

Connecticut Women and the Right to Vote

With Some Plainville Connections To These Historic Events



Part 1

**A Virtual Exhibit by Rosemary Morante
Plainville Historical Society
Summer 2020**

Photo: Suffrage Parade. RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State Archives. Connecticut State Library.
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Connecticut Women and the Right to Vote

The story of the Connecticut suffrage movement is one of courage, hard work, and perseverance despite many challenges and obstacles.

It is about remarkable women who took on the policy makers and institutions in our "Land of Steady Habits" and strove for many years to achieve voting equality.

As we celebrate in 2020 the Centennial of the 19th Amendment which granted women the right to vote, let's look back at how this movement unfolded in Connecticut.

Along the way, we will also look back at some long forgotten Plainville connections with Connecticut's historic struggle for women's rights.

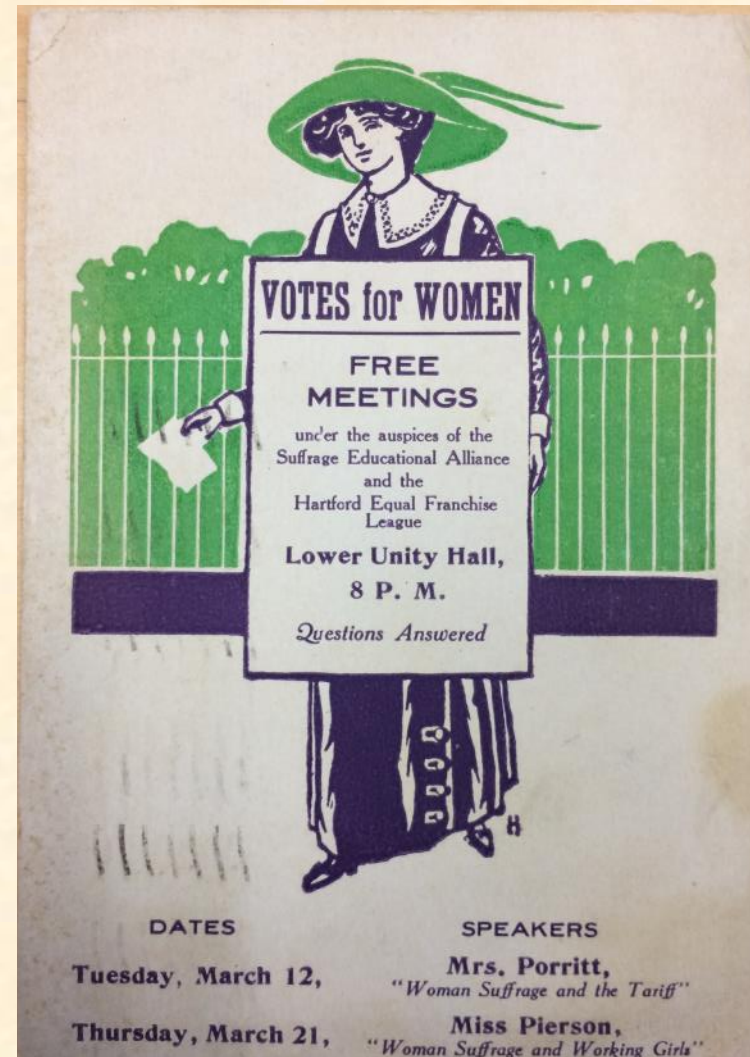


Image: Postcard. Votes for women. Connecticut Historical Society. 1961.111.4. All images from the Connecticut Historical Society are used with permission.

Prelude: Before the Civil War

Seneca Falls

The July 1848 Seneca Falls Convention is regarded as the organized start of the U.S. suffrage movement. It was called by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, two women who were active abolitionists. Their anti-slavery work had led them to also consider and become committed to women's rights.

Held in the central New York town of Seneca Falls, the Convention issued a Declaration of Sentiments in which they stated that all men and women are created equal. They passed twelve resolutions. The ninth one addressed women's "sacred right" to vote.

Role of Women in Connecticut

During this time, there was some limited attention to the role of women in Connecticut. For example, several laws regarding property rights were passed in the 1840's.

It is also reported that the idea of suffrage for both women and African American men had come up during the state's Constitutional Convention of 1818. However, in the end, the Convention "explicitly rejected" any such proposals.¹ It would be many years before either group would be granted full voting rights.



Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, site of the 1848 convention. At this time, Seneca Falls was the hometown of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her family. It is now part of the Women's Rights National Historic Park.

Photo: National Park Service. Public domain.

A Women's Convention is to assemble at Seneca Falls on the 19th and 20th inst., to deliberate upon their social, civil, and religious condition and rights. Lucretia Mot, the eloquent quaker is to attend.

A brief notice in the July 21, 1848 Hartford Courant announcing the Convention at Seneca Falls.

Note regarding newspaper images: Newspapers more than 95 years old are regarded as public domain.

Prelude: Right After the Civil War

Frances Ellen Burr

One of the state's first notable feminists was Frances Ellen Burr from Hartford. In 1867, she petitioned the state legislature to bring forth a bill giving women the right to vote. The bill was ultimately defeated although the vote was relatively close.

National Leaders Come to Town

A second 1867 highlight was a Hartford lecture by the two famous suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Heralded as the "apostles of women's rights" by *The Hartford Courant* on December 9th, they spoke the next night at a hall on Asylum Street.

Isabella Beecher Hooker

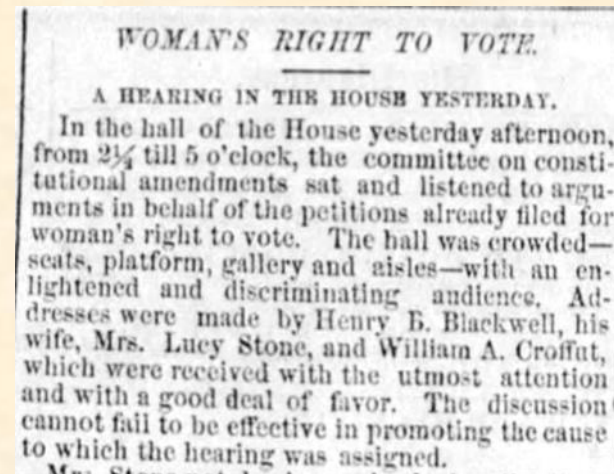
Another Hartford woman who began a long journey with suffrage in the 1860's was Isabella Beecher Hooker. She was a member of the famous Beecher family. Her half-sister Harriet Beecher Stowe had authored *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.



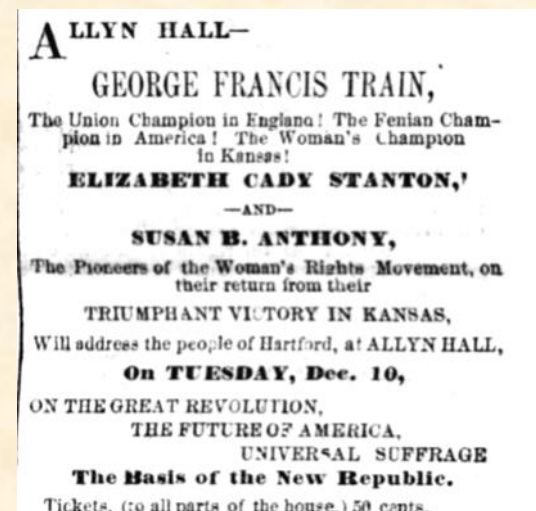
In November 1868, Isabella took part in founding the New England Woman Suffrage Association. By 1869, she had "established association" with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.²

Both Isabella and her husband John Hooker were principal players in what would come next.

Photo is from the Program Book: Votes for women: pageant and parade, arranged by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association, 1914. 324.3 C752of, The Connecticut Historical Society.



A July 12, 1867 article in *The Hartford Courant* about a legislative hearing. Lucy Stone was a well-known



Ad in the *Hartford Courant* on December 9, 1867. (George Francis Train was a wealthy

1869: Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association is Founded

A Convention is Called

In 1869, Isabella and John Hooker, Frances Ellen Burr, and others called a state convention for women's rights. The October event was held at the Roberts Opera House on Main Street in Hartford.

Notable out-of-state speakers included Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and William Lloyd Garrison, the famous Boston abolitionist who also worked for women's suffrage.

The convention was well attended. On October 30th, *The Hartford Courant* reported that the final session was near capacity. The fervent spirit of the speakers is evident in accounts of the proceedings.

The Movement Takes Shape

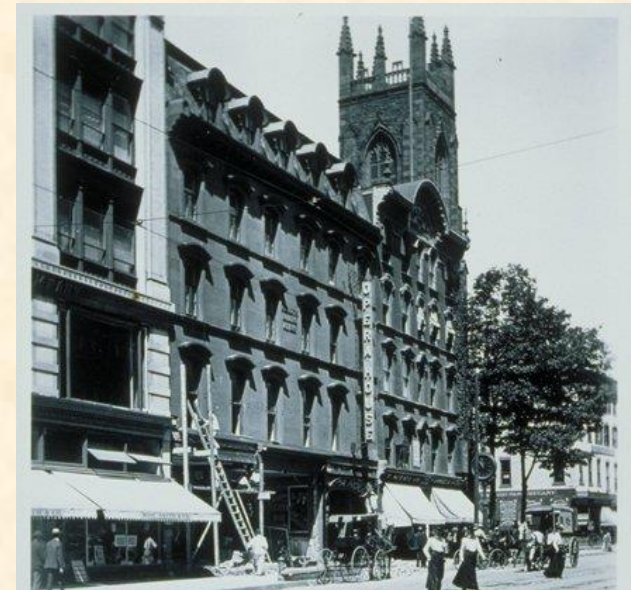
The Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association (CWSA) was founded at the convention. This was the start of an organized state movement.

Officers included Frances Ellen Burr as Secretary (a position she held for 41 years), Harriet Beecher Stowe as Vice-President, and Isabella Beecher Hooker as head of the Executive Committee.

Resolutions were adopted including one which stated that there is no reason for the right to vote to be unique to men.

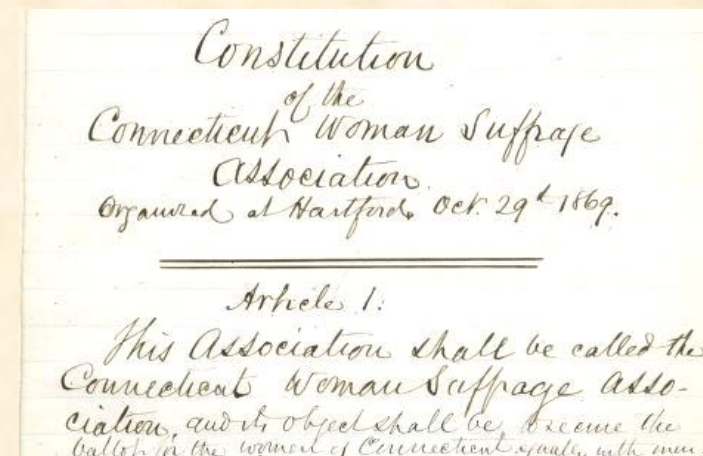
At the Governor's Mansion

At least some participants were even entertained at the Governor's Mansion.³ Governor Jewel's wife Esther was one of the persons whose name appeared on the published call to the convention.⁴ Her name also appears in CWSA records as a financial contributor to the association.



Roberts Opera House. Main Street, Hartford.

Photo:1960.147.60532img0001.pcd. The Graphics Collection. Connecticut Historical Society.



The CWSA Constitution. Article 1 states that "object shall be to secure the ballot for the women of Connecticut equally with men."

Image: RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State Archives. Connecticut State Library.

1869: Plainville Connections

Did anyone from Plainville attend the 1869 Convention and founding of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association?

The answer is Yes!

State Archives include the original Constitution of the CWSA followed by signatures of the women and men who were there at the start. We can proudly say that the names of two Plainville women appear:

H. Caulkins Hills

Annie Hills

It is quite certain that this is Harriet Caulkins Hills and her step-daughter Christiana Hills. Harriet's husband and Christiana's father was George Hills. They were both relatively young women. In 1869, Harriet would have been about 30 and Annie about 20 years of age.

Several years after this, Christiana married Charles Calor. She passed away in 1934 but a legacy in her name remains. The Christiana Calor Memorial Trust Fund continues to help support the Plainville Public Library to this day.

Russell?

Mrs C A Kufele Andover Locks
Thomas Elmes Derby Ct
Samuel W Taylor 40 Haddam^{368 Main St} Ct
Daniel Norton 254 Main St
Annex Hoffs Plainville Ct
H. Caultkins Hills. Plainville Ct.
Sarah A. Waters Hartford Ct.
R B Chapman West Meriden Ct
Mrs Eliza H. Gillette Hartford
Virginia J. Smith "
Pendence B. Martin "
Fannie J. Didd. Hartford, Haddam
Nancy M. Pierce East Haddam
Mile Hotel Kiss Kensington Conn.
Ruth B. Jones, Kensington Conn.
Mary A. Eastman Kensington Conn.
Mary C A Patterson Hartford Conn.
Helen C. White^{33 West St} Hartford Conn.
Jane A. Dean^{Box} Hartford Conn.
Fannie S. Dresser Rays Cromwell Conn.
Edwin P. Miller Hartford Conn.
Mrs E. M. Jewell^{180 Hartford Ave} Hartford
Mrs Marian Waite. Hartford,

Page on which signatures of our Plainville women appear.

Note Eliza H. Gillette just a few signatures below. This is the mother of actor William Gillette of Gillette Castle fame. The Gillette's lived on Forest Street in Hartford, the same neighborhood as the Hooks.

Image: RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage

* Just a few months earlier, Harriet and Annie would have been from the Town of Farmington. Plainville did not separate from Farmington and incorporate as a new town until July 1869.

CWSA: The Early Decades

Two Early Victories for Women

One victory was in the area of property rights. In 1870 the Hookers proposed a state law to give married women control of their own property. They lobbied each year until it was passed in 1877.

Another milestone occurred in 1882 when Connecticut's Supreme Court ruled that women could be admitted to the bar. Mary Hall of Hartford (originally from Marlborough) became our first female attorney.

On the Suffrage Front

Connecticut suffragists continued to be active. Two common strategies to gain support were use of petitions and the hosting of lectures. Speakers included national figures who toured the state.

However, there was little progress with suffrage legislation. Bills for either full or partial suffrage were introduced through the 1880's. Leaders worked hard on the cause. Advocates, including Attorney Mary Hall in 1886, spoke with great conviction at hearings⁵ but unfortunately, none of the bills passed.

The Smith Sisters of Glastonbury

There were two women, however, who achieved fame for their stand on voting at this time. After a disagreement about taxes on their farm, sisters Abigail and Julia Smith of Glastonbury asked to vote locally but were not allowed. Consequently, they refused to pay taxes each year.

This resulted in the town taking several of their cows - whereupon the sisters would buy them back or another resident would buy and return them to the Smiths! National media picked up the story and Connecticut's Smith Sisters became quite well-known.



Mary Hall
Connecticut's first woman
admitted to the bar.

Photo: Used with permission of
Richmond Memorial Library;
Marlborough, Connecticut.



"Kimberly Mansion," home of Glastonbury's Smith sisters. It is now a National Historic Landmark.

Photo: National Park Service. Public domain.

Plainville Connections: The Early Decades

Susan B. Anthony Speaks in Plainville

The most famous suffragist of all included Plainville on one of her speaking tours. On May 25, 1874, Susan B. Anthony came to town. She spoke at the Congregational Church on West Main Street to about 100 persons and wrote about it in a diary that is pictured here.

Her local hosts were Sophia and George Smith from West Main Street. George was a superintendent at the downtown knitting mill .

On May 28th, *The New Britain Herald* reported on the event. They state that her account of "arrest and imprisonment for attempting to exercise the 'inalienable right' was touching and suggestive of what we may expect to see in the not very far future." The arrest referenced by *The Herald* was for voting "illegally" (because she was a woman) in the 1872 Presidential election.



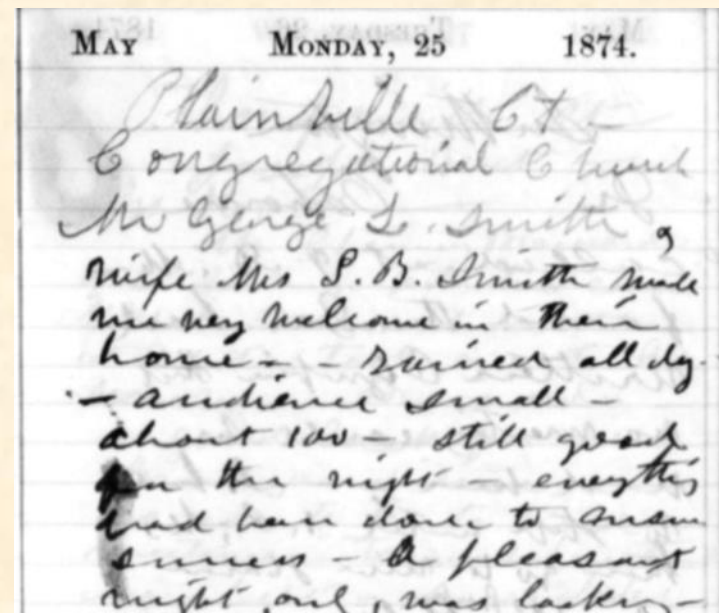
Plainville's Congregational Church on West Main Street, our oldest church and the site of Susan B. Anthony's speaking engagement on May 25, 1874.

Photo: R. Morante



Susan B. Anthony.

Photo: Library of Congress. "No known restrictions on publication."



From Susan B. Anthony's Daybook/Diaries.

Image: Susan B. Anthony Papers. Library of Congress. Public Domain.

1893: One Small Step for Connecticut Women

A Bill Finally Passes

The spring of 1893 started off well when the General Assembly mandated the State Agricultural School at Storrs (now UCONN) to accept women as students.

Then in June, the legislature passed a bill allowing women to vote but only for local school officers or “visitors.” (Today’s equivalent would be a Board of Education.) Connecticut women could finally vote in at least one type of election.

Women registered and voted for this one purpose. Included in this group was Rose Payton of Hartford who was the first African-American women to register to vote in Hartford and possibly the state.⁶

The Role of the CWSA in 1893

CWSA minutes show that the association was quite active in promoting voting by women. For example, 10,000 leaflets were distributed.

In 1893 meeting minutes, they also express great hope that “by our efforts in this direction we have sowed the seed that shall yield a bountiful harvest in the years to come for full and free suffrage for women in our state.”⁷

October 1893: Connecticut Women Vote for the First Time

Local elections took place on October 2, 1893. On October 6th, the *Courant* reported that a total of 4141 women had voted. They also reported that Waterbury and Hartford led the state in their totals of women voters. Some towns, however, had few or no women voting.

A number of women were also elected as school officers in 1893.



This is from an unknown newspaper just before local elections in 1893. An apparent attempt at humor using stereotypes regarding women!

The accompanying article lists Hartford women who registered. CWSA founder Frances Ellen Burr is there as well as Rose Payton, the city's first African-American woman to register.

Image: "Women at the polls" Newspaper Article. RG101.
Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State

1893: Plainville Connections

How Did the Local Election of 1893 Go in Plainville?

We did very well. We had the largest turnout of women in proportion to population. *The New Britain Herald* on October 4th declared that "Plainville stands as the banner town of the state."

The Herald article also says that the work of the women in getting out the vote was probably "not equaled in the state." Efforts even included bringing women to vote using "teams" rented from a livery stable owned by Frank B. Newton. In fact, he had "let so many teams to the women" that he had to walk to Town Hall to vote!

We Also Elect Our First Woman to Office

We also elected Mary Goodrich Clark as a School Visitor making her our first woman to hold elective office. She was also was the highest vote-getter of all candidates.



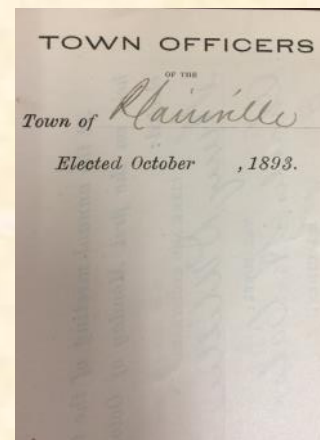
The Plainville Historic Center has one photograph of Mary, taken while she was a student at a private school that existed in town. She is at the center in the front row.

For more about Mary Goodrich Clark, please continue with the exhibit.

Photo: Plainville Historical Society files.

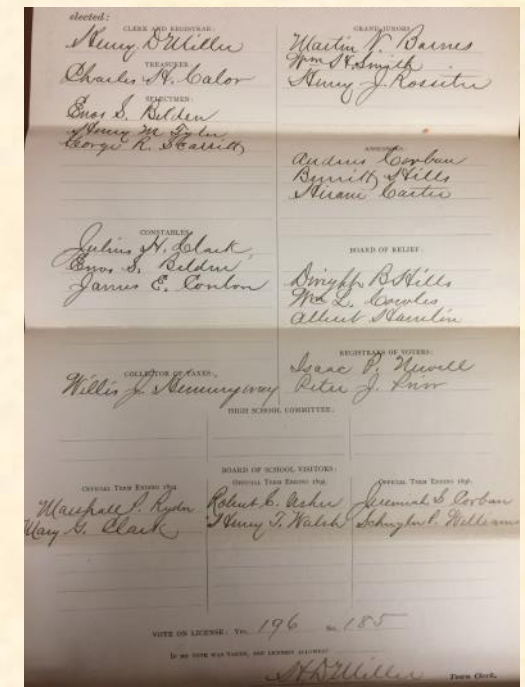
Plainville stands as the banner town of the state, in proportion to its inhabitants, for women voting and it is probable that the activity of the women in getting out a full vote was not equaled in the state. The whole number of votes cast by the men was 407, and the women cast three-fourths as many ballots. Mary G. Clark was elected school visitor.

Image: New Britain Herald. October 4, 1893.



Shown here is the original copy of the official 1893 election results.

Image: Taken at Office of the Town Clerk. Town of Plainville.



1893: Plainville Connections

Learn More About Mary Goodrich Clark:

First Plainville Woman to be Elected to Office

Mary E. Goodrich was born in Plainville (then Farmington) in 1847. Mary was a 1867 graduate of Mount Holyoke Seminary, now Mount Holyoke College. She married local manufacturer George D. Clark. They had four children.

In *The History of Plainville, Connecticut*, Henry Castle notes that Mary was in the Plainville Village Improvement Society as well as another club whose members studied history and literature.

In its October 3rd article, *The Courant* states that “Mrs. Mary G. Clark is respected by all, a graduate of Mount Holyoke Seminary and a lady of culture who knows the ways of the world.”

Years later, the family relocated out-of-state. However, during this past spring, contact was made with great-granddaughters Patsy Burdeshaw, Jane Adams, Mary McLean, Sally Rogers, and Betty Renneker. The family has graciously shared these additional photos.



Mary with her son Dwight.



Two photos of Mary as a young woman.



Mary at a family gathering. She is second from the right.

1894-1909: From One Century to the Next

Small Steps Only

Voting for school officers and election of women to these positions continued in the state. There was also some progress beyond electoral matters. By 1895, women could be notary publics and at least two of the five members of the State Board of Charities had to be women.

Suffragists took on various social reforms in addition to voting. One success was an 1895 law that did not allow anyone under the age of 14 to work in factories.

Temperance and prohibition of alcohol were also espoused by many suffragists. The two movements intertwined over the years both nationally and in Connecticut.

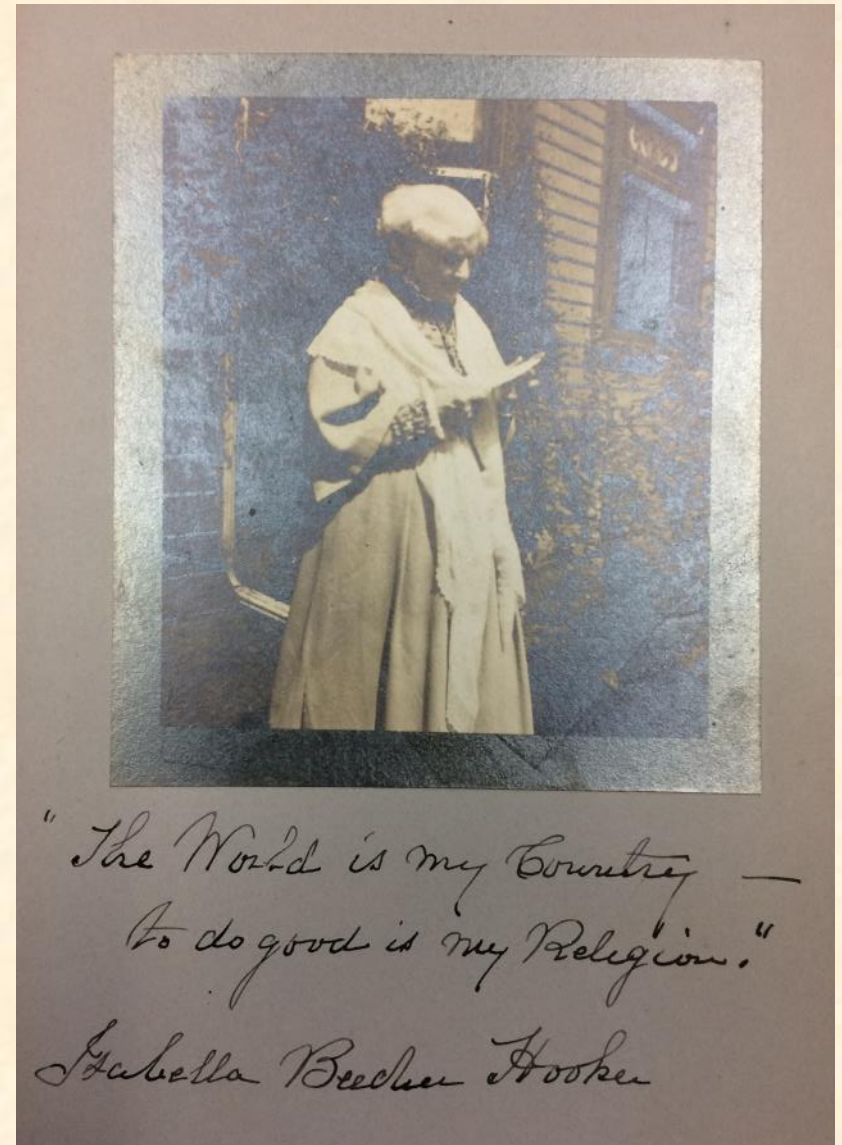
Obstacles to Progress on Suffrage

The early 1900's still did not see large-scale change on suffrage. A law giving women voting rights on library-related matters was passed in 1909. However, sources indicate that it was not actually implemented.⁸

Obstacles to more progress appeared to be significant. The political establishment at the Capitol was simply not supportive of suffrage at this time.

At a Crossroads

After 36 years, Isabella Beecher Hooker stepped down as President of the CWSA. Membership had declined during the early years of the century. The movement was at somewhat of a crossroads waiting to see what the next chapter would be.



A signed picture of Isabella Beecher Hooker in her later years.

Photo: 1997.81.0. Connecticut Historical Society.

1894-1909: Plainville Connections

Some Plainville Highlights During These Years:

- ◆ Local women continued to register to vote for School Visitors. For example, *The New Britain Herald* reported on September 13, 1900 that 62 of 157 new voters were women.
- ◆ Two more Plainville women were elected as School Visitors in the 1890's. They were Alice J. Ryder and Minnie Pierce.
- ◆ Mary Goodrich Clark appears in 1902 and 1904 minutes of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association. We now know that in addition to running for local office, Mary was engaged in the state suffrage movement.
- ◆ Like so many places, Plainville had a local and politically active Women's Christian Temperance Union. Women would petition and even stand at the polls when voting on "license" or "no license" took place. In the early 1900's, the local WCTU also erected a "temperance fountain" in the center of town.
- ◆ Elizabeth Cady Stanton papers include an August 1901 letter from John Calvin Norton of Plainville.* He tells Mrs. Stanton how much he enjoyed reading two of her books including her memoirs *Eighty Years and More*. In fact, he says that he read it three times!⁹

* John Calvin Norton and his first wife Harriet Hotchkiss Norton lived on East Main Street. Their home was part of the Underground Railroad before the Civil War. The site is now part of Connecticut's Freedom Trail. Their son was Charles Norton who donated the land for Norton Park to the Town of Plainville.



Alice J. Ryder, our second woman elected as a School Visitor.

Photo: Plainville Historical Society files



Temperance water fountain in the center of Plainville near the railroad tracks. These fountains were erected in many places (for example, Central Park in New York) and were intended to provide an alternative source of beverage.

Photo: Plainville Historical Society files

1910-1916: Momentum Builds

A New Generation of Women Lead the State

What came next at the state level was a remarkable growth of well-organized activism. CWSA membership grew significantly and a “new generation” of women stepped up as leaders. Perhaps the best-known is Katherine Houghton Hepburn (mother of the famed actress) who became CWSA President in October 1910.

To name just a few others, there was Dr. Valeria Hopkins Parker of Greenwich, Rosemary Hall Headmistress Caroline Ruutz-Reez also of Greenwich, Emily Pierson of Cromwell who taught at Bristol High School, labor advocate Josephine Bennett of Hartford, and Old Lyme artist Katherine Ludington.

Activism took many forms including distribution of literature, lobbying at the State Capitol, calling meetings, having speakers, parades, writing letters, petitioning, testifying on bills, and getting into the news. CWSA also opened a Pratt Street headquarters in Hartford.

The Anti-Suffrage Movement in Connecticut

Commonly referred to as the Anti's, the Connecticut Association Opposed to Suffrage had a following. They were led by Grace Markham of Hartford. Two others of note were Old Lyme arts patron Florence Griswold and Josephine Jewell Dodge, daughter of Connecticut First Lady Esther Jewell who had supported suffrage.

The Anti's were quite active and used many of the same strategies as the CWSA to advocate for their cause.

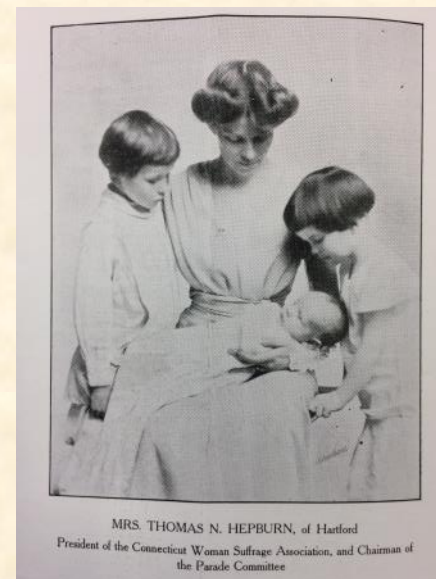
Moving Forward

However, during the second decade of the 20th century, Connecticut suffragists mounted extraordinary efforts that would have been difficult for any group to match. On the next few pages, we will take a look at some of those efforts.



CWSA Headquarters on Pratt Street in Hartford.

Photo: Used with permission from the Hartford History



Katherine Houghton Hepburn

Photo is from the Program Book: Votes for women: pageant and parade, arranged by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association, 1914. 324.3 C752of, The Connecticut Historical Society.

1910-1916: Momentum Builds

Automobile Tours

- The August 1911 Auto Tour of Litchfield County featured decorated cars and a 32-town itinerary. Over 5000 persons attended meetings to hear speakers and many signed petitions. There were later tours of Windham, Tolland, and Middlesex Counties.

Trolley Campaign

- A 1912 Trolley Campaign to hand out literature in cities was organized by Emily Pierson. Factory stops were included as part of CWSA's efforts to expand their base of support. It is reported, for example, that suffragists spoke to a lunchtime gathering of 400 Underwood Typewriter workers in Hartford.¹⁰

Emmeline Pankhurst Speaks in Hartford

- In November 1913, the famous and fiery—and some would say radical—British suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst came to speak at the Parsons Theater in downtown Hartford. Introduced by Katherine Houghton Hepburn, Mrs. Pankhurst gave what became known as her “Freedom or Death” speech. She proclaimed that once they were determined, “nothing on earth and nothing in heaven will make women give way.”¹¹



Automobile Tour of 1911.

Image: RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association

Mrs. Pankhurst Coming.
Hartford is looking forward to hearing Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, the English militant suffrage leader, who will speak at the Parsons Theater, November 13, at 8 o'clock. Her subject will be "The Women's Revolution in England." Everywhere she has met with an enthusiastic reception. In Chicago Jane Addams gave a dinner in her honor at Hull House. Among the guests were many conservative suffragists and sociologists. Mrs. Pankhurst will leave Chicago for Minneapolis, where she will speak before the International Purify Congress. In this city a dinner will be given in her honor at the Hotel Bond the evening of her lecture.

Hartford Courant November 6, 1913.

1910-1916: Momentum Builds

Parade in Hartford: May 1914

- In May 1914, the CWSA held a memorable parade in Hartford. With Emily Pierson as chief organizer and Head Marshal, the parade had over 1000 participants (many dressed in the symbolic white of the movement) and attracted thousands as spectators.¹²
- The route began at the Capitol, went through the Arch, and down to Main Street. Floats, automobiles, signs, and banners (“Votes for Women”) abounded. Many women were organized by groups such as teachers, nurses, lawyers, milliners, and others.
- The parade included a float from the Connecticut Men’s League for Woman Suffrage. A page in the event’s program book lists these male supporters as “The Enfranchised Aiding the Unenfranchised.”



Suffrage parade photo. 2009.382.0. Connecticut Historical Society.



Suffrage parade photo. 2006.93.23. Connecticut Historical Society.



Suffrage parade photo. RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State Archives. Connecticut State Library.

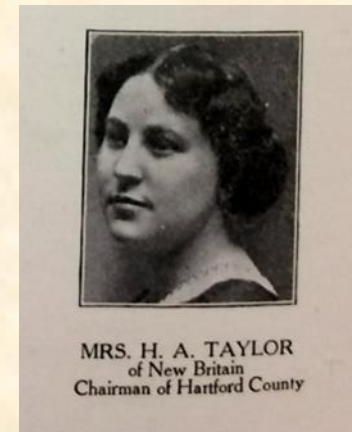
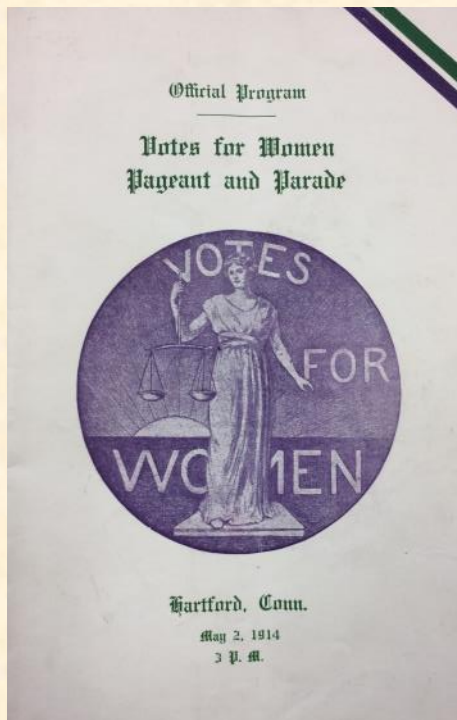
1910-1916: Momentum Builds

Parade in Hartford: May 1914 (Continued)

A wonderful historical resource about the parade is the program book that was published by the CWSA. It lists many individuals and groups and also has photographs of key members.

Shown here is the cover of the program and photographs of some women who were marshals of various contingents or held other positions. Although none were from Plainville, the ones selected are from surrounding towns.

Note: Theodate Pope's home in Farmington (designed by Theodate herself) is now the Hillstead Museum.



All images shown here are from the Program Book: Votes for women: pageant and parade, arranged by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association, 1914. 324.3 C752of, The Connecticut Historical Society.

1910-1916: Momentum Builds

Summer 1914

- Summer 1914 was extremely active. Women were energized by the success of the Hartford parade. Leaders toured by automobile and spoke at various venues including factories and outdoor locations where “sunset suffrage meetings” were often held in the evening.

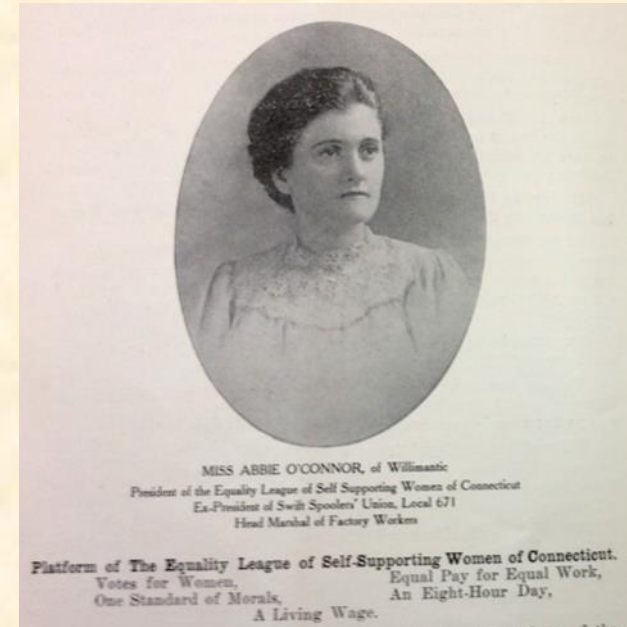
Events of 1916

- New Haven held a major suffrage parade in September 1916.
- Also in September 1916, the Connecticut Federation of Labor convention passed a resolution supporting women’s suffrage. It is reported that Emily Pierson spoke and was joined by textile worker Abbie O’Connor of Willimantic in making the argument for the resolution.¹³ Abbie O’Connor had also been Head Marshal of Factory Workers in the 1914 parade.



The Connecticut suffrage movement worked to gain more awareness and support from the working women of the state.

Photo: RG101box4folder7. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State Archives. Connecticut State Library.



Abbie O'Connor.

Image is from the Program Book: Votes for women: pageant and parade, arranged by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association, 1914. 324.3 C752of, The Connecticut Historical



Emily Pierson.

Suffrage leader, organizer, and speaker. She had also taught at Bristol High School.

Photo: RG101box4folder8. Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association Records. State Archives. Connecticut State Library.

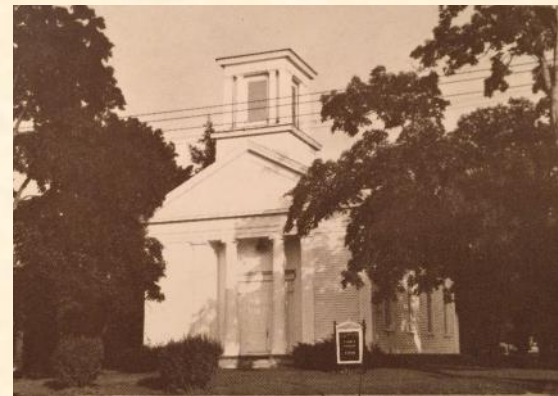
1910-1916: Plainville Connections

Some Plainville Highlights During These Years

- ◆ In March 1910, the CWSA voted to hold an outdoor meeting at the Plainville Campgrounds in connection with the “Chautauqua” taking place there in July. Chautauqua refers to adult education gatherings that were popular at the time.
- ◆ The event took place on Monday July 25, 1910. One scheduled speaker was Mrs. Elizabeth Bacon who was a suffragist from Hartford and CWSA President 1906-1910. She had also been elected to school office in Hartford during the 1890’s.
- ◆ On September 9, 1916, *The New Britain Herald* reported on what may have been called a “sunset suffrage meeting” on the previous evening of September 8th. Suffrage supporters came to town and spoke in front of the Baptist church on East Main Street. Speakers included Connecticut suffragist Cora Thompson Sage.

The members of the Woman's Alert Club and their friends are invited to attend a meeting at the Plainville campground, Monday, July 25, held under the auspices of the Connecticut Suffrage Association. Among the speakers will be Mrs. Ella Reeve Bloor, Mrs. Elizabeth Bacon and others. Miss Mildred Sage of this place will render several violin selections, accompanied by Miss Violet L. Eaton, also of Collinsville. Those who are to attend from this place will take the 7:44 train at the New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad station for Plainville.

The above notice was in the Collinsville news in The Hartford Courant. July 23, 1910.



Baptist Church. Site of a 1916 evening suffrage meeting.

Photo: Plainville USA 100 Years. Official 1969 Centennial Publication.