

THE Art of Suffrage

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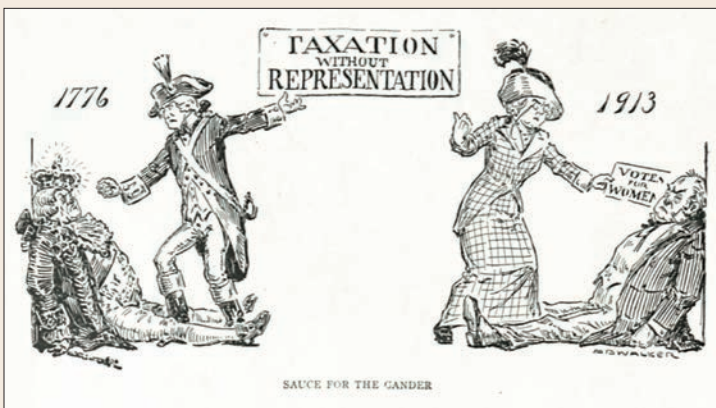
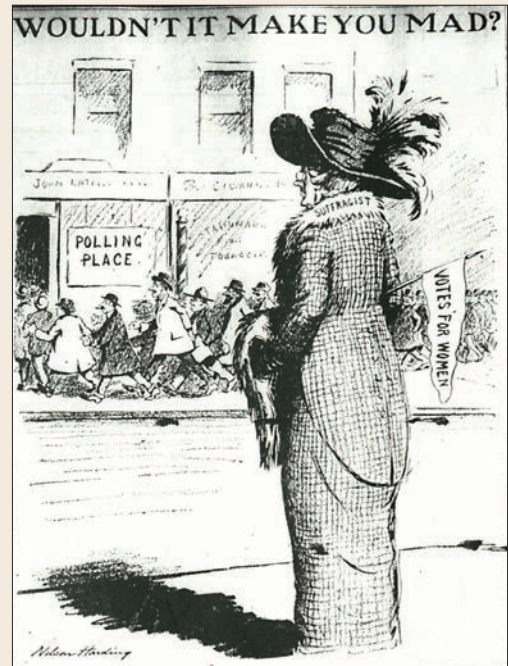
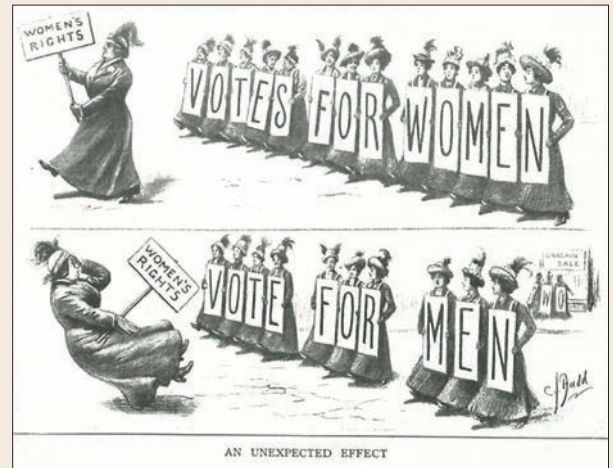
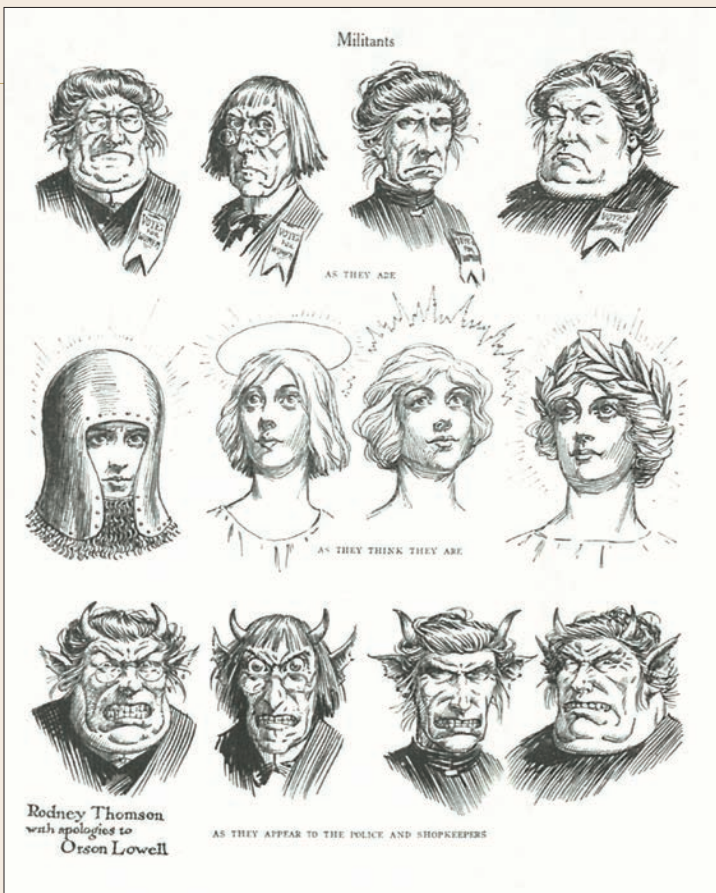
The editorial cartoon hit its stride right when the women's suffrage movement needed it most, adding wit and humor to the cause in the 1910s. Advances in newspaper publishing and editorial cartooning brought the issue to the forefront, helping women in the United States get the vote in 1920.

The 1840s proved to be crucial moments in the history of printing and woman suffrage. In 1843, Richard Hoe developed a practical

steam-powered rotary press, which speeded up the process of printing newspaper pages. In New York State, six women from Depauville, a hamlet in Jefferson County, kickstarted the cause in 1846 when they signed a petition and sent it to the men participating in the state's constitutional convention in Albany. The petition stated that "the present government of [New York State] ... den[ies] to the female portion [of the state] the right of suffrage" and it asked the men to

modify "the present Constitution of this State, so as to extend to women equal, and civil and political rights with men." Their plea was not incorporated into the new constitution.

Sixty-one years passed before women in New York State were granted the right to vote in 1917; it then took three more years for the federal government to award the franchise to women throughout the United States. Sixty-one years of drafting declarations (the 1848 Seneca



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Falls declaration of sentiments based on the 1776 Declaration of Independence); "voting" and then being put on trial for "voting" (Susan B. Anthony, 1872-1873); riding the train to Albany to lobby the state legislature (1870s-1890s); taking "a quiet walk" (Maud Malone, 1908); and then boldly parading down Fifth Avenue in New York City (1910-1913). Each of these events generated a certain amount of newspaper coverage. But it was never enough to win the vote.

The cartoonists were a little slow at becoming proficient at the task of satirizing social issues. Benjamin Franklin's famous 1754 "Join, or Die" displayed what constituted a good editorial cartoon—witty; based on fact, but exaggerating beliefs and/or prejudices; and using big, simple pictures with a minimum of text. But political cartoonists struggled to find that voice until Thomas Nast pointed the way in his attacks on William Tweed in the 1870s. Also, cartoonists needed

the development of lithography to enable them to quickly respond to breaking news with a picture. By the 1910s, newspaper publishers, editorial cartoonists and the leaders of the woman suffrage movement had found a collective voice. The cartoons made people smile, but also think. In 2020, we celebrate the centennial of women's suffrage in the United States. These cartoons are an important and engaging part of that history. ■