

1885

First Female Suffragist Movement in Nebraska

Amelia Bloomer

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All items named after the Spanish coin donated by Mr. Woods, were presented by Robt. W. Furnas.

An Indian scalping knife, presented by F. J. Hendershot, Esq., of Hebron, was taken in a fight between Indians and whites in Thayer county at an early day.

FIRST FEMALE SUFFRAGIST MOVEMENT IN NEBRASKA.

Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, Council Bluffs, Iowa, under date of Dec. 26th, 1878, furnishes the following, relating to the first female suffragist movement in Nebraska. She prefaces with this historic note :

My first visit to Omaha was July 4th, 1855. The day was being celebrated. Omaha was then a small place. The Douglas House was the only hotel. The speaker's stand was erected in front of it, across the road. The dinner table was out doors, on the east side of the street. Acting Governor Thomas Cuming was the orator. Omaha was then but eight months old.

On the 29th Dec., 1855, I received an invitation, of which the following is a copy:

OMAHA, N. T., Dec. 23, 1855.

Mrs. Amelia Bloomer:

The undersigned would respectfully invite you to deliver an address on Woman's Rights, or any other subject you may select, in the Hall of the House of Representatives, on any evening that suits your convenience, during the sitting of the legislature.

B. R. FULSOM.	WM. LARIMER, JR.
C. B. SMITH.	J. STERLING MORTON.
H. C. ANDERSON.	A. D. KIRK.
WM. CLANCY.	L. HARSH.
A. F. SALISBURY.	J. H. DECKER.
THOS. GIBSON.	J. M. THAYER.
J. H. SHERMAN.	A. A. BRADFORD.
C. W. PIERCE.	T. R. HARE.
P. C. SULLIVAN.	M. W. RYDEN.
W. A. FINNEY.	W. E. MOORE.
E. B. CHINN.	C. McDONALD.
J. HOOVER.	S. A. CHAMBERS.
W. B. BECK.	

The following is my reply ; this correspondence was published in an Omaha paper, and from that I copy :

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA, Dec. 31, 1855.

GENTLEMEN—Your favor of the 28th inst., extending to me an invitation to lecture in your city during the sitting of the legislature, is received.

Feeling, as I do, the importance of the Woman's Rights movement, and its bearings upon the welfare of the whole human race—realizing most deeply the injustice done to woman by the laws of our country in relation to the property rights of married women, &c., I shall take pleasure in complying with your request by presenting for the consideration of your citizens generally, and the members of the legislature particularly, some thoughts on the question of woman's right of franchise. It will afford me especial gratification to bring this subject before you at this time, when your legislature is about adopting a code of laws for the government of the territory.

Should it meet your wishes, I will be with you on Tuesday evening, the 8th of January, or at such other time as will best suit your convenience.

Respectfully,

AMELIA BLOOMER,

To Wm. Larimer, Jr., J. H. Sherman, and others.

A correspondent of the *Chronotype*, of this city, wrote from Omaha of this lecture as follows :

Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, who had been formerly invited by member of the legislature and others, arrived at the door of the State House at 7:00 o'clock P.M., and by the gallantry of Gen. Larimer, a passage was made for her to the stand. The house had been crowded for some time with eager expectants to see the lady and listen to the arguments which were to be adduced as the fruitage of female thought and research. When all had been packed into the house who could possibly find a place for the sole of the foot, Mrs. Bloomer arose, amid cheers. We watched her closely, and saw that she was perfectly self-possessed—not a nerve seemed to be moved by excitement, and the voice did not tremble. She arose in the dignity of a true woman, as if the importance of her mission so absorbed her thoughts that timidity or bashfulness were too mean to entangle the mental powers.

She delivered her lecture in a pleasing, able, and, I may say, eloquent manner that enchained the attention of her audience for an hour and a half. A man could not have beat it.

In mingling with the people next day we found that her argument had met with much favor. As far as property rights are concerned, all seemed to agree with the lady that the laws of our country are wrong, and that woman should receive the same protection as man. All we have time to say now is, that Mrs. Bloomer's arguments on Woman's Rights are unanswerable. We may doubt the policy for women to vote, but who can draw the line and say that naturally she has not a right to do so? Mrs. Bloomer, though a little body, is among the great women of the United States; and her keen, intellectual eye seems to flash fire from a fountain that will consume the stubble of old theories until woman is placed in her true position in the enjoyment of equal rights and privileges. Her only danger is in asking too much.

Respectfully,

ONEIDA.

So much interest was created by the lecture that a bill was drawn up and introduced into the legislature giving to woman the right of franchise. This bill, I think, was drawn and presented by Gen. Wm. Larimer, formerly of Pittsburgh, Pa. It was not until the last day but one of the session that this woman suffrage bill came up, by special order of the House. A number of ladies were present to hear the discussion. Gen. Larimer spoke ably and eloquently in favor of the bill. On the vote being taken, it stood as follows: Yeas—Messrs. Boulwere, Campbell, Buck, Chambers, Clancy, Davis, Hail, Decker, Haygood, Hoover, Kirk, Larimer, Rose, Sullivan.—14. Nays—Messrs. Beck, Bowen, Gibson, Harsh, Laird, Miller, Moore, Riden, Morton, McDonald, Salisbury.—11.

Having passed the House, it was sent to the Council, where it was twice read, but failed, for want of time, of coming to a third reading.

The session was limited to forty days—it was drawing to a close—there was considerable wrangling and excitement over county boundaries, removal of the capital from Omaha, etc.—men talking to kill time until the last hour of the session expired, and the woman suffrage bill not again reached, and so was lost.

There was no little excitement concerning the matter, pending the action of the legislature on the bill and afterward. Gen'l William Larimer was the special exponent of the bill. The opponents presented him with a petticoat, over which there came near being a general melee.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REV. WILLIAM HAMILTON.

Every old settler in Nebraska will remember "Father Hamilton," early and so long a missionary among the western Indians. I solicited his biography for this report from his own pen. The following letter in response I feel would be marred if it were changed, even in the "dotting of a single 'i,' or the crossing of a 't.'" I therefore present it just as it came to me.

DECATUR, BURT COUNTY, NEBRASKA,
May 22nd, 1884.

Robt. W. Furnas, Esqr., Brownville, Neb.:

MY DEAR FRIEND—Your kind favour of March was duly received, and it was then my intention to comply with your request as