

Josephine Pearson

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Josephine Pearson

Standards: 5.46, U.S. 18

Essential Question: What role did Josephine Pearson play in Tennessee during the suffrage movement in 1920?

Josephine Pearson was born in 1868 in Gallatin, Tennessee. Her father was a minister. Both her parents believed in education so Josephine Pearson was a well-educated woman for her time. Pearson graduated from Irving College in 1890 and received her Master's degree in 1896 from Cumberland College. In the next few years she worked as a teacher and administrator at several schools. She served as dean and chair of philosophy at Christian College in Columbia, Missouri for 5 years before returning to Tennessee in 1914 to care for her aging parents.

The suffrage movement had already begun and there was growing interest in the country for women to gain the right to vote. Apparently, the Pearson family was against women's suffrage because Josephine Pearson wrote in her book, *My Story*, that she had promised her dying mother she would fight women's suffrage if it came to Tennessee for ratification.

John Vertrees, a Nashville attorney and a leader in Middle Tennessee in the anti-women's suffrage movement, asked Josephine Pearson to replace his late wife as President of the Tennessee State Association Opposed to Women Suffrage. Pearson also achieved a leadership position in the Southern Woman's League for the Rejection of the Susan B Anthony Amendment. She became well known as a speaker and leader in these organizations.

The basic position Pearson and these organizations took was that if women received the right to vote, southern traditions and their way of life would be lost. Broadsides such as "Declaration of Principles" and "Why We Oppose Votes for Women" also stated that voting would be a burden on women. Anti-suffragists believed voting would add just one more burden or duty to all that women had to do at home. At that time many men and women believed a woman's place was at home, but voting was done outside the home. Anti-suffragists believed women's suffrage would lead to Socialism, Bolshevism or Radicalism. They also believed that women's suffrage was a threat to the continuation of Anglo-Saxon domination of social and political affairs.

When Governor Albert Roberts called a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly to vote on ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, Pearson went to Nashville. The anti-ratification group set up headquarters in the Hermitage Hotel near the capitol. From there Pearson led her followers in talking to members of the General Assembly, handing out flyers, and leading peaceful rallies. Pearson and the antis worked actively but in the end Tennessee became the 36th state to vote for ratification. The Nineteenth Amendment became law and women could legally vote.

When the fight was over Pearson went back to Monteagle, Tennessee. She accepted a deanship at Southern Seminary of Virginia. Josephine Pearson continued to lecture throughout the south and write articles. She died in 1944.

Sources: "Josephine Pearson." *Tennessee Encyclopedia and History and Culture* 1st edition. 1998. Print.

"Remember the Ladies!": *Women Struggle for an Equal Voice*. Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d. Web. 31 July 2014. < <http://state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/index.htm>>

Stovall, Jim. "Josephine Pearson: accomplished and antisuffrage." *Seeing Suffrage*. Seeing Suffrage. 2014. Web. 31 July 2014. < <http://www.seeingsuffrage.com/2012/09/15/josephine-pearson-accomplished-and-antisuffrage/#.U9qjSfldUSt>>

Josephine Pearson

Use the text and your prior knowledge to answer the following questions.

1. Were you surprised to find out that some women were opposed to women's suffrage? Why or why not? _____

2. What were some of the reasons given for their opposition?

3. In what two organizations did Pearson hold leadership positions?

4. List the titles of two anti-suffrage publications

Use the text and your prior knowledge to answer the following questions.

Josephine Pearson

1. Were you surprised to find out that some women were opposed to women's suffrage? Why or why not? *Answers will vary*

2. What were some of the reasons given for their opposition?

Voting would take women away from their duties at home;

Believed women's suffrage would lead to Socialism, Bolshevism or Radicalism. They also believed that women's suffrage was a threat to the continuation of Anglo-Saxon domination of social and political affairs.

3. In what two organizations did Pearson hold leadership positions?

Tennessee State Association Opposed to Women Suffrage. ; Southern

Woman's League for the Rejection of the Susan B Anthony Amendment.

4. List the titles of two anti-suffrage publications

"Declaration of Principles" and "Why We Oppose Votes for Women"

Josephine Pearson

Use the text and your prior knowledge to answer the following questions.

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2. What were some of the reasons given for their opposition?

3. In what two organizations did Pearson hold leadership positions?

4. List the titles of two anti-suffrage publications?

5. Based on the answers above, how extensive do you think the women's anti-suffrage movement was in East Tennessee? Justify your reasoning.

Josephine Pearson

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Answers will vary

2. What were some of the reasons given for their opposition?

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3. In what two organizations did Pearson hold leadership positions?

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Woman's League for the Rejection of the Susan B Anthony Amendment

4. What were some of the publications? (List two)

"Declaration of Principles" and "Why We Oppose Votes for Women"

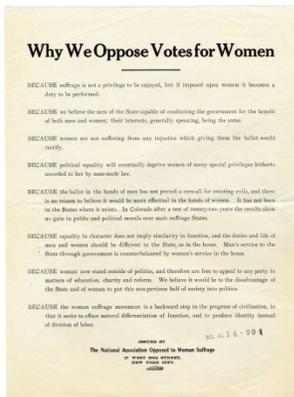
5. Based on the answers above, how extensive do you think the women's anti-suffrage movement was in East Tennessee? Justify your reasoning.

Answers will vary

Josephine Pearson Primary Source Set

Standards: 5.46, U.S. 18

These sources can all be found at the Tennessee State Library . The “Download” button is located in the upper right hand corner. The entire online exhibit can be viewed at <http://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/index.htm> A number of additional sources are available in the exhibit.



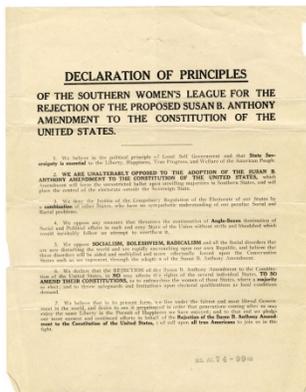
Why We Oppose Votes for Women

The Antis believed that the suffrage movement represented a social step backward—civilization was at stake!



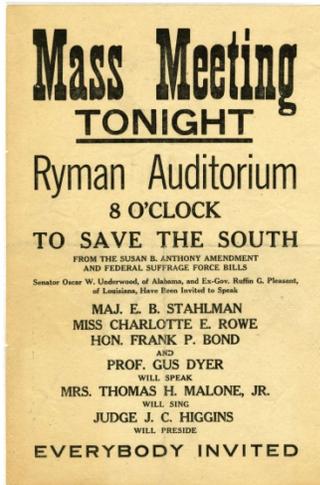
America When Feminized

Mother hen walks out on her eggs leaving the rooster to set them. According to the Anti-Suffrage literature, giving women the right to vote would make men “sissies” and doom civilization.



Declaration of Principles

Principle No. 4 has obvious racial overtones as it asserts the continuation of Anglo-Saxon (white) supremacy. The Anti-Suffragists feared that African American women might want to vote if the Amendment became la



[Mass Meeting Broadside](#)

The Antis genuinely believed they would save the South by stopping the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in its tracks. Part of their unspoken reason was racial since it would give nonwhites the right to vote. This call to arms was a hurried effort to rally their supporters.



[The Crushed to Earth Will Rise Again](#)

At the Anti's headquarters in the Hermitage Hotel, representatives of the Southern Women's League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment display the colors of the Union and the Lost Cause. An elderly Confederate veteran sits in the middle. Portraits of Andrew and Rachel Jackson hang on either side of the scene.