

**A TRANSCRIPTION OF ABIGAIL GOODWIN HASKELL'S
1870 HANDWRITTEN ADDRESS TO THE
CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE**

Created by Michael Slade

In 2021, Ann Nisson donated to the Petaluma Historical Library & Museum a handwritten address composed in 1870 by her great-great-grandmother, Abigail Goodwin Haskell (1820-1884), accession # 2021-887-01. Due to the difficulty of reading Haskell's cursive script, Michael Slade created the following printscript transcription. Haskell's address is a primary document of great significance to the history of the women's suffrage movement in California. She was the President of the California Women's Suffrage Association, and her address was a defense of the CWSA's 1870 petition for women's right to vote.

To THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE

MARCH 18TH 1870

HONORABLE GENTLEMEN:

I APPEAR BEFORE YOU IN BEHALF OF THE CAL WSA. I DO NOT EXPECT TO WIN YOUR FAVOR BY ANY ELOQUENCE AS POWER OF ORATORY. I ASK OF YOU A RESPECTFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION WHICH HAS YET BEEN OR WHICH CAN HEREAFTER BE BROUGHT BEFORE AS A LEGISLATIVE BODY. I CRAVE YOUR INDULGENCE WHILE I READ, FROM THIS SACRED VOLUME, REGARDED BY MOST ENLIGHTENED NATIONS AS THE BOOK OF BOOKS — AS THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY FOR BOTH LAW AND PRECEDENT. IN THE TWENTY SEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS WE FIND THESE WORDS. 1ST 2ND 3^D 4TH & 5TH VERSES HE DID NOT BRING IT BEFORE A CHOSE COMMITTEE OF THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, NOR THE JUDGES THEREOF; BUT BEFORE THE SUPREME RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, THE KING OF KINGS, THE LORD OF LORDS. NOW MARK THE ANSWER ~~THE~~ ^{HE} THE LORD DID NOT PUT OFF THEIR CLAIM AS UNWORTHY HIS NOTICE, NOR ON THE GROUND THAT HE HAD A GREAT MANY LAWS TO MAKE AND COULD NOT AFFORD TIME TO LISTEN TO THEIR PLEA. NO! 6TH 7TH VERSES. NOW GENTLEMEN OF THIS COMMITTEE WE COME BEFORE YOU TO NIGHT AS THESE FIVE WOMEN CAME BEFORE

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MOSES WHO REPRESENTED THE GLORIOUS MAJESTY OF THE LAW BEFORE ALL ISRAEL, ~~HAD THE PLEA~~ THESE SAME FIVE WOMEN SEEM TO HAVE TROUBLED MOSES ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS AFTERWARD BUT EACH TIME THE LORD BADE HIM GRANT THEIR REQUEST, SAYING THAT IT WAS RIGHT. ~~HAD THE PLEA~~ WHICH WE NOW MAKE TO YOU BEEN BROUGHT BY THE WOMEN OF THE THIRTEEN STATES UNITED IN THE DECLARATION OF MALE INDEPENDENCE IN 1776 THINK YOU IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DENIED? THESE FIVE WOMEN ASKED THE LORD THROUGH MOSES THEIR INHERITANCE WHEN HE WAS DIVIDING THE LAND OF CANAAN LOT UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. IN ANSWER TO THEIR PETITION WE FIND AN ORDER ISSUING FROM A HIGHER THAN HUMAN AUTHORITY COMMANDING THAT WOMEN SHOULD INHERIT LANDED ESTATE — THAT WHICH WE TERM REAL ESTATE. THEIR PATENT DATES BACK MUCH FARTHER THAN THE FAMOUS, OR RATHER INFAMOUS, SALIC LAW WHICH FOR SO MANY CENTURIES DISGRACED THE STATUTES OF FRANCE, AND THROUGH THEM THOSE OF ENGLAND, YEA, AND EVEN OF NEW ENGLAND TOO AND THE WHOLE UNITED STATES, AND WHICH HAS PERPETUATED A MOST GRIEVOUS INJUSTICE WHEREVER IT HAS EXISTED; VIZ, THAT ~~THE~~ A WOMAN HAD NOT AN EQUAL RIGHT WITH MAN TO HOLD LANDED PROPERTY, WHETHER INHERITED OR OTHERWISE OBTAINED, IN HER OWN

RIGHT AND TO BUY OR SELL THE SAME WHENEVER IT SUITED HER INTEREST OR CONVENIENCE SO TO DO.

OUR PETITION BEARING UPON THIS AND KINDRED SUBJECTS, SIGNED BY SEVERAL HUNDRED WOMEN OF THIS STATE ASKS YOU TO TAKE SUCH IMMEDIATE ACTION AS SHALL SECURE TO ONE HALF OF THE ADULT POPULATION THE RIGHT AN EQUAL SHARE IN ITS GOVERNMENT WE CLAIM TO BE RECOGNIZED AS CITIZENS IN THIS FREE REPUBLIC, DERIVING ITS ONLY JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED. AS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL OTHER RIGHTS WE ASK THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE. WE CLAIM THE SAME RIGHTS UNDER GOVERNMENT THAT MEN ENJOY. WE ARE OLD RESIDENTS OF CALIFORNIA AND WE COME BEFORE YOU NOT AS PUBLIC SPEAKERS ACCUSTOMED TO THE STAGE OR THE ROSTRUM, BUT AS WOMEN — AS THE MOTHERS AND WIVES, AS THE SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS OF MEN WHO ENJOY ALL THE PRIVILEGES OF CITIZENSHIP. WE ASK THAT WE MAY BE RESTORED TO AND ENABLED TO ENTER INTO THE POSSESSION & EXERCISE OF EQUAL CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS WITH MEN. WE ARE EQUALLY TAXED, WE ARE ALIKE AMENABLE TO THE PENAL CODE WHICH GOVERNS OUR FATHERS, BROTHERS, HUSBANDS AND SONS. WHY THEN, ARE WE, ON THE GROUND OF SEX ALONE EXCLUDED FROM A JUST PARTICIPATION IN THE MAKING OF THOSE LAWS BY WHICH WE ARE GOVERNED AND WHICH WE ARE COMPELLED TO OBEY TO THE VERY LETTER?

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WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO ENTER INTO ANY LABORED ARGUMENT TO CONVINCE YOU THAT SUFFRAGE IS THE "INALIENABLE RIGHT" OF EVERY WOMAN. ~~IN OUR STATE~~. WE FEEL SURE THAT YOU ALL ADMIT THE JUSTICE OF OUR CLAIM. THIS QUESTION AFFECTS THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF OUR POLITICAL LIFE AS A REPUBLIC. WE BEG OF YOU TO LAY ASIDE ALL IDEAS DERIVED FROM PREJUDICE OR CUSTOM AND TO LOOK AT THIS SUBJECT IN THE LIGHT OF REASON, WITH A CONSCIENTIOUS REGARD FOR THE GREAT LAWS OF RIGHT WHICH SHOULD GOVERN ALL YOUR ACTION AS A LEGISLATIVE BODY.

X GOD SAW FIT TO MAKE MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE AND LIKENESS. HAD ONE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO ENBODY THAT IMAGE & LIKENESS BUT ONE WOULD HAVE EXISTED. THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY DWELLS IN NEITHER ALONE BUT IN BOTH UNITED. WE NEED TODAY IN THE SUFFRAGE ELEMENT THE WHOLE OF HUMAN NATURE. WE HAVE HAD ONE-SIDED MASCULINE RULE LONG ENOUGH TO TEST THE TRUTH OF SACRED WRIT, WHICH DECLARES THAT "IT IS NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE" IN GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS ANY MORE THAN IN THE OTHER CONCERNS OF LIFE. LET US NOW, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE MAKE THE TRIAL OF ADMITTING THE FEMININE ELEMENT OF HUMAN NATURE INTO POLITICAL AS WELL AS SOCIAL LIFE. WE KNOW HOW WELL IT HAS SUCCEEDED THERE AS A MEANS OF CIVILIZING EDUCATING AND REFINING MAN AND ELEVATING HIM TO HIGHER PLACE OF LIFE AND ACTION.

"WOMAN'S INFLUENCE" HAS BECOME A STALE PLATITUDE IN THE MOUTHS OF THOSE WHO WOULD DEFINE HER SPHERE AND ITS BOUNDARIES. WHAT WE NEED, NOW, IN GOVERNMENT IS HER DIRECT ACTION AND THE POWER WHICH WILL BE DEVELOPED & ULTIMATED BY THAT ACTION. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WOMAN IS REPRESENTED IN ALL POLITICAL ACTION BY THE MALE MEMBERS OF HER FAMILY. THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE. THE MEN OF THIS REPUBLIC FOR THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS HAVE ENACTED LAWS FOR WOMEN PRECISELY OPPOSITE TO THOSE MADE FOR THEMSELVES IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. WOMEN, AS A CLASS, HAVE SPECIAL INTERESTS IN THE MAKING OF THOSE LAWS WHICH ARE TO GOVERN THEM. THEY SHOULD HAVE AN EQUAL VOICE WITH MEN IN ORDER TO SECURE THESE INTERESTS.

X I CANNOT NOW DWELL UPON ALL THE REASONS WHY THE BALLOT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO WOMAN, BUT ONE, WHICH HAS CLAIMED MY ATTENTION MORE THAN ANY OTHER, IS THAT ITS POSSESSION WILL CONFER UPON HER SO MANY ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DEVELOPMENT. THE BALLOT IS NOT ONLY AN EDUCATOR BUT THE MEANS FOR OPENING TO WOMEN ALL THE AVENUES TO WEALTH AND FAME, NOW EXCLUSIVELY ENJOYED BY MEN. OUR UNIVERSITIES, OUR MEDICAL, THEOLOGICAL & SCIENTIFIC SCHOOLS MUST OPEN THEIR DOORS TO OUR DAUGHTERS ON AN ENTIRE EQUALITY WITH OUR SONS. WE CANNOT WITH TRUTH AFFIRM THAT THE FORMER HAVE NOT EQUALLY

AVAILABLE INTELLECTUAL POWER FOR THE SERVICE OF THE STATE AS THE LATTER, UNTIL THE EXPERIMENT HAS BEEN TRIED FOR BOTH AN EQUAL LENGTH OF TIME.

WE ASK OF YOU, HONORABLE GENTLEMEN THAT THE TRIAL BE MADE OF OPENING THE STATE UNIVERSITY TO OUR DAUGHTERS. WE ARE TAXED TO SUPPORT ~~THE~~ THIS AND IT IS BUT JUST, THAT, WHOEVER IN THE STATE HAS THE POWER, SHOULD INSTRUCT THE BOARD OF REGENTS TO SO ALTER OR AMEND THEIR REGULATION AS TO OFFER THE SAME FACILITIES TO OUR DAUGHTERS THAT OUR SONS NOW ENJOY. YEARS OF OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING BOTH SEPARATE AND MIXED SCHOOLS HAVE CONVINCED ME OF THE IMMENSE ADVANTAGE OF THE LATTER, PARTICULARLY IN THE BRANCHES OF STUDY. I CANNOT EXPRESS IN TOO STRONG TERMS MY GRATITUDE THAT I WAS EDUCATED IN SUCH A SCHOOL, SIDE BY SIDE WITH BOYS WHO WERE PREPARED TO ENTER HARVARD & YALE COLLEGES. NEITHER CAN I TOO DEEPLY DEPLORE THE FACT THAT I, ALSO, BEING EQUALLY WELL FITTED WITH THEM TO ENTER THOSE INSTITUTIONS WAS EXCLUDED, ON ACCOUNT OF SEX ALONE, BY THE ABSURD CUSTOMS AND TIME HONORED USAGES OF THE PAST. OUR LEGISLATORS SHOULD BE URGED TO SOME DECISIVE ACTION ON THIS SUBJECT AND I DO MOST EARNESTLY BEG OF YOU, GENTLEMEN OF THIS COMMITTEE THE CONSIDERATION, IT SO STRONGLY DEMANDS.

X "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER" FOR GIRLS AS WELL AS BOYS

BECAUSE IT DEVELOPS ALL THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND AND HELPS TO ORIGINATE NEW IDEAS. WE NOW KNOW BUT ONE HALF ITS VALUE IN THE STATE BECAUSE ONE SEX HAS BEEN SO ENTIRELY DEPRIVED OF THE HIGHEST FACILITIES OF LEARNING. WHEN THE SEXES ARE EDUCATED TOGETHER IN OUR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES, IN THE SAME BRANCHES OF STUDY, THEN ~~MAY~~ WE MAY BEGIN TO LEARN SOME TRUTHS, ABOUT THE RELATIVE INTELLECTUAL POWERS OF MAN AND WOMAN; ALSO THE EFFECT OF THEIR JOINT ACTION IN THE SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT, WHICH WILL ASTONISH THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT THE SUBJECT. ^X AN OBJECTION IS URGED BY SOME THAT BY CONTACT OF THE TWO SEXES IN UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE LIFE OUR GIRLS WILL LOSE THEIR PECULIAR DELICACY OF THEIR NATURES & BECOME MASCULINE IN THEIR APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR. I DENY THAT THIS IS A RATIONAL CONCLUSION. YOU CANNOT, BY ANY PROCESS OF EDUCATION, CHANGE THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF EITHER. BY INSTRUCTING THEM TOGETHER YOU WILL DEVELOP ALL THAT IS NOBLEST & BEST IN EACH, I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A SEX IN SOULS AS WELL AS BODIES & THAT THIS DIFFERENCE WILL CONTINUE FOREVER. THE VERY REASON WHY THEY SHOULD BE EDUCATED TOGETHER IS THEIR UNLIKENESS IN ALL ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF MIND & HEART. THEY ARE NOT AND CAN NEVER BE EXACTLY ALIKE. BOTH ARE NECESSARY TO FORM A COMPLETE HUMAN BEING IN GOD'S IMAGE & LIKENESS, MANIFESTING TO THE WORLD HIS WISDOM & GOODNESS & USING

ALL THEIR JOINT POWERS & FACULTIES IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY
 ACCORD TO WOMAN HER TRUE PLACE AS MAN'S EQUAL & COMPANION IN
 ALL THE DUTIES & USES OF LIFE & YOU ELEVATE BOTH TO A HIGHER
 PLANE OF THOUGHT & ACTION THAN EITHER CAN ATTAIN ALONE.

X "THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS A GRAND PROTEST
 AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF ENGLAND. IT WAS SIGNED BY SOME WITH
 TIMID HEARTS & TREMBLING HANDS. YET OUR FATHERS KNEW NOT, SAW
 NOT ALL THAT THEY WERE DOING FOR THIS REPUBLIC. WE SEE NOT
 YET ALL THAT THIS BROAD CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS WILL ACCOMPLISH
 FOR THE ENTIRE RACE. WHEN IT SHALL BE STUDIED, IN THE LIGHT OF
 HISTORY BY THE CLEAR INTUITION OF WOMAN JOINED TO THE RATIONAL
 UNDERSTANDING OF MAN, THEN MAY WE HOPE TO SEE IN ITS SPIRIT &
 MEANING THE REVELATION OF A HIGHER THAN HUMAN WISDOM, YAY,
 THE VERY LIFE & SPIRIT OF HIM WHO IS THE CREATOR & EMBODIMENT
 OF ALL LAW. X THE SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT IS THE GRANDEST THE
 NOBLEST THAT CAN ENGAGE THE ATTENTION OF THE WHOLE HUMAN
 RACE. WHEN BOTH SEXES BRING TO ITS STUDY THEIR UNITED
 AGGREGATE OF INTELLECTUAL CONVICTIONS THEN MAY WE HOPE
 TO UNDERSTAND ~~THE~~ BETTER THAN IS POSSIBLE TO EITHER ALONE ITS
 PRINCIPLES AND THE MODE OF ACCOMPLISHING THROUGH IT THE
 BEST RESULTS. WE CLAIM FOR OUR DAUGHTERS THE VERY HIGHEST
 EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES, THE STATE CAN BESTOW, NOT TO ["]UNSEX["]
 THEM OR TO UNFIT THEM TO BECOME FAITHFUL WIVES AND
 HONORED MOTHERS BUT FOR THIS VERY REASON, VIZ, WE EXPECT
 THEM TO USE THESE ADVANTAGES (AS MOTHERS OF THE RACE)
 FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEIR CHILDREN

IN ALL NATIONS THE CHILD FOLLOWS THE CONDITION OF THE MOTHER.
X A MOST MONSTROUS AND UNJUST FRAUD HAS BEEN COMMITTED
AGAINST THE DAUGHTERS OF THIS REPUBLIC IN SO LONG
WITHOLDING FROM THEM THIS PART OF THEIR INHERITANCE.
HONORABLE GENTLEMEN OF THIS COMMITTEE, WILL YOU NOT PUT AN
END FOREVER TO THIS WRONG IN OUR FAIR GOLDEN STATE? WILL
YOU NOT LISTEN TO OUR PLEA AND TO THE VOICE OF RIGHT IN
YOUR OWN SOULS, BEGGING YOU TO ACT JUSTLY IN THIS
MATTER. MOST OF THIS LEGISLATURE PROFESS TO BE DEMOCRATS.
I APPEAL TO YOU, IF THIS ONE-SIDED LEGISLATION, APPROPRIATING
SUCH LIBERAL MEANS FOR THE STATE UNIVERSITY, WHILE ONE HALF
THE YOUTH ARE VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM SHARING IN ITS BENEFITS,
IS TRULY DEMOCRATIC? NO! THE PRINCIPLES OF TRUE DEMOCRACY
FORBID YOUR ANY LONGER ALLOWING SUCH INJUSTICE TO YOUR
SISTERS & DAUGHTERS.

WILL YOU NOT USE ALL YOUR EFFORTS TO OPEN THE DOORS OF
THE STATE UNIVERSITY TO YOUNG WOMEN AND REMOVE ALL
OBSTACLES TO THEIR IMMEDIATE ADMISSION TO ITS CLASSES ON
EQUAL TERMS WITH YOUNG MEN? DO NOT ADJOURN YOUR
LEGISLATIVE SESSION WITHOUT PROMPT & EFFICIENT ACTION TO
SECURE THIS END! YOU WILL MAKE A RECORD ON OUR STATUTE
BOOKS WORTHY YOURSELVES AND THE POLITICAL PARTY WHICH
YOU REPRESENT. YOU WILL ALSO INSCRIBE YOUR NAMES HIGH
UP ON THE ROLL OF FAME AS BENEFACTORS OF HUMANITY

SUFFRAGE FOR WOMAN IS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME. WE ARE AS SURE OF ITS ULTIMATE SUCCESS AS OF OUR OWN EXISTENCE. I, FOR ONE, WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THIS MATTER. WHICHEVER POLITICAL PARTY TAKES IT UP AT THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS SURE TO SUCCEED. THE ONE WHICH STRIVES TO CRUSH OR IGNORE IT IS SURE TO BE DEFEATED. WE HAVE THE RIGHT ON OUR SIDE & CONSEQUENTLY ALL THE FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE WILL AID IN THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF OUR CAUSE.

I CONCLUDE WITH A FEW WORDS CONCERNING WOMAN'S SPHERE. ON A LANDING OF ONE OF THE GRAND STAIRCASES IN THE CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON IS A LARGE PAINTING REPRESENTING EMIGRANT TRAINS GOING WEST. UNDERNEATH ARE THE WORDS— "WESTWARD THE STAR OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY." ON ONE SIDE ~~WERE~~ ARE THESE LINES. "THE MIND² IS NARROWED IN A NARROW SPHERE. THE SPIRIT GROWS TO ITS ALLOTTED SPACES." ON THE OTHER SIDE THESE. "NO PENT UP UTICA CONTRACTS OUR POWERS BUT THE WHOLE BOUNDLESS CONTINENT IS OURS." THE PAINTING IS ON A LARGE SCALE. I CANNOT TELL HOW AN ARTIST MIGHT REGARD IT BUT TO ME IT WAS VERY SUGGESTIVE. IT WAS TRUE TO THE LIFE. ONE COULD ALMOST REALIZE THE SUFFERINGS & PRIVATIONS OF THE PERSONS REPRESENTED, SOME WITH OX TEAMS, OTHERS WITH WAGONS DRAWN BY POOR, FAMINE STRICKEN HORSES — WHILE THE LEAN, CADAVEROUS MEN & WOMEN LOOKED READY TO SINK & PERISH BY THE WAY, AS MANY OF THEIR COMPANIONS HAD ALREADY DONE.

ARE THERE MEN ALONE IN THIS ^{MARCH} JOURNEY TOWARD THE SETTING SUN? WHY ARE THESE WOMEN REPRESENTED

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BY THE LIFE LIKE SKILL OF THE PAINTER'S ART, SIDE BY SIDE WITH THEIR FATHERS, HUSBANDS AND SONS IN ALL THE HARDSHIPS & DANGERS OF THIS LONG PERILOUS JOURNEY ACROSS THE PLAINS? WILL THOSE OBJECTORS TO THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN, WHO SAY THAT WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE SECLUSION & QUIET OF HOME, THAT SHE IS TOO DELICATE TO BE EXPOSED TO ANY OUTSIDE INFLUENCES OF WIND ^{OR} STORM IN THE DISCHARGE OF HER DUTIES, ANSWER MY QUESTION?

I WILL TELL YOU WHAT I THINK ABOUT WOMAN'S SPHERE. NOT ONLY THE "WHOLE BOUNDLESS CONTINENT," THE WHOLE ROUND WORLD, FROM THE ZENITH TO THE NADIR, FROM THE HORIZONS FARTHEST RIM TO ITS UTMOST VERGE; NAY MORE ~~IT IS~~ ~~HERS~~ TO EXPLORE THE WHOLE BOUNDLESS UNIVERSE! WHEREVER MAN CAN GO, FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC, FROM IGY POLE TO TORRID HEAT, SIDE BY SIDE WITH HIM SHOULD WOMAN GO AS HIS COMPANION, HIS EQUAL, IN ART, LITERATURE AND SCIENCE HIS OTHER AND WELL ACKNOWLEDGED BETTER HALF.