

Susan B. Anthony's Trips to Perinton By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

The year was 1845, when Susan B. Anthony, traveling with her family, first came to Perinton. Or more likely, passed through on the Erie Canal, on their way west to Rochester. Just 25 years old at the time, she and her family were in financial difficulty, and relocated from Battenville, Washington County. She returned to Perinton at least three more times in her life, following her passion and life's work in pursuit of equal rights for women.



In June of 1873, at age 53, Miss Anthony was tried and convicted for the crime of voting in the election of 1872. In the months prior to the trial, she traveled, speaking to groups in many nearby communities. On March 25th, she appeared in Fairport at Shaw's Hall on West Avenue. Her diary entry for that day states: "Fairport – Shaw's Hall. Reverend and Mrs. Butler very cordial. Fine audience. Hardest hotel bed. Added to cold, just about all I can do to keep going. Then to bed, so many sick ones at home." Ten days later, she met with a group in Egypt. In her diary, she wrote: "Egypt – Cullen Loud – school house. Wm. Becker. Ankle better, but fiery looking still. No pain in it. Only lame when I walk. Small audience."

An 1894 newspaper advertisement announced what was likely her next visit to this community. "Miss Susan B. Anthony will address the women of Perinton, at the Methodist Church, Fairport, Friday evening the 27th inst at 7:30 o'clock. Gentlemen as well as ladies are

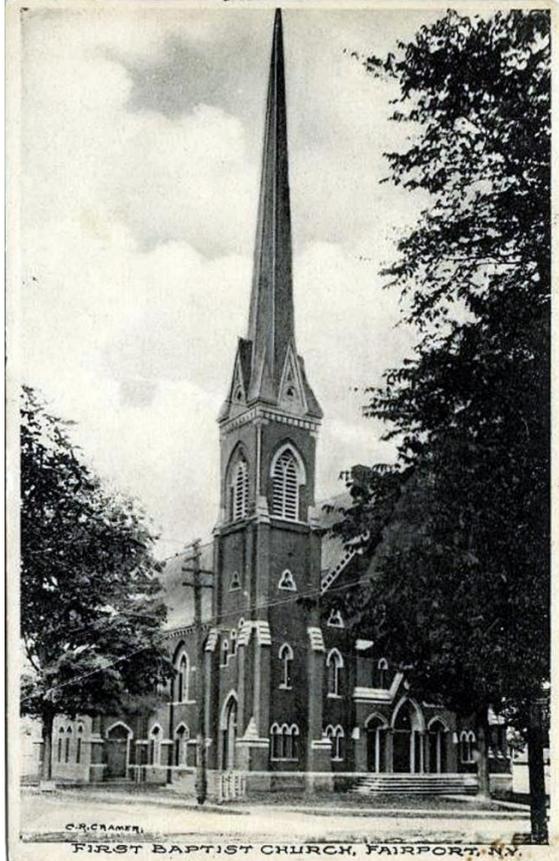
invited. Admission free.” Now 74 years old, her diary entry included the following: “Church filled with women – was a score of men among them. No proper ventilation, the heat was smothering.”



Based upon her diary entry of April 4, 1873, it appears Susan B. Anthony spoke on that day at the district 4 schoolhouse in Egypt.

Just three years before her death in 1906, the now iconic Susan B. Anthony once more visited Fairport. The event was the 12th annual convention of the Monroe County Political Equality Club, held at the Fairport First Baptist Church on June 9th, 1903. Her diary mentions that before leaving home for Fairport, she “sent 47 letters and 8 packages.”

Upon her arrival in Fairport, Anthony spoke briefly in the afternoon session, as did a local woman, Mary A. Butts, known for her civic contributions in the community. In her diary, Anthony entered the following notes: “Monroe County Political Equality Association annual convention in Fairport, 9 miles east of Rochester. Reverend Anna H. Shaw was with us. Was a good audience in the Baptist Church. Reverend E.E. Knapp the minister – his wife a fine woman.”



*Fairport First Baptist Church,
site of the 12th annual
convention of the Monroe
County Political Equality Club
in 1903.*

Susan B. Anthony, now 83 years of age, was escorted from the church to the New York Central passenger station, and took the short train ride to Rochester. She died just three years later, in 1906. Fourteen years after her death, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted most, but not all women, the right to vote. Many minority women remained disenfranchised, and did not gain the right to vote for years to come.

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