups to accept; yet another method used today to undercut their leaders. Thus, these two leaders eventually lost their audiences.

But Anthony remained active and engaged and reaching for the maximum audience with the most impact. She would maneuver to reunite the separated Suffrage organizations to one big umbrella by the end of the 19th century, equipping them for the coming final fight for women's suffrage. Though she did not live to see the passage of the amendment recognizing a woman's right to vote, her peers named the amendment in her honor.

Similarities: Telling Stories Rather than Giving Lectures

Anthony is seen today as an historic agent of change for woman. She is also a literal icon, the first actual woman to be featured on American currency. Many people of her era might have noted the diminished rights of women, and the fallacy that women were being protected in a separate sphere. But it was Anthony that spoke out, and never stopped speaking out.

Anthony's use of the story of Sioux City's mothers and wives faced with their husbands' support of prostitutes caused outrage and embarrassment and prompted the offer of a coat of tar and feathers. But to Anthony, it underlined the disparity between the treatment of men and women, and she repeated it across the country. While Sioux City may not have appreciated its footnote in history, the example it provided shows that unless a mirror is held to reflect reality, reality will avoid change. The women of Sioux City stepped beyond their assigned 'sphere' when they confronted the issues, though they were frustrated by an intentionally slanted legal system. They signaled their refusal to accept the idea, first by burning the building, later when legal avenues were blocked by legal means.

But the message for the women of Sioux City reached others, because Susan B. Anthony transmitted that message using the 'social media' of her era – the lecture circuit. She did it by sharing stories to highlight her logic. We see the same thing today on social media – it is the story, not the logic, that gives weight to the argument, and causes a message to go viral. The story of the Sioux City women burning down the house of ill repute is still known 150 years later, as well as the story of the same madam's escape legal punishment six years later for running a house of ill repute.

Did this single story change the tide of battle? No. But may it have convinced other women of the validity of the cause? Remember, Anthony was never committed to a fast victory – only an eventual one. When her plans failed, she tried yet another strategy. But she never relented in her efforts to show that women were being constrained and harmed by consigning them to a separate sphere, rather than protected.

Susan B. Anthony: A Revolutionary, and Much More.

Anthony's statement, "when women associate with men in serious matters... both will grow stronger, and the world's work will be better done" clearly was the most unlikely prophecy when she proclaimed it. It proves the hard-headed Susan B. Anthony was a visionary, and a prophet.

More importantly, though, Anthony was far more. She put her efforts into creating change. Her trip to California may not have been a rousing success she had envisioned, but from May to October in 1871, her message was heard. For years to come, women and men across the continent would continue to hear her arguments, using examples from the headlines, as she did in Sioux City. Anthony planted the seeds that would grow within the listener. Her efforts to focus all women on a joint goal they could agree on would heal the rift she created in 1870, and bring the two female rights groups back together, first under Stanton, and then Carrie Chapman Catt.

Anthony positioned women for their eventual success in 1920, when those many scattered seeds from that 1871 trip blossomed and new women like Catt and Paul took the lead. They would accomplish her shared vision of securing the ballot for women, and thus, the all-important step toward achieving equality. But in the end, it took women, women whose names we do not know, marching, demonstrating, acting up and acting out, daily, to win the vote. They were following the lead, and leadership that Susan B. Anthony demonstrated. These many women were the result of the seeds Anthony planted for 50 years.

Notes:

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