

Historical Background

In the Utah Territory, women were **enfranchised** in 1870, gaining the right to vote nearly two decades before statehood. Though Wyoming was the first territory to grant women's **suffrage** in 1869, Utah was the first to hold an election in which women actually voted.

In 1887, women in Utah lost their right to vote when the Edmunds-Tucker Act was passed. This act aimed to end polygamy within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints but also revoked women's **suffrage** in the territory.

“This Act disincorporated the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, seized church assets, barred polygamists from voting and from jury service, disenfranchised women, replaced sympathetic local (mostly Mormon) judges with federally appointed judges, and took other actions to compel an end to polygamy. Church leaders sued on First Amendment grounds, but the Supreme Court again ruled against them. Thousands were disenfranchised under this act and top LDS leaders went into hiding to avoid arrest.” - Adam R. Brown, Utah Politics and Government: American Democracy among a Unique Electorate

This right was restored with the ratification of Utah's state constitution, which declared, “The right of citizens of the State of Utah to vote and hold office shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex.” - Utah Constitution, Article IV

Important Figures in the History of Utah Suffrage

Seraph Young: the first woman in the United States to vote under a women's equal suffrage law.

<https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/bios/seraph-young/>

Martha Hughes Cannon: the first female state senator in the United States. She was also the first woman in Salt Lake City to register to vote. When she ran for state senate, she ran against her husband and beat him.

<https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/bios/marthahughescannon/>

B.H. Roberts: Delegate in the Utah Constitutional Convention. Opposed women's suffrage vehemently. p. 939

“Utah voters elected LDS leader B.H. Roberts to the U.S. House in 1898. Fearing that the LDS church would use Roberts to maintain political influence, the House refused to seat him, citing his polygamous past as a pretext.” -Adam R. Brown, Utah Politics and Government: American Democracy among a Unique Electorate

<https://www.betterdays2020.com/blog/2018/10/18/contention-at-the-convention>

Heber M. Wells: Delegate in the Utah Constitutional Convention. Argued in favor of women's suffrage. p. 977

Original Minutes of the Proceedings and Debates of the Utah State Constitutional Convention

<https://le.utah.gov/documents/conconv/utconstconv.htm>