

# Chapter Eleven: Rebecca Brown Mitchell \_Idaho, 1856

In Chapter Eleven, titled "Rebecca Brown Mitchell," the narrative centers on Rebecca's remarkable journey against the constraints of gender norms in 19th century America, particularly in Idaho, where she ultimately became a pioneering figure in women's suffrage and education.

The chapter begins with the assertion that the fight for women's rights was built upon the efforts of earlier generations, especially those like Rebecca Mitchell, who advocated for women's voting rights long before prominent suffragists like Inez Milholland and Maria de Lopez came into the scene. As a young widow and mother of two sons in Illinois, Rebecca faced the harsh reality of coverture laws that stripped her of nearly all property rights upon her husband's death. This legal framework exemplified the oppressive conditions women endured, where they had no claim over their belongings or custody of their children.

Despite her struggles, including the loss of a daughter and a challenging second marriage, Rebecca sought education—a pursuit thwarted by societal prejudices. However, she found a missionary training program that welcomed her and in 1882, at the age of 48, she moved to the burgeoning territory of Eagle Rock, Idaho, with her daughter Bessie. Their arrival marked the beginning of a community-focused mission; Rebecca set up a school in a rudimentary shed, teaching children while overcoming significant hardships.

Rebecca's commitment to education and community drew her into the suffrage movement, especially linked to the temperance movement. She became an influential figure within the Women's Christian Temperance Union, advocating for women's rights and legislative reforms including raising the age of consent and securing women's suffrage in Idaho. Through tireless advocacy and public speaking, she inspired numerous women to fight for their rights, emphasizing that equality is foundational to justice.

The chapter culminates in the victory of women gaining the right to vote in Idaho in 1896, a heartfelt achievement celebrated amidst challenges. Rebecca's legacy did not end there; she became the first female chaplain of a legislative body in history and continued to champion community initiatives, including founding libraries and churches. Her dedication and unwavering spirit left a profound impact, ensuring her influence would endure well beyond her lifetime. Rebecca Brown Mitchell symbolizes the relentless pursuit of justice and empowerment for women, epitomizing courage against societal constraints .