



The Trial of Susan B Anthony (Classics in Women's Studies)

Susan B. Anthony

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On January 24, 1873, Susan B. Anthony was indicted by a grand jury for voting, "knowingly, wrongfully, and unlawfully ... the said Susan B. Anthony being then and there a person of the female sex."

The subsequent trial, in which Anthony was convicted of breaking the law by casting a vote, became one of the most famous trials of the nineteenth century. Far from defeating the fledgling movement for women's suffrage, the trial brought more publicity to the issue than it had ever received before. This was largely due to Anthony's clever stratagem of publishing a one-volume edition of the trial proceedings, then shrewdly using it as a public relations ploy for a campaign to rally women to "The Cause."

This new paperback edition of the original volume includes an engrossing introduction by former ABC News correspondent Lynn Sherr (author of *Failure Is Impossible: Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*), who puts the trial in historical context. As Sherr points out, perhaps the most outrageous aspect of the proceedings was the peremptory manner in which the judge came to his decision. After reading a prewritten statement that was clearly in favor of the prosecution, he concluded, "[T]he jury should be directed to find a verdict of guilty." He thereby prevented the jury from exercising its duty to render a decision.

Anthony later called the judge's action "The greatest outrage History ever witnessed." When given the opportunity of making a final statement, she responded: "Your denial of my citizen's right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law, therefore, the denial of my sacred rights to life, liberty, property."

Despite repeated attempts to silence her, she went on and on delivering the most passionate and eloquent speech of her life.

No musty historical document, *The Trial of Susan B. Anthony* is alive with the drama of an exciting time, when the hard-fought gains that women enjoy today still hung in the balance.

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