

Winner of the Women's Rights National Historical Park's Poetry Contest April 2013

Susan B.

Almost the measure two centuries ago
In a Massachusetts town,
Was born the soul of women's rights
A girl of great renown.

Birthered in the shadow of Mt. Greylock
A spirit of fortitude grew.
And virtues of justice and diligence
Blossomed within her too.

Even in Battenville, now in New York
Susan, so eager to learn
Demanded to solve arithmetic
Once only a boy's concern.

Determined to know and to find a way
Her father resolved the case.
He opened a school to teach the girls
The classics, at their own pace.

Yes, Susan B. was an unusual girl
Concerned for the rights of all
Especially her mother who worked so hard
Who felt her loving call.

Even so young, now only fifteen
Susan began to teach.
Self-sufficient and on her own.
Ideas found shape in speech.

Her salary as teacher, a fraction of men's
Frustrated her sense of fair
And the Moulson school that soured her
Left her reformer spirit bare.

The inner light of her Quaker roots
Rekindled with greater force
Wedded to fight for women's rights
She followed the suffrage course.

Anti-slavery and temperance too
She fought to serve their cause
But her greatest push was the women's vote
And the fight to change the laws.

Her years of struggle, her vision quest
Were met with anger and walls
With undaunted will and undying strength
The right to vote still stalls.

This single-minded, keen concern
Now focused toward the vote
Exhausted and consumed her life
In all she spoke and wrote.

And then in eighteen seventy-two
Susan broke the law
She cast a vote for president
No thought that she withdraw.

Insisting that this was her right
Her jury trial made news
She claimed that she a citizen
Could vote without refuse.

For sixty years her work went on
She paved the suffrage course
She did not live to see her goal
But she's the font and force.

We recognize her tireless job
Securing rights for all
Removing chains, revering life
Knocked down the suffrage wall.

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