

## The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

In 2000, a milestone in America's and indeed the world's march toward social equality was celebrated. Women's right to vote in this country became legal in 1920, 80 years ago that year.

Just as Longfellow's poem *Paul Revere's Ride* begins with the words "On the eighteenth of April in seventy-five, hardly a man is now alive...." (He wrote it in 1863.), The same can now be said of those women who cast their first vote in the election of 1920. The youngest of them would be not less than 101 this year. [This article, written in the year 2000, obviously shows that all the original ladies have passed on.]

After many years of struggle, the Sixty-sixth Congress sent a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution bearing the title "Amendment XIX" to the States June 4th 1919. It was ratified August 18 1920. It states that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." It further states "Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Searching through Colebrook's voter's lists produced the following interesting facts: In the years immediately following the First World War, new voters averaged three to five per year. In 1920, in addition to the three or four men, there were 27 names of women. There is no doubt that many, if not most have descendants who still live in the area. Here is that list, in the order it appears in our Town Records:

Alice Gilman, Bessie Deming, Harriet Deming, Elizabeth Anderson, Anna Johnson, Genevieve Newth, Harriet Cooper, Naomi Martin, Elsie Northway, Carrie Phillips, Ellen McCormack, Leila Palmer, Mary Phillips, Leonora Verchot, Emma J. Allen, Belle Seymour, Helen Seymour, Barbara Ulrich, Katherine Carrington, Sarah Carrington, Lena V. Tucker, Martha Thompson, Wally Vining, Sarah Norton, Grace Deming, Annie Durst and Lucy Whitman.

These ladies were the first to take advantage of many years of long, hard-fought battles. All of us, men and women alike, ought to not only exercise our right to vote, but when the opportunity presents itself, honor the memories of those pioneers who led the way.