

SUSAN B. ANTHONY
And Justice For All

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Preface

Susan B. Anthony led an exciting life and achieved great things. Working against injustice wherever she saw it, she crisscrossed the United States many times. She broke unfair laws in her effort to change them; “kidnapped” a woman from a cruel husband; faced angry mobs; and gathered 400,000 signatures asking Congress to outlaw slavery.

She was a person of immense energy, kindness, and daring who lived long enough to write her own history. In *Susan B. Anthony And Justice For All*, the author has stayed true to Susan’s own accounts but adjusted the dialogue for modern ears.

Susan was born in Adams, Massachusetts in 1820 in the first-floor bedroom of a spacious house near her father’s cotton mill in the Berkshire Mountains. She worked 50 years to achieve equal rights for women, but she never saw this goal accomplished during her lifetime. However, 14 years after her death, when Congress finally passed a law allowing women to vote in national elections, they named it after her.

Susan began as a simple Quaker girl and, throughout her 86 years, worked hard for every penny she earned. From her earliest days, her riches lay in the companionship of family and friends who believed that one person can make a difference. Even in her rather ordinary childhood there were hints of the great woman she would become.



Susan B. Anthony, in 1868, posed with her face turned,
probably to disguise her weak eye.

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Chapter One: 1820-1838

Why Can't a Woman . . . ?

Susan B. Anthony paced back and forth near the window above the street. It was the spring of 1838, and she was looking forward to going home from boarding school. After what seemed like hours, she saw what she was waiting for, and flung open the front door. Guelma, Susan's older sister, followed close behind.

Grabbing her skirts and petticoats in both hands, 18-year-old Susan rushed to the front hall of Miss Moulson's school for girls. For once she ignored her teacher's icy reminders that young ladies should walk instead of run.

Father climbed down from the carriage and stretched. Using the special speech of the Quakers, he teased his daughters, "Have thee been waiting, girls?"

"Only since dawn," said Guelma, 20, with a twinkle in her eye. Members of this tight-knit religious group dressed simply and said *thee* and *thou* instead of *you* and *your*.

Susan hoisted her bags up to the carriage and jumped in to sit beside her father and sister. Then the two girls quickly asked their father for details of every family member. Hannah, 17, wanted to be a teacher, Father replied. Daniel, 14, had recently carved a whistle

out of wood. Their shy 11-year-old sister Mary could hardly wait for Susan to walk through the door. Four-year-old Merritt was following his older brother everywhere these days. And for this homecoming, Mother would bake the special bread that Susan especially liked.



Bumping along in the carriage, Susan began savoring memories of the family she had been longing to see. She thought back on the courtship stories of her parents when they were young. Her mother, Lucy Read Anthony, had been raised a Baptist and enjoyed singing, dancing, and pretty clothes. In fact, when Father fell in love with her, Mother had been the most popular girl in the neighborhood. Mother loved Father so much that when she married him, she gave up most of her lighthearted ways out of respect for his plain Quaker customs. The family worshipped at the Quaker meeting house nearby where Susan's Aunt Hannah was a minister.

Guelma was two years old in 1820, when Susan was born in Adams, Massachusetts. Soon little Hannah was born, and the three sisters loved each other very much. When Susan was four, Mother became pregnant with their brother Daniel.

Shortly before the birth, Mother sent the three girls to Grandmother Read's for six weeks. Grandmother and Grandfather taught Susan to read, and the little girl so delighted in her new ability that she practiced for

long hours every day. But when the daughters returned home, Mother discovered that young Susan's left eye was crossing—apparently from eyestrain.

She urged Susan to stop reading so that her eyes could relax and return to normal, but every once in a while they still crossed. For this reason, Susan often felt self-conscious about her appearance. When she got older and had her picture taken, she usually turned her crossed eye away from the camera. In other pictures she wore glasses (which she did not truly need) to disguise that eye.

In 1826, when Susan was six years old, the Anthonys moved to Battenville in eastern New York. As Father built his business there, the tiny village grew, too. Within 10 years it had expanded from just a few houses to a thriving town with two churches, a store, a post office, a cotton factory, two mills, a tavern, and about forty homes, many of which he had constructed for his employees.

Two miles farther down the Battenkill River, he owned more factories and mills in Hardscrabble, a village as ugly as its name. There Father's business was so successful that he was able to build his family a brand new, 14-room home with all the modern comforts, including four fireplaces.

Father often made unusual choices and got away with them. Almost everyone, including many Quaker elders and preachers, drank liquor at all hours of the day and night. Father, however, disapproved of such drinking, so he refused to serve alcohol to the men who came to help build houses for his workers.

Father's business partner warned, "The men will not come to the 'raising' unless they can have their gin."

"Then the houses will not be raised," Father replied calmly, and sent out invitations anyway.

On house-raising day, Mother served pitchers of lemonade, gingerbread, donuts, and coffee, and no one seemed to miss the liquor. Best of all, not a single accident marred the project, and everyone went home sober.

Sitting in the carriage on her long ride home, Susan recalled Sally Ann, one of Father's workers whom she had grown to admire. The year Susan was 12, another millworker fell sick for two weeks and Father let Susan do that woman's job for full pay. Several times during those weeks the boss, Elijah, had wished for Sally Ann to come untangle the threads when they became caught in the machinery.

Susan asked her father why he didn't make Sally Ann the overseer. After all, the young woman seemed to know more about weaving than Elijah.

But Father replied firmly, "It would never do to have a woman overseer in the mill."

Susan loved her father deeply. Sometimes, however, the way he treated women just didn't make sense to her. Still, his opinions on education, women, and drinking had a lasting effect on her life.

As a Quaker, Father often repeated teachings given by his sister Hannah, who preached at the Sunday Meeting. Like others in his church, Father believed that both girls and boys should receive a good education. Because she grew up in both a family and a church circle where women's minds were valued, Susan

naturally assumed that such equality was normal. So when the town schoolmaster refused to teach Susan long division as a child, she ran home and protested this injustice to her father. Soon he started a school right in his own home. During the evenings, he offered classes to all of his millworkers—both women and men.

Most of the Quakers Susan knew ignored society's silly rules about women. They even called themselves "Friends" to everyone. Susan could not understand, then, why Father would encourage women to become smarter workers, but later ignore their skills and give the best jobs to men. Like other business owners, he paid his female employees only a portion of a man's wage. Susan thought this was unfair.

After a while she realized that some neighbors were equally puzzled by her father's views on women, but for a different reason. They thought that he was wasting his time, effort, and money on them. Like the schoolmaster, they could see no reason to teach girls much more than household duties. After all, wouldn't a woman always have a father or husband to take care of her? If so, then why did Daniel Anthony encourage all of his children to support themselves?

The neighbors shook their heads when Susan and her sisters spent the summers of their teenage years teaching school. Why did Friend Anthony allow his daughters to work when he was such a wealthy man? Shouldn't the girls be home helping their mother Lucy?

Susan wondered why her father did not hire servants. He could certainly afford them, and poor Mother could use an extra pair of hands. So although it was endless drudgery, Susan did all she could to help

with hauling water, spinning, weaving, sewing, washing, ironing, and preserving food for the family of eight.

For several years the busy household expanded to include even more people, such as the workers who built their new home. Of course, when Grandmother and Grandfather Read grew very old, Mother took them under her own roof and nursed them. Sometimes Mother herself became ill with the endless hard work.

When Mother's parents died, they wanted to give their daughter \$10,000, which was a large sum of money in those days. But Father's business had begun to fail, and he knew that if he and Mother accepted the money, they would have to use it to pay his debts. So Mother's brother Joshua agreed to keep the money for the Anthonys until all their debts were paid.



When Miss Moulson's girls' school was several miles behind, Father gently brought Susan back to the present with disturbing news. Susan and Guelma would not be returning to that school, he said. Like mist, the girls' holiday mood vanished as they heard the terrible facts: Father had lost everything in the bank difficulties that gripped the United States that year. He could no longer afford to keep the mills, the houses he had built for his workers, the store, or even their home and household goods.

How long until they had to sell? Susan wanted to know, her eyes a sea of concern. Father replied that they would have to start packing the house soon. All of the

Anthony's belongings would be sold at an auction next month.

Over the next few days they covered 300 miles from the school in Philadelphia to their home in eastern New York State. Everywhere they saw signs of the money troubles, which had begun when a change in the nation's banking system made money scarce. Factories and stores had closed, Father reported, and people had no work.

As Father steered the horses around the last corner of the street to the Anthony home, Susan viewed the house with a mixture of delight and sorrow. While at school she had written many homesick letters about her longing to be in the familiar place with those she loved. But now that she was here, the fine house, barn, and factories would have to be sold and Father would have to start over again. How would everyone in the family survive if Father had no money?

Susan never forgot how difficult it was to pack the items the family would sell to pay Father's debts. The big house with the polished floors and light green woodwork had always been orderly. She hated to take things apart and make a mess. Besides, getting everything ready for the auction was so hard on Mother.

One day while they were packing, Mother removed a pile of embroidered pillowcases from the dresser drawer and asked Mary to count them. Susan interrupted, "Oh, Mother, do we have to sell those? They were a wedding present from your mother, weren't they?"

Mother nodded sadly. "Yes, but everything must go on the list to be sold."

“Even our pocketknives?” called Daniel sadly from the room that he shared with his brother Merritt.

“Even the flour, coffee, tea, and sugar? And the silver spoons from Grandmother Read?” said Hannah, coming upstairs from the kitchen.

“Everything,” Mother replied.

Hannah wanted to know why they had to put Mother’s spoons into the auction. After all, those spoons had belonged to her long before she ever met Father. They didn’t have anything to do with his business debts, did they?

Yes, they did, Mother explained. When she married their father, everything she owned became his property. Under the law, the husband owned everything—he could even keep money that his wife earned and send their young children out to work. Of course, their father would never do that, she assured her children hastily.

Susan listened in silence. She had heard of fathers who became drunk and gambled away all the family’s money, leaving the wife and children to fend for themselves. Such a fate was too horrible to think about. At least her mother had been spared this sorrow, she thought gratefully.

Mary finally voiced the question that everyone had been wanting to ask: How would they live without food and clothing?

Uncle Joshua had offered to buy the things they needed most, Mother reassured her children. He would let the Anthonys use them and pay him back as soon as they could.

