

Innovative Iowans: Carrie Chapman Catt

Activity Overview: The right to vote has not always been granted to every Iowan due to race or gender. Through the hard work of suffragists, like Iowan Carrie Chapman Catt, women were granted the right to vote nationally in 1920. In this month's Innovative Iowan activity, learn about Iowa suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt and her lifetime of work supporting women's rights. Afterwards, young historians can create and design a ribbon like those worn by suffragists in the early 1900s.

Connection to Iowa History

In 1866, Carrie Lane, eventually to be known as Carrie Chapman Catt, and her family moved to a farmstead a few miles outside of Charles City. Catt had many successes during her life, in and outside of Iowa. Catt graduated as the only woman in her class from the Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University) in 1880. In 1883, she became one of the first women in the nation appointed superintendent of schools in Mason City, Iowa. She served as the state organizer of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association from 1890-1892. After joining the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), she succeeded Susan B. Anthony as the group's president between 1900-1904. In 1904, she became a leader in the formation of the International Woman Suffrage Association. After returning to lead NAWSA in 1915, her "Winning Plan" helped lead to the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920.



After the amendment passage, Catt founded the League of Women Voters and served as honorary president until 1947. Following World War I, she focused on international peace by organizing a group called the Committed on the Cause and Curse of the War and later working on behalf of German Jewish refugees prior to the start of World War II. Catt passed away on March 9, 1947.



What is a Suffragist?

A suffragist is a person who advocates for the right to vote to be extended to more people. Voting is important because it gives a person a say in decisions that affect them. People supporting this cause sometimes wear ribbons or buttons on their shirts to show they support the movement.

Instructions [\(Video Instructions Available\)](#)

- 1 Draw.** A ribbon consists of three shapes - a large circle and two long rectangles with v-shapes cut out from one end of each rectangle. The circle will be the rosette and the two rectangles are the ribbons coming down from the circle. On a sheet of paper, draw the three shapes. For the circle you can trace around a mug or drinking glass. For the long rectangles, draw them twice as long as the diameter (length from top to bottom) of your circle. Remember to add the v-shapes to one end of each rectangle.
- 2 Decorate.** Color and decorate the shapes. The women's suffrage movement used the colors purple, white, and gold to represent the cause. Purple signifies loyalty, white signifies purity, and gold signifies light and life. You can also search online for inspiration.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

- Printer Paper
- Crayons, Colored Pencils, or markers
- Scissors
- Safety Pin (optional)
- Tape (optional)

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Instructions continued

- 3 **Cut.** Use your scissors to cut out the shapes following the outlines you drew.
- 4 **Attach.** To create the ribbon, flip all the shapes design-side down on a flat surface. Using tape, attach each rectangle shape, using the non v-shaped ends, to the back of the circle going the same direction. The rectangles should overlap slightly.
- 5 **Wear.** You can wear the ribbon on your shirt by either attaching it to a safety pin or using a tape loop. The ribbon can also be hung up for display.
- 6 **Share!** After you complete your ribbon, share your work with the State Historical Museum of Iowa. Email a photo to museum.education@iowa.gov. We want to share your creation with others!
- 7 **Questions to Spark Learning**
 - Wearing ribbons and buttons was one way people could show support for the suffrage movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s. How do you show support for causes that are important to you? How has technology changed the ways you can show your support?
 - Do you think suffrage is important? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think some people didn't want to allow women the right to vote?
- 8 **Additional Resources**

If your young historian would like to learn more about this topic, explore these additional resources below.

 - [Carrie Chapman Catt Girlhood Home and Museum](#)
 - [Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University](#)
 - [Iowa Women's Suffrage Collection Flickr Album](#) - State Historical Society of Iowa
 - [19th Amendment Centennial Celebration](#) - State Historical Society of Iowa
 - [Women's Suffrage in Iowa Online Exhibit](#) - Iowa Women's Archives
 - [Carrie Lane Chapman Catt Activity](#) - Iowa PBS
 - [Carrie Chapman Catt Primary Sources](#) - Library of Congress
 - [Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote](#) - Library of Congress