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Women Make History: Stories we should have learned in school

This is the second in a series about women who have run for President of the United States. The first to run for their party's nomination were abolitionists [Lydia Maria Child](#) and [Lucretia Coffin Mott](#) (relative of Mary Ware Dennett). Each received only one vote at the [Liberty Party's](#) convention in 1847 immediately ending their aspirations. Nearly 30 years later, Victoria Woodhull won her party's nomination and launched a formal campaign becoming the first woman to do so. Attorney Belva Lockwood followed in her shoes.



Belva Lockwood, photo by Benjamin Falk, c. 1880 - 1884

*"I cannot vote,
but
can be vote for."*

**Attorney Belva Lockwood
Second Woman to run for President**

Meet Belva Lockwood: Second Woman to Run for President

Less well known than Victoria Woodhull (see [September's issue](#)), is [Belva Lockwood](#), attorney, suffragist, educator, and international peace activist who ran for President in 1884 and 1888. Like Woodhull, Lockwood was the nominee of the [Equal Rights Party](#) and the [second](#) woman to run for the nation's highest office. She also fought for and won the right for women to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court.

[Born](#) in 1830 in Royalton, New York, [Lockwood](#) became a teacher at age 15, and married four years later. When her husband died unexpectedly, Lockwood was 22-years-old with a young daughter to support. [Believing](#) that higher education was the path to a better paying job, she made a difficult and, at the time, controversial decision to leave her child in the care of her parents to return to school.

Initially, Lockwood took classes to improve her teaching skills, but in 1854, she enrolled in Genesee College (now Syracuse University), as the only woman in the school's science curriculum. [Graduating](#) with honors three years later, she reunited with her daughter and then became head of school for different women's seminaries in New York state.

In 1866, Lockwood [moved](#) to Washington, D.C., and opened a private school in the Union League Hall, an early hub of activity for the women's suffrage movement. She remarried and gave birth to a second daughter who died before reaching her second birthday. When Lockwood's husband, an elderly war veteran, became gravely ill, once again, she was once again the primary supporter of her family.

By this time, Lockwood had come to believe that the path to equality was through changing laws. She applied to several law schools, but at the time, it was widely believed that women were incapable of the mental strain of an exacting professional career. Lockwood received multiple rejections, but in 1871, nearing her 40th birthday, she was admitted to National University Law School (now George Washington).

Enduring two years of what she [referred](#) to as the "growl" of her male classmates, she graduated in 1873, but was then denied her diploma by the school's administrators. Undeterred, Lockwood petitioned President Ulysses S. Grant, chancellor ex officio of the university. She was awarded her degree one week later.



Holding her Supreme Court Bar Certificate, The Daily Graphic, 1879

Lacking the traditional male network and denied access to men-only professional organizations, Lockwood opened her own practice. Her clients were multi-racial, working-class people, a segment of society that she championed throughout her career.

When Lockwood was denied the right to argue a client's case before the Supreme Court in 1876, Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite [stated](#), "...none but men are admitted to practice before [the Court] as attorneys and counsellors . . .". Lockwood doubled down. She [marshaled](#) support from male colleagues and started lobbying Congress to change the law. Three years later, what was commonly known as "the Lockwood bill," passed, and was [signed](#) into law by President Rutherford B. Hayes. In 1880 Lockwood [argued](#) her first case before the Supreme Court.

Although Lockwood lost that case, in 1906, she argued a second one. Representing the Cherokee Nation, she [won](#) an unprecedented victory and a monetary award of \$5 million. Under an 1835 treaty, the tribe had sold their land to the federal government for \$1 million, but the government never paid its debt. Lockwood successfully argued that the Cherokee Nation was owed the original sum plus interest.

As a suffragist, Lockwood participated in numerous marches and campaigns. In 1884 she accepted the nomination of the [Equal Rights Party](#) to run for president making her the second woman to do so. Although many suffrage leaders condemned her candidacy as a political stunt, Lockwood forged ahead. She was convinced that it was an important step in opening the political process to women. Towards the end of her life, she [remarked](#) that one day, when a woman finally occupies the Oval Office, "It will be entirely on her own merits...No movement can place her there simply because she is a woman."



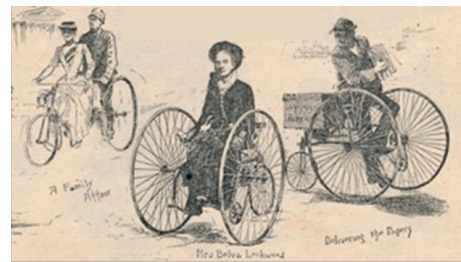
BELVA A. LOCKWOOD.

Candidate of the Woman's Rights Party
for the Presidency.

The Billings Herald, 1884

Lockwood took her candidacy seriously and outlined her approach on key policy issues in her platform. These included the economy, equality, Native American affairs, and the protection of public lands. She famously said that although women were denied the right to vote for her, men could. She won more than 4,000 votes and ran again in 1888.

Never one to shy away from controversy, Lockwood was often the target of newspaper gossip columns. In the early 1880s, she was accused of immodesty for [riding](#) an adult tricycle in the streets of Washington, D.C., to and from court appointments just as her male colleagues did. But she was also known to respond to detractors with humor. Accused of failing to pay a client's bill, she [wrote](#) a short poem in her defense:



On her tricycle, from *Frank Leslie's Monthly*

*Oh! Cruel creditor thus to sue For money charged as
overdue, And go into the Court and swear To things as
light as empty air; And strive to get a judgment sum
Before the day of Judgment come; You know I'd pay
that little bill Just as you fixed it in your Will . . .*



Throughout her career, Lockwood encouraged women to pursue the legal profession and she often spoke of her own hardships to inspire women to become self-reliant. She was [instrumental](#) in securing legal reform for women in property law and equal pay. A dedicated peace activist, Lockwood served as an international delegate at global Peace Conferences from 1896–1911.

Lockwood died in 1917, three years before women won the right to vote. She was 86 years-old. In 1983, she was [inducted](#) in the [National Women's Hall of Fame](#) and in 1986, the U.S. Postal Service [issued](#) a stamp in her honor as part of its Great Americans series."

Ask a Friend: What does it take to have a similar level of courage as Belva Lockwood in the face of what seem like insurmountable odds?

Ask Yourself: When and where have I gone against the grain to fight for what's right?

Note: I'm excited to let you know that a new book about reproductive rights activists [Margaret Sanger](#) and [Mary Ware Dennett](#), will be in book stores soon. You can preorder a copy [here](#). Written by journalist [Stephanie Gorton](#), *The Icon and the Idealist* is a must reading to understand the history of women's rights in the U.S. and our current battles for reproductive freedom.

The Holidays are Coming...

Women Make History Merch is Available!

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The Puzzle, Mugs, Book Bags, & Aprons



[Sharon Spaulding](#) discovered the hidden story of Mary Ware Dennett, suffragist, sex education and reproductive rights activist, when she married one of Dennett's great-grandsons. Today, she curates the family's archives.

Sharon has spent twelve years researching first-wave feminism, the battle for reproductive rights,

and Mary's life in the context of politics and social mores from 1914–1947. She received a grant from Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library to support her research and the creation of a manuscript. Her essays about Dennett have appeared in [Ms. Magazine](#), [Smithsonian](#), and [New Hampshire Magazine](#).

Sharon is a popular speaker at women's and civic groups, and also book clubs. She is available to speak on the forgotten stories of remarkable women and the history of the suffrage and reproductive rights movements of the early 20th century. [Schedule](#) a talk with your group!

Sharon lives near Salt Lake City with her husband and two dogs, Gus and Hank.

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