

Susan B. Anthony Visits C.T. Plunkett School

By John Durkan, iBerkshires Staff

Tuesday, May 22, 2012

NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — Susan B. Anthony roamed down Main Street just prior to visiting the C.T. Plunkett School in her hometown of Adams.

Well, not quite. After all, it's been over a century since Anthony traveled the country by foot, sleigh, and train alone, even in areas where Jesse James ran rampant on robbing sprees. But Jeanne Gehret, a historical performer and author of "Susan B. Anthony and Justice For All" matched the size, weight and 19th century dress of the historical woman described as the "Napoleon of the women's movement."

"She's really the most important woman figure in U.S. history because she liberated 50 percent of people," said Gehret, who is from Rochester, N.Y., where Anthony lived during her adult life.

Today, Gehret, in conjuncture with the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, delivers the lecture "Bedbugs and Mobs: The Travels of Susan B. Anthony" at C.T. Plunkett School.

Throughout her travels, she spoke to various crowds – some welcoming and others drunk and angry – about women's rights, abolishing slavery, and the dangers of drinking.

Gehret talked about the Winter of Mobs in 1861, when she traveled across various towns in upper New York to rally against slavery and at times was "burned in effigy" and faced life-threatening situations, but continued none-the-less.

"She was fearless, she was tireless," Gehret said.

In a time before printable forms, instant mass communication, and cheap pens, Anthony coordinated a petition campaign against slavery that collected 400,000 signatures and made its way to the Congress floor in 1864.

Gehret said Anthony worked more and harder than anyone else in the movements. She had more time than some of her contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton who co-founded the Women's Temperance Movement with Anthony, because she lived a single life and, as Anthony elegantly put it, didn't take time off for "baby making."

The lecture was also made possible through a grant from Mass. Humanities.

"The criteria is important, they just don't give [the grant] to anyone," said Carol Crossed, the president of the board of directors at the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum.

iBerkshires is also attending Anthony's appearance at Plunkett and will update the story.

<http://www.iberkshires.com/story/41330/Susan-B.-Anthony-Visits-C.T.-Plunkett-School.html>