

WHERE WOMEN FIRST VOTED

Equal Suffrage Had Its Origin in New Jersey in 1776.

The renewed agitation for equal suffrage recalls the almost forgotten fact that in New Jersey was first extended to women the right of suffrage on the same terms as to men.

On the second day of July, 1776 (two days before the signing of the Declaration of independence) the first constitutional convention of New Jersey, in session at Burlington for the purpose of revising the old Colonial charter, struck out of the suffrage clause the words "male freeholders" and inserted the words "all inhabitants." It then read "All inhabitants worth £50."

On this property qualification women voted "in increasing numbers" until 1807. Only those few women could vote who owned \$250 worth of property, and these were almost all Federalists. That party continued to control the state until 1807, when for the first time the Democratic party obtained a majority in the legislature. The Democrats at once proceeded to disfranchise the white women and free negroes by an act which, it is said, was clearly unconstitutional, but which never was contested. In 1844 a new constitution removed any question of the subject by using the words "white male citizen."