

RISE UP, SISTERS!

In 1920, after the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, the women of Connecticut won the right to vote in federal elections. For over 50 years, generations of state activists campaigned to achieve woman suffrage. They organized and formed advocacy groups to conduct petition drives, marches, and conventions. Connecticut organizations often connected with national suffrage associations, meaning that grassroots town groups worked collaboratively within much larger networks. While all of these organizations championed the collective goal of woman suffrage, they differed in their perspectives and strategies. The history of Connecticut's woman suffrage movement is complex, as determined women from diverse backgrounds united to fight for voting rights and social reforms.

FROM SOLITARY to SOLIDARITY

“PRETTY
MUCH
ALONE
HERE...”

-Frances Ellen Burr

1867

FRANCES ELLEN BURR

Pioneering organizer **Frances Ellen Burr** (1831-1923) collected enough petitions to propose a bill for woman suffrage in Connecticut in 1867. It was defeated with a margin of 111 to 93. Burr recalled that at this stage she was “pretty much alone here in those days, on the woman suffrage question,” but the movement gained momentum in the state as she helped establish two major suffrage organizations. After years of advocating, Burr lived to see the passing of the 19th Amendment.

1869



Isabella Beecher Hooker
CWSA director for 36 years, CWHF Inductee

ISABELLA BEECHER HOOKER

In 1869 **Isabella Beecher Hooker** (1822-1907) assembled the first suffrage convention in Connecticut, bringing together the more conservative New England Woman Suffrage Association and the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association. From that convention, Hooker founded the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association with Burr and other supporters. She served as the society's director for 36 years.

COLORS OF THE U.S. SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

- purple for justice
- white for purity
- green for strength
- gold for courage



The Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association modeled their chain link motif, shown here in the center of the pin, after a design of Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union in England.

CWSA pin, circa 1905-1915, from the collection of Dr. Kenneth Florey, Woman Suffrage Memorabilia

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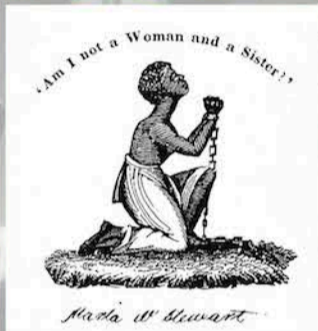
THE EARLY

SUFFRAGISTS

Women suffragists were fueled by their desire to improve society, especially the lives of women and children. They argued that women should have the right to vote to fulfill their roles as moral guardians. Many suffragists lobbied not only for enfranchisement, but also for the abolition of slavery, the protection of children, better employment opportunities for women, and anti-vice and temperance laws, among other concerns. Pioneer suffragists led the crusade for social reforms.

1832

MARIA MILLER STEWART



Abolitionist illustration signed by Maria Miller Stewart, orator, writer, advocate, CWHF Inductee

In 1832 Maria Miller Stewart (1803-1879), a free black woman born in Hartford, Connecticut, galvanized others to oppose racial and gender oppression. She became the first woman in the U.S. to address mixed-race and -gender audiences on the issue of abolition at a time when public speaking for women was unseemly. Stewart boldly lectured to both "my beloved brethren" and "O, ye fairer sisters" because these causes "have fired my soul with a holy indignation, and compelled me thus to come forward to turn their attention to knowledge and improvement; for knowledge is power." She called on black Americans to develop racial pride, unite, and fight for their rights.

THE MAIDS OF GLASTONBURY

JULIA AND ABBY SMITH

1873



Julia and Abby Smith, women's rights activists, abolitionists, CWHF Inductees

Julia (1792-1886) and Abby Smith (1797-1878), known as the "Maids of Glastonbury," resisted when their town raised taxes on unmarried women and widows. In 1873 Abby Smith said: "Now all we ask of the town is to put us on an equality with these men, not to rule over them as they rule over us, but to be put on an equality with them. Is this an unreasonable request?" The Smith sisters refused to pay these taxes, arguing: "No taxation without representation." In 1874 the town seized their cows and some of their property to pay the back taxes, but the sisters continued their resistance.

HARTFORD WOMAN SUFFRAGE CLUB

Mary Hall's (1843-1927) groundbreaking legacy started with her bid to become the first woman attorney in Connecticut. She passed the bar exam, but her application was decided in an 1882 State Supreme Court case which ruled that Hall was a "qualified person." Her case led the way for other women lawyers. Hall was also a founder of the Hartford Woman Suffrage Club and the Good Will Club for working-class boys.



Mary Hall, first woman attorney in Connecticut, CWHF Inductee

1885

GRADUAL VOTING RIGHTS

There was progress at the end of the nineteenth century, including: expanded married women's property rights (1849), passage of a ten-hour maximum workday act (1887), women's right to vote for school officials (1893) and on school and public library issues (1909).

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A NEW

GENERATION

A new generation re-energized the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association (CWSA) in 1910, led by Katharine Houghton Hepburn (1878-1951), mother of actor Katharine Hepburn. Hepburn also co-founded the Hartford Equal Franchise League with Emily Pierson (1881-1971), who later masterminded some of the most effective suffrage campaigns. Connecticut's second-wave suffragists were "younger, enthusiastic, and militant." They worked with a sense of urgency and believed that securing women's rights was essential to upholding democracy.

“WE MUST SAY IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT ALL THE WORLD WILL HEAR.”

-Katharine Houghton Hepburn



Katharine Houghton Hepburn
CWSA president, women's rights advocate, CWHF inductee

SPECTACULAR CAMPAIGNS

1914

Critics insisted that most women did not want to vote, so increasing membership was a priority for suffrage organizations. They campaigned with pamphlets and automobile rallies from town to town and helped elect supportive politicians. Their large-scale parades enabled the organizations to show their numbers and appeal to the public.

In 1914 Hartford hummed with excitement over a parade of 2,000 suffragists from across the state, led by Ethel Murray representing Joan of Arc on a white horse. In 1916 New Haven suffragists held two parades within two weeks.



Suffrage Parade Float, Hartford, May 2, 1914.
CHS Collections, 2006.93.23



CWSA Grand Automobile Tour, Litchfield County, 1911, RG101, CWSA Records, 1869-1921, State Archives, Connecticut State Library

1917

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

and the NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY

Civil disobedience tactics were controversial and splintered Connecticut's suffrage groups. Alice Paul (1885-1977) broke away from the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) which took a more conciliatory state-by-state approach. In 1917 Paul founded the National Woman's Party (NWP) to pursue the passing of a federal amendment as the quickest way to voting rights. Hundreds of NWP members picketed at the White House, and 168 women were arrested between 1917 and 1919, including Katharine Seymour Day (1870-1964) and Catherine Flanagan (1889-1927). They endured horrific prison conditions, and some, like Paul, went on hunger strikes and were force-fed in prison. Their arrests and sufferings drew sympathy from the public and put pressure on the president to support woman suffrage.

Alice Paul
NWP founder, ERA activist, CWHF inductee

NAWSA criticized such radical tactics and refused to endorse Paul and the NWP. Dismayed, eight leaders of the Connecticut branch of NAWSA resigned in 1917 and joined the NWP. Both organizations intensified their separate efforts towards their shared goal.

We ask suffrage in the name of
JUSTICE,
MERCY AND
COMMON SENSE.

-Emily Pierson



Announcement of suffrage meetings led by Emily Pierson and Annie Parritt, Hartford, 1912, CHS Collections, 1961.111.4

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THE ANTI

SUFFRAGISTS

The intelligent anti-suffragist is not . . . 'perfectly satisfied with things as they are'—she sees, as vividly as does the suffragist, a thousand bad conditions that call for remedy, but she cannot see that the ballot would render any aid in remedying these conditions.

- Mrs. William S. Case, anti-suffrage spokesperson

ANTI SUFFRAGE

Americans were divided on the issue of voting rights. Those who opposed the movement were called "antis." The leaders of the antis were typically middle- to upper-class, educated, white women. Some women protested enfranchisement to protect their privileged status. Like the suffragists, many antis worked for social reforms, but they disagreed that voting rights were needed to achieve changes.



Anti-suffrage pin and pennant, from the collection of Dr. Kenneth Florey, Woman Suffrage Memorabilia

GRACE G. MARKHAM

a leader of the antis asserted:

WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS A MEANS WHEREBY WE CAN RENDER THE HIGHEST SERVICE TO OUR STATE OR COUNTRY.

1910

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO SUFFRAGE

The Connecticut Association Opposed to Suffrage formed in 1910 in response to expanded state suffragist activities. Antis campaigned as fiercely as the suffragists and used many of the same tactics: through meetings, rallies, pamphlet distributions, and legislative committee appeals.



Mother's Got the Habit Now, 1913, from the collection of Dr. Kenneth Florey, Woman Suffrage Memorabilia. Postcard

SEPARATE SPHERES



CATHARINE BEECHER

Catharine Beecher
Female education pioneer; author, CWHE Inductee



FLORENCE GRISWOLD

Florence Griswold
Old Lyme Art Colony steward, CWHE Inductee

Antis believed that women exercised meaningful civic influence from their homes and they did not want to jeopardize it by participating in politics. Women were as equally important as men, they argued, but each belonged in "separate spheres." **Catharine Beecher (1800-1878)** held that women and men had equal rights to "happiness and usefulness." She opposed woman suffrage, calling it "an act of oppression, forcing [women] to assume the responsibilities of a man." Later antis continued to view the home as women's place of power. For example, **Florence Griswold (1850-1937)** fostered American Impressionist artists in her home and she served on the antis' executive committee in Old Lyme.

WE ASK THAT YOU DO NOT THROW THE BURDEN OF GOVERNEMENT ON THE WOMEN. -Elizabeth Burnell,
speech before the House committee,
Hartford, March 19, 1913

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FIGHTING

FOR INCLUSION

In the early 20th century, women from diverse backgrounds were part of the movement to organize and lobby for reforms, including enfranchisement. They formed alliances in their communities, such as the Colored Women's Leagues and the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women of Connecticut. These organizations campaigned for voting rights and other focused interests, such as anti-lynching protection and safe working environments. As advocates, women of color and working women made significant contributions by securing rights for many populations.

Given the biases of the press to cover the suffrage activities of Connecticut's middle- to upper-class white women, only some histories have been documented. Today, the archives of local black churches and organizations continue to reveal more stories of the heroic leadership and community efforts of women of color to secure their suffrage and fight for social justice and equal rights. The research must continue.

SEGREGATED ASSOCIATIONS

1918

“A COLORED SUFFRAGE LEAGUE”

Many white suffrage leaders encouraged activism among women of color, working women, and immigrant women but were reluctant to integrate their organizations. The groups remained independent and segregated. In 1918 after a CWSA talk in New Haven at a “war rally of colored women at the Congregational Church,” five hundred women formed “a colored suffrage league.” Connecticut suffragist leaders remained silent about whether voting rights should be extended to all women, and racial and class tensions ran high as diverse women's groups fought for inclusion.

MARY TOWNSEND SEYMOUR 1919



Mary Townsend Seymour
Equal rights and NAACP activist, CWHF inductee

Mary Townsend Seymour (1873-1957), a founding leader of Hartford's NAACP in 1909, was instrumental in securing black women's rights. She helped form Hartford's equal rights advocacy chapter of the Circle for Negro War Relief, Inc., and joined the Colored Women's League of Hartford. In 1919, when suffragist leader Alice Paul declared that the 19th Amendment focused on enfranchising women, but not African American women, Seymour fought to ensure that they were included “without compromise.” She was the first African American woman to run for state office in 1920, and although she lost, she continued her lifelong work as an advocate.

WORKING WOMEN

1893

ROSE PAYTON of Hartford
“the first woman of that race [African American] to be registered [to vote] in Hartford and probably the only colored woman registered in the state to date.” - The Hartford Courant

1920

**MRS. MINNIE CLOVER,
MRS. DAISY DANIELS,
MRS. OSSIE M. DIMOCK**
*“first three Negro women to vote in Hartford”
- The Hartford Courant*

Working women suffragists dealt with both class discrimination and the demands of earning their livelihoods.

ELSA S. OSTEDT 1911

an immigrant from Sweden living in Cromwell wrote:

RICH WOMEN I HAVE HEARD SAY THAT THEY ARE AFRAID THE IGNORANT WORKING WOMEN WILL VOTE. MOST CERTAINLY WE WILL VOTE, AND I AM NOT SURE THAT ALL THE IGNORANCE AMONG MEN OR WOMEN IS CONFINED TO THOSE WHO EARN THEIR OWN LIVING. MOST OF US ARE TOO HARD PUSHED TO HAVE TIME OR MONEY TO GIVE TO FIGHTING FOR THIS RIGHT. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE DO NOT NEED THE VOTE OR THAT WE DO NOT WANT IT.

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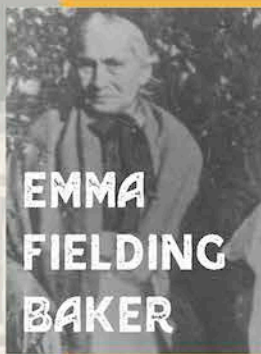
SUFFRAGE

FOR ALL?

Connecticut's culture has long been shaped by its female leaders, as shown in the legacy of Native American women. They held key roles in their tribes' matriarchal social and political systems. Even though the arrival of colonizers inflicted drastic and destructive changes, Native American women persevered in their roles as leaders and carriers of their cultures.

NATIVE AMERICAN VOICES

EMMA FIELDING BAKER



Emma Fielding Baker (1828-1916), Medicine Woman of the Mohegan Tribe, was instrumental in preserving tribal traditions, festivals, and records. In 1860, she served as the president of the Church Ladies Sewing Society which continued the Mohegan matriarchal political role by voicing their decisions on the selection of new chiefs and land divisions. **1860**

Emma Fielding Baker
Mohegan cultural leader and guardian, CWHF Inductee



Baker's niece, **Gladys Tantaquidgeon (1899-2005)**, is credited with preserving Mohegan language and customs. Trained as an anthropologist, she dedicated her life to tribal heritage education and to aiding oppressed persons, including women on reservations and in the Niantic Women's Prison. Tantaquidgeon died in 2005 at the age of 106. During her lifetime, she had witnessed great transformations—and the need to persist in fighting for rights and recognition.

GLADYS TANTAQUIDGEON

Gladys Tantaquidgeon
Preservationist, educator, author, CWHF Inductee

1919

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

In 1919 Congress approved the amendment for universal suffrage for American citizens, but it needed the support of three-quarters of the states. Connecticut affirmed the amendment in 1920 only *after* the required 36 other states had ratified it, making it an official part of the United States Constitution. The 19th Amendment was a landmark victory for women suffragists, but the crusade for true universal suffrage continued. Native Americans were excluded since they did not gain citizenship until 1924. Even then, discriminatory social and legal practices denied voting rights to many people for decades. The 1965 Voting Act outlawed obstacles to all American citizens' suffrage. Ten years later, an amendment to the Act further protected the the voting rights of language minorities, such as Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and non-English speaking groups, strengthening the political voices of communities of color.



Catherine Flanagan enters the State Department with Connecticut's official certificate of ratification of the 19th Amendment, Hartford, 1920. CHS Collections, 2017.86.16

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