While many think of the suffrage movement gaining speed in the early 1900s, there were spurts of enthusiasm across the country before that time.

The Seneca Falls Convention led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other activists took place in 1848. Soon, Susan B. Anthony would join the movement and it would pick up steam across the country. Here in Virginia interest would fall flat until 1909 when it came to women’s suffrage—whether pro or anti.

There were a few Richmond and Virginia women who tried to make the case for women’s suffrage before 1900 but their efforts did not gain much support.
In 1909, a group of Richmond women including Lila Meade Valentine, Adele Clark, Nora Houston, Ellen Glasgow, Agnes Randolph, the great-great granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson, and Lucy Randolph Mason, the great-granddaughter of George Mason, as well as teachers, journalists and business women banded together to form the Equal Suffrage League (ESL) which initially worked for a state amendment allowing women the right to vote.

Nearly 120 members joined in the first year – most from Richmond.
In 1912, the Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (VAOWS) was formed to lead the fight to defeat the efforts of the ESL and other pro-suffrage organizations.

From 1915 through 1920, Mary Mason Anderson Williams was president of the Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. No organizational records survive to indicate how many members the association had, but at the May 1918 state convention officers reported on the addition of almost 1,350 new members.

Its board of directors and committees included members of many influential social, business and political families in the state.
The Equal Suffrage League and the VAOWS would each espouse their viewpoints to the people of Virginia, often engaging one another directly in editorials and other literature. During this time before social media and the internet, messages were delivered through a variety of means including newspaper articles, pamphlets, cartoons, cards, buttons, sashes, etc.
WOMEN DEMAND RIGHT TO VOTE

Advocates of Suffrage Appear Before Committees of General Assembly.

LARGE AUDIENCE APPLAUDS

Many Speakers Advocate Amendment to Constitution—One Opponent Voices Views.

MISSING K-BOAT IS BELIEVED SAFE

Tank Steamer Reports Sighting Submarine Off Florida Coast.

MISSING K-BOAT IS BELIEVED SAFE

Efforts by Naval Vessels and by Radio to Locate Submersible Prove Futile.

ELOQUENT PLEA AGAINST SUFFRAGE

Miss Lucy Jean Price Opposes Granting of Votes to Women.

MISSING K-BOAT IS BELIEVED SAFE

CHARLESTON, S. C., January 31—With the statement here to-night by Captain E. C. Bryan, commandant of the Charleston Navy-Yard, that the tank steamer C. A. Canfield reported having sighted off the Florida coast what appeared to be the K-5, belief was expressed that the submersible was safe, and proceeding on her course to Key West. Captain Bryan's statement here was that the Canfield having reported sighting a submarine, and as the K-5 was the only submarine known to be in those waters, he felt satisfied that the boat which the Canfield sighted could be no other than the K-5.

Russian Forces Drive Turks Before Them

AFTER having driven the Turks from a region about forty miles in length in Asiatic Turkey to the west of Lake Van, and push them to retreat down the Taurus Valley, the Russians have crossed the Kizil Irmak and the Kizil Irmak has recrossed their operations in this particular vicinity for the winter.

Large numbers of prisoners were taken by the Russians, in addition to heavy guns, machine guns and other war material.

There has been little fighting of great moment anywhere in any of the war theatres, excepting for artillery. German positions at St. Etienne and at the south of Tyre, and in the north of St. Mihiel, have continued under the guns of the Entente allies on the eastern line, and considerable damage has been done.

From northwest of Riga to the middle Strips there has been considerable bombardment by the batteries of various Russian towns and positions. Petrograd reports that the surrounding by the Russians of a large Austrian detachment in the middle Strips, and the annihilation of most of the Austrians, the remainder being captured.

ZEPPELINS RAID NUMBER TWELVE
Virginia suffragists succeeded in bringing the issue to the floor of the General Assembly three times between 1912 and 1916, but the vote never came close to passage. The Equal Suffrage League's strategy focused on winning support in the General Assembly for a voting-rights amendment to the state constitution. Some suffragists grew impatient with the painstaking approach and broke ranks, joining the more militant Congressional Union (later the National Woman's Party), and then pressuring Congress and U.S. president Woodrow Wilson to enact a federal suffrage amendment.
WOMAN SUFFRAGE VICTORIOUS IN SENATE;
NATIONAL WIRE STRIKE LIKELY IN 48 HOURS

HEAD OF D. C. UNION FORECASTS SUSPENSION UNLESS BURLESON ACTS

President F. N. McDowell of Local 24, Says Atlanta Trouble Menaces Whole System Of Communication—Strike Breakers Enroute from New York to Georgia Intercepted Here—Konencamp in City to Direct Fight Against Western Union.

With Sylvester J. Konencamp, international president of the Telegraphers' Union, is in Washington to direct the fight for the operators, indications were late last night that the national-wide strike of wiremen would be called within forty-eight hours.

F. H. McDowell, president of the District local, said early this morning that complete suspension of wire activities here was imminent unless the Atlanta trouble was speedily settled.

“The Net Circulation of the Washington Herald Yesterday Was 42,155

How Suffragists Have Fought to Win the Ballot

The vote yesterday was the fifth time the Senate has balanced on the question since it was introduced forty-one years ago by Senator Sargent of California.

The first vote, which came in 1878, was 31 to 34; in 1914 the amendment had gained a majority of one, but still failed to pass the full Senate by necessary two-thirds, in 1916 passing by one vote to 68, and last February by one.

Senator R. Anthony led the suffrage fight during the last period, and in 1920 cast a vote to test women's rights. She was arrested and fined, but, refusing to pay it, was never jailed. The time came when a constitutional amendment was necessary, and began to press it in Congress.

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Richmond Suffragists Happy Over Victory Of Their Amendment

Prominent suffragists from all parts of Virginia will come to Richmond shortly to attend the victory luncheon, which is to take place, probably, in the Jefferson hotel, to celebrate the passage of the Susan B. Anthony amendment to the federal constitution after a struggle of approximately forty years. Details of the jubilee will be planned at a called meeting of the Equal Suffrage League of Richmond tomorrow morning at 11 o’clock at its headquarters, Fourth and Franklin streets, at which every member is urged to be present. Mrs. Kate Langley Bosher, first vice-president, will preside.

Mrs. Bosher, in commenting upon the outcome of the senate vote yesterday, said: “I feel not alone a sense of relief and gratitude for the beginning of a larger and better work, but the responsibility which all women should take seriously. The responsibility of citizenship is not to be entered into lightly, but soberly, earnestly and in the fear of God.” If men had not wanted this to follow they should not have educated women. I regard our political freedom with a feeling of awe. It challenges all women to measure up to what should be expected of them.”

One of the first persons in Rich-

mond to be notified of the suffrage victory was Mrs. B. H. Valentine, president of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, who on receipt of the news made the following statement:

“I rejoice that at last congress has taken the step which will enable this nation to stand before the democracies of the world unashamed. The federal suffrage amendment now goes to the legislatures of the forty-eight states and will undoubtedly be ratified by the required three-fourths, thus giving to the women of America the political power already possessed by the women of the other great nations.

“My one regret is that Virginia did not long ago take the initiative by passing the state amendment asked for by the Equal Suffrage League since 1913.

“I trust that she may alone for the past neglect by being among the first to ratify the national amendment.”

Miss Mason Confident

Miss Lucy Randolph Mason, president of the Equal Suffrage League of Richmond, when interviewed today, made this statement: “While we are rejoicing over the action of the senate in passing the suffrage bill, we

(Continued on Fourth P. C.)
When Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment in June 1919, the ESL fought hard for ratification, but Virginia politicians did not relent. Despite the efforts of the Equal Suffrage League, Virginia was one of the nine southern states that refused to grant the vote to women. Virginia women at last won the right to vote in August 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment became law, and exercised that right soon after in the November elections. More than 13,000 Richmond women registered and voted in the 1920 election. The General Assembly stubbornly withheld its ratification until 1952 which was, of course, symbolic.
For more information:
Encyclopedia of Virginia
https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/woman_suffrage_in_virginia#start_entry


https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Valentine_Lila_Meade_1865-1921#start_entry

Library of Virginia
https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/people/lila_meade_valentine