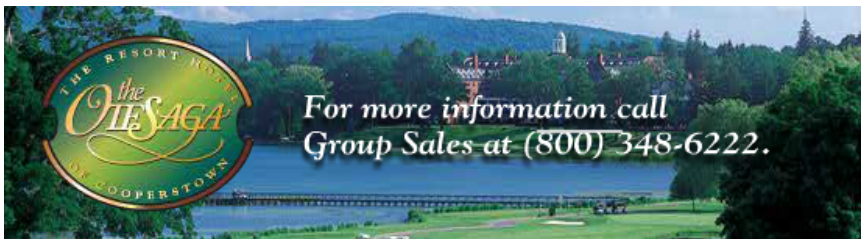


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Museum exhibit honors birth of women suffrage in New York

By Sara A. Emmert

March 08, 2010

Ten days before the 1917 November election, a banner was carried in a massive women's suffrage parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City. The banner read "1,006,503 Women in New York State Ask You to Vote for Women Suffrage Amendment No. 1 Nov. 6th." Two years later, New York state ratified the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that prohibited sex-based restrictions on the right to vote.



The Women Suffrage exhibit in the front lobby of the state museum displays a hand-crafted banner and wooden wagon that were used by suffragists in the early 1900s to get their voices heard. *Photo by Sara Emmert, The Legislative Gazette.*

Today that banner is displayed in the front lobby of the New York State Museum along with a large wooden wagon used in the suffrage movement to celebrate Women's History Month. The exhibit opened March 1 and runs through the end of April.

Robert Weible, state historian and chief history curator at the state museum, said there is a plan in the works to create a permanent history gallery in the museum of about 13,000 square feet. The gallery would include exhibits on the abolition movement, Civil War and fight for women's rights.



A photo of suffragist, Trixie Friganza, hangs above the exhibit. *Photo by Sara A. Emmert,*

The Legislative Gazette.

"I think our main point for the exhibit is that New York's women's history is nationally significant; it is Women's History Month, and a subject we recognize we haven't done with as much in the past as we would have liked to have done ... we want to do more with it, and we know that there is an audience for this and people who aren't part of that audience just haven't thought enough about it," said Weible. "This is an opportunity for them."

The wooden wagon in the exhibit was donated to the museum's collection by Margaret Kearns; it was used by her grandmother Edna Kearns in the suffrage movement. The wagon plays the central role in the exhibit, said Weible, because it was once adorned with hand-painted banners and signs and used as a speaker's platform for the outspoken women suffragists.

Built after 1820, the wagon was owned by a carriage salesman in Brooklyn. It was donated in 1913 to Edna Kearns and her cause, said Weible. "Spirit of 1776" was painted on the side of the wagon and covered in banners, including one that asked, "If taxation without representation in 1776, why not in 1913?"

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"The wagon spoke to me," said Ann Pfau, another museum historian who worked on the exhibit. "During President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in 1917, Kearns traveled to Washington with her young daughter Serena to participate in pickets."

"The banner and the wagon represent two different strands of the women suffrage movement — moderate and militant," said Pfau.

In 1917, the banner, which was purchased by the museum in 1974, was carried in a parade organized by suffrage moderates such as the National American Women Suffrage Association and its affiliates, said Pfau. "Other parade participants carried banners condemning suffrage militants who picketed the White House, even though the marchers and the militants worked toward the same goal."

Also in the exhibit are pictures borrowed from the Library of Congress depicting women suffragists in New York such as Trixie Friganza, Mrs. H. Riodan, Inez Milholland and Fay Hubbard.

The exhibit chronicles the history of the suffrage movement, which was officially sparked when Elizabeth Cady Stanton added the demand for equal suffrage to the Declaration of Sentiments at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, which she helped organize.

The declaration condemned male tyranny and claimed for women "all the rights and privileges" of citizenship. News of the convention sparked controversy and helped ignite a national movement.

"New York is where it all started," said Pfau.

"I can't think of any other state with a significant enough story to tell as New York," said Weible. "The women's movement of the 1970s and beyond has a big [state] story to tell as well. We would like to make women's history a much more permanent part of the museum."

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Importance of Regional Women's Suffrage Activities in NYS
March 09, 2010 | 08:35 AM

I am a writer and historian living in Charlton (Saratoga County). I have just written a book about the regional Women's Suffrage movement in Washington, Warren, and Saratoga Counties at the turn of the 20th century -- "Strength Without Compromise: Womanly Influence and Political Identity in Turn-of-the-Twentieth Century Rural Upstate New York." (Published by the American Classics Company, 2009) I know well the important contribution of the grassroots suffrage movements, and my book relates the special brand of suffrage work carried out by the women of rural areas who embraced their femininity for "the cause." I applaud the NYS Museum for embarking upon this tremendous exhibit - and their commitment to see to it that women's suffrage history becomes part of the permanent exhibition at the museum. Thank you!

Teri Gay

Museum exhibit honors birth of women suffrage in New York
March 09, 2010 | 12:42 PM


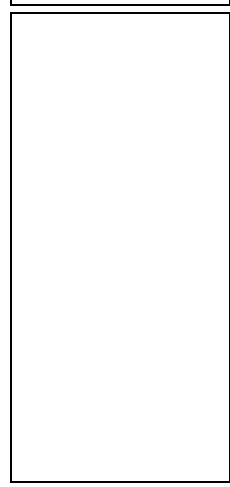
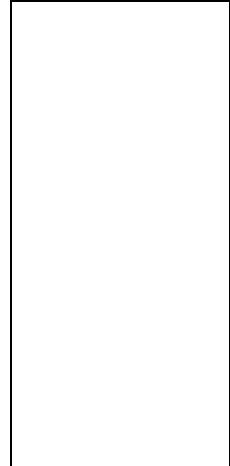
Well done New York State Museum! Please make this wagon and banner part of a permanent exhibit. What could be more important than equal rights for 51% of the population. I am proud that New York State is part of my history as a man and that the march toward woman's rights was part of our NY history. Kind regards,

Regis McCann

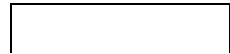
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