



# Not Right Now, Grace!

The True Story of  
Susan B. Anthony's Famous Picture

Anne O'Brien Carelli

In the late 1800s, Susan B. Anthony met Grace Woodworth, a young photographer and entrepreneur from Seneca Falls, New York. They developed a close friendship, and Grace spent many hours at Susan B. Anthony's home, where Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Hester C. Jeffrey, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton often visited.

This true story, based on primary sources (including Grace's journal, notes from Susan B. Anthony, and photographs), shows how "Miss Anthony" finally agreed to let Grace take her picture, resulting in the iconic photographs that are in history books today. (The author, Anne O'Brien Carelli, is a descendant of Grace Woodworth.)



Grace Woodworth



All of the church bells were ringing.  
Fire! Our town was on fire!

The flames were so hot the water-filled hoses were burning.

I rushed to set up the tripod for my bulky camera.

My clothes were stained with sweat and soot, but I didn't care.

How I loved to take pictures!

Mr. Wayne is  
selling this  
morning  
paper on  
a dry goods  
box at the  
street.

14 Johnston St.  
Seneca Falls, N.Y.  
July 20, 1890.

Dear Sisters,

Seneca Falls has  
received a death blow, dealt  
by the hand of a saloon.  
At 3.21 this morning we were  
aroused by the fire bells  
ringing as if for life.  
We looked from the window  
and saw it was near and  
a terrible fire. Elmer went.  
Soon someone shouted in  
the street. "Sanderson, Story  
Wayne, Pollard, Blodgett,  
business men! Fall street  
is in flames, rescue your  
books. The town is doomed."

But Mother didn't approve.

"No more photos today, Grace Woodworth!"

She wanted me to act like a lady, get married, and go to tea parties.

She wanted me to stay close to home.



**But I wanted  
to be on my  
own, free to  
explore.**



I loved to paint and take pictures of my neighbors in Seneca Falls, my little town in New York State.

I studied the artistic techniques of painters like Rembrandt and Monet and experimented with light and shadow in my photos.

It was my dream to open a photography business.



But in the 1800s women weren't expected to be independent. And they certainly weren't supposed to own businesses! But I forged ahead.

First I opened a studio in the Cuddleback block of my hometown, and was in great demand to create portraits of friends and neighbors. I was on my way.

I took the risk and set up a new shop in Rochester, New York, a bustling boomtown.

Unmarried women in the city had to live in grungy boardinghouses. The streets were muddy and the buildings shabby, but Rochester was the center of new ideas and constant activity.



I decided to design a peaceful, elegant studio, a quiet spot in the busy city. It had an abundance of light, tall palm plants, soft drapery, and hand-painted backgrounds for my photos.



I rolled out thick rugs and arranged pieces of furniture several different ways, until I got it right.

I lifted heavy cameras and spent hours in the darkroom with glass plates and dangerous chemicals.

I was proud of my little shop.

**I had no idea that someday I would take a picture that would be famous all over the world.**

I needed customers, so I created advertisements that were modern and enticing, and took pictures of my friends at square dances, parties, croquet matches, and picnics.



**CHRISTMAS PHOTOGRAPHS.**

Our Fall display of Photographs shows the very latest ideas. Every little detail that could possibly add charm to

**OUR PORTRAITS**

has been carefully noted.

We would be pleased to have you come and see what we are doing for other people who require the best, and allow us to take your

**CHRISTMAS PICTURES**

as early as possible.

Bell Phone 44 J.

**WOODWORTH STUDIO**  
G. A. WOODWORTH  
85 Fall St., Seneca Falls, N. Y.

**"HANDSOME  
BABY,  
MADAM.**

You really have a right to be proud of it." Yes, indeed, and could the baby talk it would ask for

**A  
PHOTOGRAPH  
OF BABY**

to show its friends in years to come.

**CHILDREN'S  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
A SPECIALTY**

with us. Our photos of young or old are perfect and lifelike.



**WOODWORTH STUDIO**  
G. A. WOODWORTH  
85 Fall St., Seneca Falls, N. Y.

I also joined clubs that went ice skating on Lake Geneva and sailing on Lake Ontario.

I even learned how to drive a car, a rare skill for women of my time!

Soon I was very busy, with a steady flow of customers who wanted their pictures taken.



I specialized in pictures of families, women, and children, and posed them comfortably, using costumes and props such as toys, a wooden wagon, or a sleigh.





A newspaper, *The Reveille*, wrote about successful businesses and highlighted my shop!

*"Easter time usually brings a large number of ladies to the Woodworth Studio to be photographed in the new gown of the season."*

Every Sunday I went to church in my neighborhood.

That's where I met the famous Susan B. Anthony and her sister, Mary.

Miss Anthony was known all over the world as a strong voice against slavery, and she fought fiercely for women to be able to vote.

She gave a hundred speeches a year!

Sometimes she was hit with rotten eggs, especially when she wore pants, called "bloomers."





But Miss Anthony refused to quit. She traveled everywhere in the nation to promote a woman's right to vote.

She rode in a wagon to every county in New York State to fill pages of petitions, sometimes in heavy downpours and snowstorms.

Miss Anthony was a sweet, cordial lady with a gentle voice. Her blue eyes were keen behind her spectacles, and she had a rather severe mouth, but a wonderful smile.

It was hard to believe she was one of the most outspoken women in the world.

I asked politely if I could take her picture. She gave me one of her kind smiles.

“Not right now, Grace. I’m too old for more pictures.”

The Anthony sisters became my friends, and I spent many hours in their large home in Rochester.

They had fine old furniture, and a flood of light filled the house. There were books, pictures, and magazines everywhere.



THE ABOLITION CORNER OF MISS ANTHONY'S STUDY.

Miss Anthony showed me her special Abolition Corner in the study, with paintings, photos, and books pertaining to the subject.



As they sat in their comfortable old rocking chairs before a cheerful blaze in the fireplace, knitting and chatting, I noticed china cups from their mother's dowry, a beautiful old teapot, and a quilt Miss Anthony made as a girl.

They talked of famous people who were her friends.

We often had supper with well-known guests.

The table was set with embroidered linens, and dessert spoons presented to Miss Anthony by the Political Equality Club.

I met their close friend Hester Jeffrey and the famous Frederick Douglass and Carrie Chapman Catt.



Hester Jeffrey



Frederick Douglass



Carrie Chapman Catt



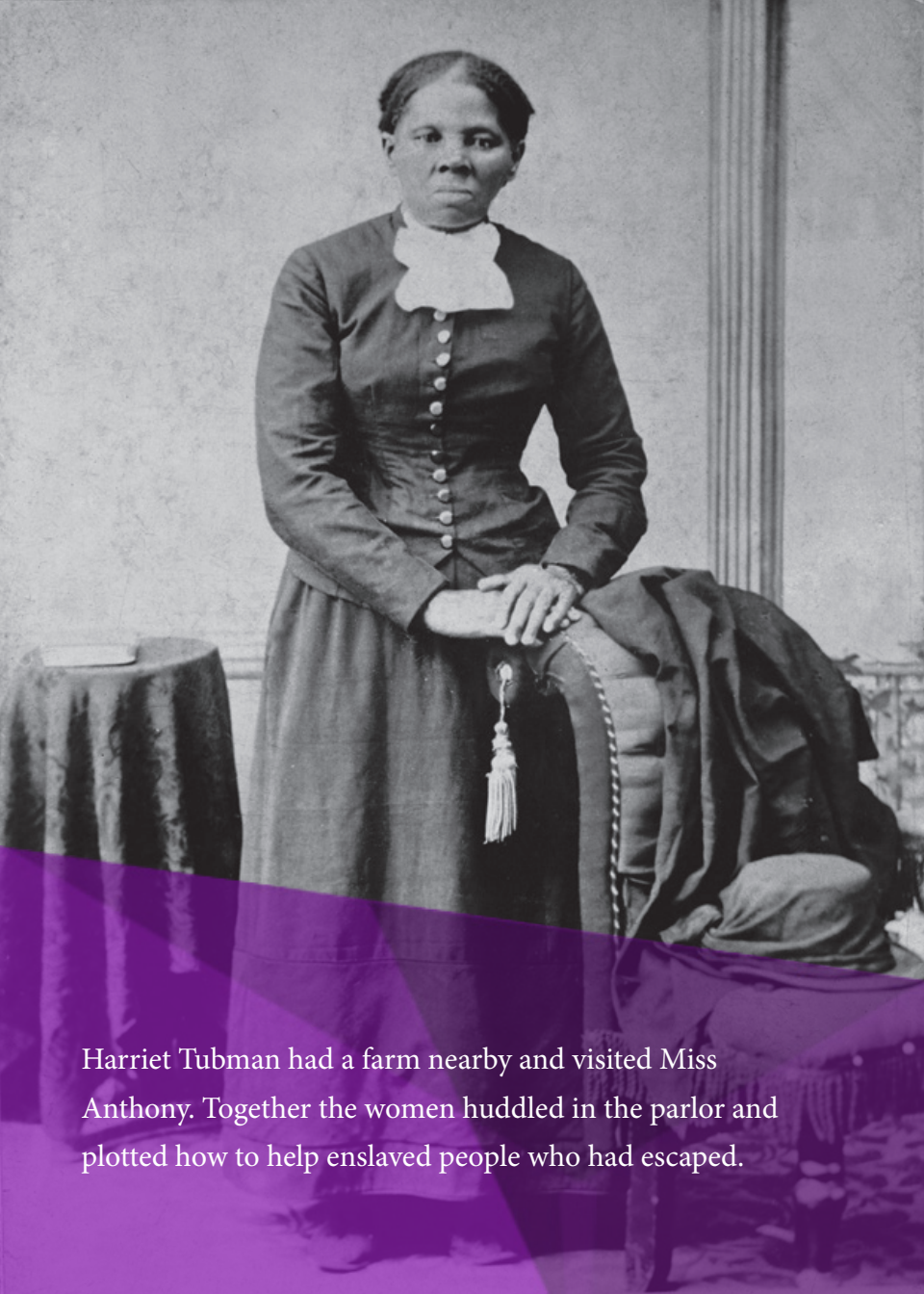
We laughed at Elizabeth Cady Stanton's stories about her house full of children, and were joined by her daughter, Harriot Stanton Blatch, to discuss books the women were writing.



*Top: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and daughters  
Right: Susan B. Anthony & Elizabeth Cady Stanton*



One of my favorite guests was the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, a minister and physician who told harrowing stories about fighting for women's rights and the freedom to preach.



Harriet Tubman had a farm nearby and visited Miss Anthony. Together the women huddled in the parlor and plotted how to help enslaved people who had escaped.



They all talked deep into the night about how to achieve suffrage for women, and how to end slavery.

**I often left supper at the Anthony house wanting to do something worthwhile, and the feeling that I had the ability to do it.**

I brought my camera to the house to capture pictures of these brave women.

But Miss Anthony shook her head. "Come join us, Grace. We can take photos at another time."



Sometimes the cupboards in the Anthony kitchen were empty. The sisters gave away their food to people who were hungry.

They were active in the Rochester Fortnightly Ignorance Club, working to educate women about the vital topics of the day and provide shelter, food, and medical care for women.

I thought these charitable women should be honored by a photo.

But Miss Anthony was too busy to stop for picture-taking. She had marches and rallies to lead!

**“Maybe later, Grace. Not right now.”**



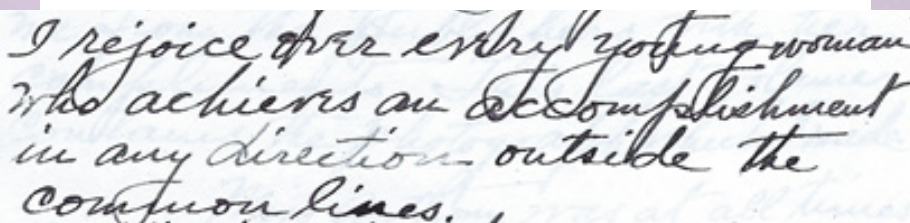
When Miss Anthony gave speeches, the crowds buzzed with excitement.

"Girls who pay their own way are the happiest!" she told them.

She fired me with enthusiasm for a cause that seemed heroic and worth fighting for.

At receptions she would introduce me to most of the notable people of the time, viewing them as possible customers. She was very shrewd and always interested in a woman in business for herself.

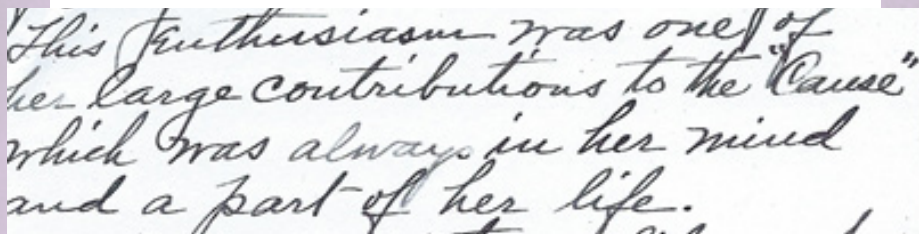
"I rejoice over every young woman who achieves an accomplishment in any direction outside the common lines," she commented.

A photograph of a handwritten note in cursive script. The ink is dark, and the paper appears aged. The text is written in a fluid, connected style typical of 19th-century handwriting. The quote is: "I rejoice over every young woman who achieves an accomplishment in any direction outside the common lines." The sentence ends with a comma and a period. There are some faint, illegible markings to the right of the main text, possibly from the reverse side of the paper or another page.

*I rejoice over every young woman  
who achieves an accomplishment  
in any direction outside the  
common lines. ,*

(From the notes of Grace Woodworth.)

But I was not invited to take pictures of her as she spoke. Miss Anthony wanted attention to her causes, not to herself.

A photograph of a handwritten note in cursive script. The text reads: "This enthusiasm was one of her large contributions to the 'Cause' which was always in her mind and a part of her life." The ink is dark on a light-colored paper.

*"(Her) enthusiasm was one of her large contributions to the "cause" which was always in her mind and a part of her life." (From the notes of Grace Woodworth.)*

One day on the way to a meeting, I rode the streetcar with the two sisters. An elderly black woman wearily climbed the steps, and Miss Anthony quickly stood up and offered her a seat.

No men on the streetcar stood up. Miss Anthony soundly lectured them about respect for all women.

I yearned to photograph the scene!

But I could imagine Miss Anthony's words.

**"Not right now, Grace."**



I still hoped the sisters might visit my studio, so I got everything ready.

I set up the best lighting and lined up my lenses. I tried all of the chairs to find the most comfortable ones.

I showed them albums of my photographs, including pictures of customers in fancy hats and natural poses.

It was unusual for photos to be informal at that time. Subjects sat stiffly, rarely smiling.

But Miss Anthony appreciated my skills and creativity. “You have fine talent and take a good picture, Grace. But not today.”



One evening, Miss Anthony was remembering the early days of her speeches.

I reminded her I was from Seneca Falls where the first convention about women's rights was held.

Signatures to the "Declaration of Sentiments" Set Forth by the First <b>Woman's Rights Convention,</b> held at <b>Seneca Falls, New York</b> July 19-20, 1848		
<b>LADIES:</b>		
Lucretia Mott Harriet Cady Eaton Margaret Pryor Elizabeth Cady Stanton Eunice Newton Foote Mary Ann M'Clinck Margaret Schooley Martha C. Wright Jane C. Hunt Amy Post Catherine F. Stebbins Mary Ann Frink Lydia Mount Delia Mathews Catherine C. Paine Elizabeth W. M'Clinck Malvina Seymour Phebe Mosher Catherine Shaw Deborah Scott Sarah Hallowell Mary M'Clinck Mary Gilbert	Sophronia Taylor Cynthia Davis Hannah Plant Lucy Jones Sarah Whitney Mary H. Hallowell Elizabeth Conklin Sally Pitcher Mary Conklin Susan Quinn Mary S. Mirror Phebe King Julia Ann Drake Charlotte Woodward Martha Underhill Dorothy Mathews Eunice Barker Sarah R. Woods Lydia Gild Sarah Hoffman Elizabeth Leslie Martha Ridley	Rachel D. Bonnel Betsey Tewksbury Rhoda Palmer Margaret Jenkins Cynthia Fuller Mary Martin P. A. Culvert Susan R. Doty Rebecca Race Sarah A. Mosher Mary E. Vail Lucy Spaulding Lovina Latham Sarah Smith Eliza Martin Maria E. Wilbur Elizabeth D. Smith Caroline Barker Ann Porter Experience Gibbs Antoinette E. Segur Hannah J. Latham Sarah Sisson
<b>GENTLEMEN:</b>		
Richard P. Hunt Samuel D. Tillman Justin Williams Elisha Foote Frederick Douglass Henry W. Seymour Henry Seymour	William S. Dell James Mott William Burroughs Robert Smallbridge Jacob Mathews Charles L. Hoskins Thomas M'Clinck	Nathan J. Milliken S. E. Woodworth Edward F. Underhill George W. Pryor Joel Bunker Isaac Van Tassel Thomas Deil

She was thrilled when I added with pride, "My Uncle Stephen was one of the few men at that meeting."

She declared that I was the perfect example of everything the suffragists had been fighting for.

She beamed at me and suddenly stood up. "On my eighty-fifth birthday you may take my picture!"

I could hardly contain my excitement as we looked through her wardrobe to find a special dress.

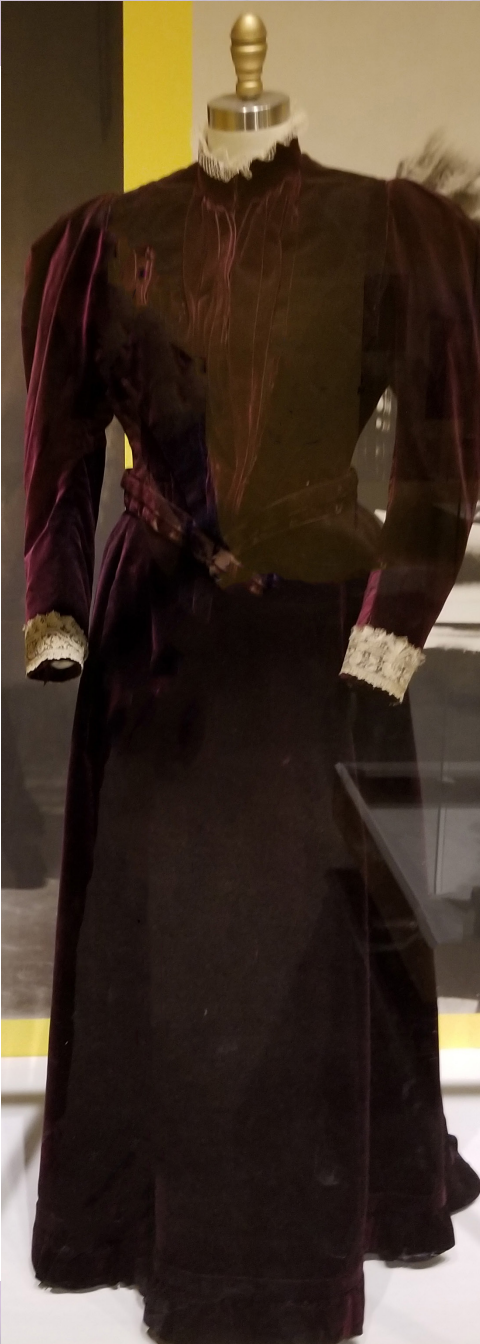
Miss Anthony wanted to wear her black taffeta, but I convinced her to choose her garnet velvet gown. She added her favorite lace collar.

I offered to pay for a carriage to take the sisters to my studio.

But Miss Anthony said, “Oh no, save your money. We prefer to take the streetcar.”

I rushed back to the shop, dusted the chairs, and set up my best tea and hot chocolate service.

I was ready!





When the sisters arrived, Miss Anthony took off her bonnet and shawl. “Today’s the day, Grace!”

I remembered her stories and wanted to take a picture that captured Miss Anthony’s fight for rights and freedom.

I wanted to capture the glowing fire of enthusiasm I’d seen in my friend, but her eyes were weary.

“It has been a long, hard fight, a dark, discouraging road,” she told me. “But all along the way bright spots to cheer me on.”

She deserved a dignified photograph, and I highlighted the lovely folds of her gown and used a soft focus so she would emerge from the dark.



Days later Miss Anthony invited me to her house for supper and gave me two volumes of the story of her life.

She had written special notes inside:

“This is given in slight recognition of my pleasure at your success in the art of photography.”

“As a slight token of my thankfulness for the beautiful photographs of myself and my sister Mary, I present these volumes of my biography. Affectionately, your friend, Susan B. Anthony.”



*Susan B. Anthony and  
her sister Mary.*

Reporters all over the globe heard about my photos.

There was an avalanche of calls for prints! “Can you send them right away, Grace?”

“Of course,” I responded, as I hung Miss Anthony’s picture in my studio. “I’ll be happy to do it today.”



## Author's Note

The first Women's Rights Convention was held in 1848 in Grace Adelle Woodworth's hometown of Seneca Falls, New York. One hundred of the participants, including Grace's Uncle Stephen, signed a Declaration of Sentiments that declared men and women to be equal. The convention was a major step in the national fight for human rights.

In 1872, the year Grace was born, Susan B. Anthony, an outspoken antislavery activist and suffragist, was arrested in the nearby city of Rochester. She was trying to vote in the presidential election even though women were not allowed to vote. She continued to travel worldwide to fight for the abolishment of slavery and the right for women to vote.

At that time, many women worked in low-paying, menial jobs such as factory work in textile mills and staff positions in wealthy households. Grace's friends were permitted to work in professions where they could help people or support men, such as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and social workers. But once they were married, they stopped working. It was almost impossible for women to enroll in college, own a business, or become doctors or lawyers.

But Grace had always been independent, and had no desire to get married. She had an impish sense of humor and was even sent home from school one day because the teacher said that Grace would not stop whispering!

Grace loved her little town of Seneca Falls, but wanted to strike out on her own. So she cut her hair very short and headed for Rochester, New York, the center of major reform movements. A friend visited Grace's new studio and wrote home, "*Grace is prim and proper, but not as prim as she looks. She has a mind of her own.*"



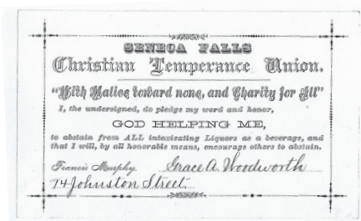


Grace planned every detail of her new shop, determined to make it an oasis in a busy, noisy city. She made many new friends, taught photography classes, and participated in the Rochester Art Exchange, created for women to be able to sell their artwork. She even tried new ways of taking pictures, dressing her customers in costumes and posing them with props and fancy hats. She created newspaper advertisements that were warm and friendly, and her business blossomed. Her niece commented, "Everything she did was artistic, even if she made a salad."

Grace met Susan B. Anthony and her sister Mary at church, and they soon became friends. Miss Anthony (or sometimes Grace called her "Miss Susan") welcomed Grace into her home, and they spent many evenings knitting and chatting before the fire. Miss Anthony introduced Grace to abolitionists and suffrage activists. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (initiator of the early women's rights movement) and Hester C. Jeffrey (national organizer for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and the Susan B. Anthony Club for Black Women) were often at the Anthony home. Frederick Douglass remained a lifelong friend to Miss Anthony, even though they didn't always agree.

Miss Anthony made it clear that she admired how a young woman from a rural town could be so independent. Both Grace and Miss Anthony grew up learning about sales and advertising because Grace's father owned a dry goods store and Susan B. Anthony's father owned a cotton factory. Miss Anthony sent Grace a note: *"I rejoice a young woman who achieves an accomplishment outside the common lines."*

Grace wrote in her journal about how Miss Anthony was pleased to help Grace build her photography business. *"She was at all times kindness itself to me, and at her receptions she would pass me down the line and introduce me as 'her photographer.'"*





Grace described her visits with Miss Anthony with fondness, but did not express her opinions about the topics of the time. It's likely she was privy to many fervent discussions. For example, although Miss Anthony had close, long-standing friendships with black abolitionists and suffragists, she and her white peers did not always include in meetings and marches the over 35,000 black women who were organized and vocal in the fight for the right to vote. Susan B. Anthony signed an 1864 congressional petition that pushed for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. But when the Fifteenth Amendment was passed in 1870 securing the voting rights of men of all races (but not extending the vote to women), she made it clear that she intended to focus on how to gain the passage of the women's right to vote, sometimes causing rifts in organizations and friendships.

Grace continued to build a thriving business and kept track of every penny earned and spent. It may be hard to believe that it was rare for a woman to have her name on a shop, earn her own money, and traipse around a big city lugging a huge camera. It took several decades for Miss Anthony and thousands of reformers to make these activities possible for all women. Grace wasn't even able to vote in New York State until 1917.

Susan B. Anthony died in 1906, soon after her birthday celebration, before she could witness the 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, known as the "Anthony Amendment," that granted women the right to vote.

Grace attended her friend's funeral. For hours, hundreds of mourners silently gathered in front of the church in the March cold. Grace wrote, *"There were many notable speakers, which made for a long service. The crowd, who loved Miss Anthony as I did, stood in the sleet storm, then paid their respects in the church in a seemingly endless solemn line of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, black and white, while the entire*

792

	Copyrights	Permits
1905		
Feb 10	Susan B. Anthony & Sister	Patent Right - 2.50
" 14	" " " Large head "	Public Opinion 1.00
		than 1000 40.50
Mar 14	Miss Knapp	2 1.50
" 10	Mr. Bennett	1.00
" 14	" " "	1.00
" 14	Mr. Blueball	1.00
" 14	" " "	1.00
" 14	Miss Knapp	1.00
" 14	Mr. Stewart	1.00

*congregation wailed and the organ softly played.”* She remembered Miss Anthony’s powerful speeches, and the day when she arrived at the Woodworth Studio with her sister, wearing her famous little red shawl. *“Now you will make us look handsome,”* Miss Anthony had said to her photographer.

Grace’s famous photographs of Susan B. Anthony were seen in publications around the world. The pictures are still in textbooks and history books and displayed on posters and other items that promote the history and achievements of the fight for women’s suffrage. In 1908 Grace was invited to document the sixtieth anniversary of the Women’s Rights Convention.

Later in life Grace returned to Seneca Falls, established a studio, and took pictures of her beloved hometown. While another photography studio stressed low cost photos, Grace emphasized artistic quality and modern techniques she learned in the city. She took school pictures and the annual mother-and-baby photograph on National Hospital Day, with over forty dressed up mothers holding squirming infants on the steps of the hospital.



Today we take pictures of anything, in color, anytime we want. When Grace took pictures, a photo was considered a formal, serious portrait. Setting up and developing photos was complicated, requiring physical strength and a lot of patience. It was difficult to capture what Grace called *“the view showing the most character.”* Grace’s plain picture

of an elderly woman with a fancy lace collar is considered one of the most important images in American history.

Grace Adelle Woodworth died in 1967 at the age of 95 and is buried in Seneca Falls. In 1984 the exhibition and publication *Grace Woodworth: Photographer Outside the Common Lines* was created by the Seneca Falls Historical Society and the Schweinfurth Art Center in Auburn, New York. In 1998, at the request of the National Women's Hall of Fame, Grace's photos were shown at an exhibit at LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

When Grace was growing up, she had no idea she would become friends with a world-famous activist and absorbed into significant historical events. When I was growing up in Michigan, I had no idea that my mother's relatives were originally from New York State. When I moved to upstate New York many years ago, I visited the Seneca Falls Historical Society and Museum, and may have even walked by a display of Grace's photographs, not knowing our history. Now I know she's an ancestor of mine who took the iconic photo of Susan B. Anthony.

A special thank-you goes to Katelyn Connally for assisting the author in this project, and Kay Irland and the Seneca Falls Historical Society for their meticulous record-keeping and fond appreciation of Grace Adelle Woodworth. Visit the Historical Society to see Grace's camera, studio items, and photos. <http://sfhistoricalsociety.org/>

FOOTNOTE: On August 18, 2020, President Donald J. Trump awarded an Executive Grant of Clemency (Full Pardon) posthumously to Susan B. Anthony, for a "wrongful and unjust conviction from the only vote she ever cast in an election." This pardon was immediately rejected by a number of leading historians and organizations, including the Susan B. Anthony Museum. For more information: [www.susanb.org](http://www.susanb.org)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. If you went to Grace's studio in Rochester, what would you talk to her about?
2. If you joined Susan B. Anthony and her sister at their supper table, what would you ask them?
3. Today people take pictures and videos of everything, sometimes without asking for permission. Why didn't Grace just go ahead and take Miss Anthony's picture?
4. Why did Susan B. Anthony keep saying, "Not today, Grace"?
5. If Grace and Susan B. Anthony were such good friends, why didn't Grace just call her "Susan" instead of "Miss Susan" or "Miss Anthony"?
6. Why was Grace's photography considered artistic at the time? What can be done to enhance photos today?
7. Grace was an independent woman who never married by choice, a photographer who moved around town to take pictures, and a business owner. Why was this so unusual in the late 1800s and early 1900s?

*Questions continue on next page...*



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT'D:

8. A lot of this story is in Grace's actual words from her journals and letters. What did she mean when she said:

*"I often left supper at the Anthony house wanting to do something worthwhile, and the feeling that I had the ability to do it."*

*"I wanted to capture the glowing enthusiasm in my friend, but her eyes were weary."*

9. The author visited the rooms that were used to house Grace's photography business in Seneca Falls, New York. The original skylights and dark room were still there. How did Grace set up her studio in Rochester?
10. How did Grace spread the word about her new photography business?
11. How could Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass remain close friends when they disagreed on some very important issues?
12. Grace had a lot of support from Miss Anthony. Who can you ask for help if you want to try something new?

## RESEARCH TOPICS:

1. Who were some of the people at Miss Anthony's dinner table, and why did Grace call them "notable" and "famous"?
2. How did cameras change during Grace's lifetime (1872-1967)? How are cameras different today?
3. What chemicals did Grace have to use in the dark room in the late 1800s, early 1900s?
4. Why do you think abolitionists and suffragists often worked together to achieve their goals?
5. The suffrage movement was more than seeking the right for women to vote. Why did Susan B. Anthony say that Grace was the perfect example of everything the suffragists were fighting for?
6. What were the Rochester Fortnightly Ignorance Club, the Political Equality Club, and other organizations during Susan B. Anthony's time?
7. Rochester, New York was known as a center of national reform. What was happening in Rochester so that it earned that reputation?
8. Why did the Susan B. Anthony Museum reject the pardon of Susan B. Anthony?
9. There have been a postage stamp, coin, and statues depicting Susan B. Anthony. What are some of her famous sayings?
10. Grace Woodworth kept journals and notes about her experiences as a photographer. How can you document events in your life, whether they are significant (like how it feels to go to school during a pandemic) or everyday experiences (like what you eat for breakfast)? Try different techniques for documenting your life.