



The effort to gain women's rights in the United States began at a convention in New York State. But it was in the Western United States—Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho—where the women's movement found its first great triumphs. In this book, meet 25 Westerners who led the way.

With a foreword by Utahn Shannon Hale, Newberry Honor award-winning author of *Princess Academy*.

Includes illustrations, biographies and photos of women (and one man) who advocated for women's voting rights in the 19th century.

Explores the lives of people in the 20th century who further the work on behalf of women in a variety of industries and disciplines.

DISCOVER THE STORIES OF HEROES OF THE PAST. HOW DO THEY SHAPE WHO YOU ARE TODAY?

20 | BETTER DAYS | 20



CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

25 WOMEN WHO MADE HISTORY

Watkins
Kitterman

GIBBS SMITH

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25 WOMEN WHO MADE HISTORY

Naomi Watkins AND Katherine Kitterman

FOREWORD BY SHANNON HALE ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROOKE SMART

Jacketless Hardcover
7 x 9 in, 64 Pages
25 Illustrations and 25 photos
Pub Date: August 2019

\$16.99 U.S.
ISBN-13: 978-1-4236-5263-2
9 781423 652632

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FOREWORD

BY SHANNON HALE
NEWBERRY HONOR AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

Growing up as a girl in the 1980s, I was desperate to know more about women in history. In school and in church, almost all of the great and important people we learned about were men. I absorbed these stories and lessons, and in my own fragile heart I often wondered, do girls actually matter at all?

As I grew older, these questions only got louder. In high school, history focused on the doings of men, with barely one class period brushing over the women’s suffrage movement. In English class we studied novels written by men; in science we studied the discoveries of men; in Drama we performed plays written by men. I had a mind and a desire to use it, but I felt deeply unsure that as a girl, there was a place for me in this world.

I clung to the few women in history I learned about—Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria. I revered these women and longed to be like them. Women of power. Women who did things. But they were royalty from long ago and far away, so unlike little Utah girl Shannon. I could barely imagine stretching myself far enough to make room for the potential I felt blooming inside me.

I would have cherished stories of women closer to home, women who believed in equality, women who worked diligently to secure rights for all. Women who believed that girls do matter. Women like Emma McVicker, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, Zitkála-Šá, and Mignon Barker Richmond, who I’d never heard of before this book, despite the fact that we attended the same high school.

It’s vital for girls to read stories about all kinds of women—to hear about women in leadership, women in education, women who pushed boundaries and blazed trails. Reading these kinds of stories helps girls recognize more possibilities for their own lives. It’s also vital for boys to hear stories about all kinds of women—to grow up seeing and knowing that girls and women can be leaders and role models. Stories help us gain more empathy for others while enlarging our own lives. I know I will be sharing these stories with my son and my daughters.



SUSAN B. ANTHONY

NATIONAL CAMPAIGNER FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

February 15, 1820–March 13, 1906

Born: Adams, New York

Died: Rochester, New York

Activism, Writing

"We all rejoice . . . that Utah is a state with her women free and enfranchised."

"Failure is impossible."

One of America's best-known suffragists, Susan B. Anthony spent her life fighting for women's rights. Even though Susan was from the East and she opposed the Mormons' practice of polygamy, she formed strong ties with Utah suffragists. In turn, these women helped her campaign for national women's suffrage.

After Utah's female citizens were granted the vote in 1870, Susan and her close friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke in celebration in a five-hour meeting with 300 women in Salt Lake City. Though it cost Susan politically, she offered her friendship to these polygamous suffragists and invited them to participate in national suffrage conventions when others turned their backs on them. To show their appreciation, Utah suffragists sent Susan black silk produced by their woman-owned silk association. She had a cherished dress made from it, and it is displayed today in her bedroom in her Rochester, New York, home.

After Utah women lost their voting rights in 1887 due to federal anti-polygamy legislation, Susan urged them to ensure that a women's suffrage clause was included in their soon-to-be-proposed state constitution. She reasoned that it would be much easier to add suffrage into the constitution when it was drafted rather than after it was adopted, which was the challenge in Eastern states, including Susan's home state of New York. Once voting rights for Utah women were adopted again, Susan sent a telegraph: "Hurrah for Utah, No. 3 State—that establishes a genuine 'Republican Form of Government.'" She would return to Salt Lake City to congratulate the state on its suffrage win, speaking to a crowd of 6,000 as part of a suffrage convention for women in the West with fellow suffragist Reverend Anna Howard Shaw.

Susan was so beloved in Utah that upon her death, a memorial service was held for her in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Though she died fourteen years before the 19th Amendment passed, Susan left a lasting imprint on women in the United States.



EMMELINE B. WELLS

SUFFRAGE LEADER AND NEWSPAPER EDITOR

February 29, 1828–April 25, 1921

Born: Petersham, Massachusetts

Died: Salt Lake City, Utah

Activism, Religious Leadership, Writing

"I believe in women, especially thinking women."

Standing only five feet tall, Emmeline B. Wells was a leading suffragist who used her strong voice and pen to speak and write in support of women's rights. She was one of the first women in the United States to vote, and she led the charge to win voting rights back for Utah women after the U.S. Congress took them away. Emmeline was a frequent speaker at national and international suffrage conventions and traveled the Utah Territory as president of its suffrage association.

For nearly 40 years, Emmeline edited the *Woman's Exponent*, a newspaper that she used to voice her support for suffrage and other opportunities for women. She also kept a detailed diary and wrote numerous short stories and poems. Affectionately known as "Aunt Em," she mentored many others who became women's rights leaders, including her daughter, Annie Wells Cannon, who helped Emmeline with newspaper editing and became a state legislator. The newspaper office was an informal meeting place for women; many dropped in to share news with Emmeline or seek her advice. Emmeline also maintained lifelong friendships with national suffrage leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Shortly before Susan died, she had one of her gold rings sent to Emmeline as a token of their friendship.

Emmeline lobbied for over 30 years in Washington, D.C., meeting with legislators and four U.S. Presidents. Later, President Woodrow Wilson made sure to visit her during his travels to Utah. He wanted to thank her for selling 200,000 bushels of wheat to the U.S. government during World War I. The wheat had been saved under her management by her church's grain-saving project for the poor and needy—just one of many things she did in her leadership of the Relief Society, the Mormon women's organization. At the age of 82, she became its worldwide president and served in this position for 11 years until just a few weeks before her death—her commitment to women's rights never wavered.



MIGNON BARKER RICHMOND

COMMUNITY BUILDER WITH HEART

April 1, 1897–March 10, 1984

Born: Salt Lake City, Utah

Died: Salt Lake City, Utah

Activism, Education, Philanthropy, Politics, Religious Leadership

"My life has been children."

A professor told Mignon Barker Richmond, "You'll never get more than a 'C' from me because you're a Negro." Yet, she refused to let racism stand in her way and earned her degree in home living, textiles, and foods from what is now Utah State University, becoming the first African-American to graduate from college in Utah. Mignon (meaning "little flower of Africa") had no children of her own, but her second husband, Thomas had a toddler, Ophelia, from a previous marriage. Mignon raised her—and her community's children—as her own.

Even as a college graduate, it took Mignon a year and a half to be hired as a housekeeper due to racial discrimination. Mignon later worked as a cook and household manager until World War II, when wartime provided a need for her talents and skills. She was hired as a senior director of youth volunteers for the United Service Organizations (USO) and volunteered at the Red Cross and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

Twenty-seven years after earning her degree, Mignon had her first opportunity for employment in her field when she was hired to start a school lunch program, the first in the state. Five years later, she was hired to develop home-living classes at a youth correctional facility which led to her position as the YWCA Food Services Director. She stayed in this position until her retirement.

During President Lyndon Johnson's administration, Mignon headed the Women's Job Corps and was chairwoman of Project Medicare Alert, a program that hired workers to enroll seniors in Medicare. She also served with the Salt Lake Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was co-founder of the Nettie Gregory Center, a gathering place for minority youth groups to get involved in recreational activities, and worked on the Women's Legislative Council where she was instrumental in developing anti-poverty legislation.

Mignon received numerous awards and honors. In 1986, the NAACP, Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Calvary Baptist Church joined with others to dedicate Richmond Park in Salt Lake City, marked by a plaque acknowledging Mignon as an educator, civil rights leader, and humanitarian.



ANNIE DODGE WAUNKA

PUBLIC HEALTH PROMOTER

April 11, 1910–November 10, 1997

Born: Navajo Nation

Died: Flagstaff, Arizona

Education, Medicine, Politics, Science

"With support, you can do it."

"Bil dashdoolnih"

Annie Dodge Wauneka was born into the Tse nįjikíni (Cliff Dwelling People) Clan of the Navajo Tribe as daughter of Keehabah and Henry Chee Dodge. When the Indian boarding school on the reservation that Annie attended was hit by an influenza epidemic, she came down with a mild case while many of her classmates died. Her quick recovery allowed her to help care for the sick, influencing her life's work in public health.

Annie attended tribal council meetings with her father, a wealthy tribal leader, and traveled the reservation with him throughout parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, observing poor living conditions and the spread of disease. She viewed education and leadership as the best ways to make improvements. She earned a degree in public health from the University of Arizona and ran for office on the Navajo Tribal Council, becoming the second woman elected. In a later election, she defeated her husband, George, to keep her position. She would serve seven terms and raise six children with her husband as he continued to run a ranch owned by her father.

As a tribal leader, Annie chaired the health committee, launching public health campaigns about sanitary conditions, clean drinking water, alcoholism, influenza, and tuberculosis (TB).

Since the Navajo language didn't include translations for many medical terms, she created an English to Navajo medical dictionary to make healthcare more accessible and less intimidating to Navajo patients. She also encouraged the Public Health Service and hataalii (Diné traditional healers) to work together and appreciate the others' knowledge and contributions. On her weekly radio show broadcast in Navajo, Annie shared information about disease prevention and treatment.

Annie's work was not limited to the reservation; she served as a Girl Scouts leader and on national advisory boards of the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, received two honorary doctorate degrees, and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. An intelligent and confident advocate, the Navajo council honored Annie as the legendary mother of the Navajo people.



BARBARA TOOMER

POWERHOUSE IN THE DISABILITY RIGHTS COMMUNITY

August 26, 1929–April 24, 2018
Born: Pasadena, California
Died: Salt Lake City, Utah
Activism, Medicine, Military

*"We don't help people live with their disabilities;
we help people with disabilities live."*

Former first lieutenant in the United States Army Nurse Corps, Barbara Toomer contracted polio shortly after the birth of her first child, and lost the use of her legs. While she received treatment in the hospital, her father and a very good friend refused to visit her because they could not handle seeing her that way. She then started to understand that she was no longer welcome in certain places. Although confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life, Barbara refused to slow down or give up. Her husband engineered multiple contraptions to keep her mobile and allow her to maintain her independence and raise their three children. Undeterred by her physical limitations, Barbara Toomer was a leading disability rights advocate for over forty years.

The buses where Barbara lived were not accessible to people with disabilities, so she organized and participated in non-violent public protests. She led "crawl-ons" where protesters would throw themselves out of their wheelchairs and drag themselves onto buses to illustrate how challenging it was for people with disabilities to use public transit. They also chained themselves to buses, shutting down every bus route in the city. Over the course of her life, Barbara was jailed at least 35 times due to her activism, yet she never backed down.

On a national level, Barbara participated in the rallies and protests in Washington, D.C. that led to the passage of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and was among the throngs of activists who attended a U.S. Senate committee hearing on the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. She also started Advocates for Utah Handicapped, an organization devoted to disability rights activism; served as a plaintiff against local cab companies for not being ADA-compliant; and lobbied for Medicaid expansion.

Barbara's later activism focused on co-founding an independent living center, allowing persons with disabilities to live at home instead of being institutionalized in hospitals and nursing homes. Because of Barbara's empowering activism for legal protections and public accommodations, people with disabilities are able to participate more fully in their communities.