

White Paper #3 for Lexington Historical Society Exhibit “Something Must Be Done: Bold Women of Lexington”

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Votes for Women: The Women’s Suffrage Movement, 1870-1920

Note: most of the wider commentary in this paper is based on two books, both of which I highly recommend to anyone interested in investigating this history further: first, Kate Lemay’s *Votes for Women! A Portrait of Persistence* (Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery, 2019), the exhibit catalog for Kate’s masterful exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D. C. This catalog contains several essays by noted scholars on the subject of suffrage history, which serve to unpack or correct the historical record on the national women’s suffrage movement, particularly in relation to African-American women’s roles (or exclusion from) the suffrage debates. The second book is Barbara F. Berenson’s *Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement: Revolutionary Reformers* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2018) Berenson’s book sets the story of suffrage in Massachusetts against the national story, and introduces many women who have been otherwise ignored by the history books. Both volumes have extensive source notes, and excellent bibliographies.

The National Scene

In the past few years, historians have been unpacking the famous story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, examining why this event and these women have overshadowed the entirety of the women’s rights movement in the United States. The retelling of the story has moved it into the realm of myth; in fact, Anthony was not at the Seneca Falls Convention, and did not even meet Stanton until 1851, and the significance of the convention to the women’s movement at the time is overblown. However, these facts are ingrained in American historical moments because Stanton and Anthony themselves worked to make it so: in the aftermath of the American Civil War, they fought to maintain control of an increasingly fractious women’s rights movement, and to downplay the contribution of Massachusetts-based suffragists led by Lucy Stone.¹

The reason for the animosity between Stanton and Anthony on the one hand and Stone on the other began with the end of the Civil War and the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, specifically giving African-American men the right to vote. With the end of the war, the anti-slavery movement began to break up, and many women moved on to a full-time focus on women’s rights. Stanton and Anthony were upset that black men were being given voting rights before (and therefore political

¹ Tetrault, “To Fight by Remembering, or the Making of Seneca Falls” in (Lemay 2019, 1-27)

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power over) white women. In an effort to attract southern women to their cause, they formed an alliance with an outspokenly racist sponsor, and formed the Women Suffrage Association, which became in 1869 the National Women's Suffrage Association. The NWSA was opposed to the 15th amendment, wanted a constitutional amendment guaranteeing women's right to vote, and also concerned itself with a wide range of women's issues, such as property ownership, divorce laws, and child custody. The organization was headquartered in New York City, and from 1868-72 published the newspaper *The Revolution*.²

The New Englanders, on the other hand, stayed closer to the abolitionist roots of the women's suffrage movement. The New England Woman Suffrage Association, which was soon absorbed into the American Women's Suffrage Association, was first led by Julia Ward Howe, and then by Lucy Stone, two women who had been central to the anti-slavery movement in Massachusetts. The AWSA supported the fifteenth amendment, unlike the NWSA allowed men to serve on its executive committee, and invited African-American men and women to join. The focus of the AWSA was to work on a state-by state basis, getting each state legislature to pass individual laws guaranteeing women's suffrage. The AWSA focused solely on women's suffrage, but its organ, *The Women's Journal*, covered a wide variety of women's issues and subjects of interest during its over fifty year publication run.³

For about twenty years, the two organizations worked separately, and often at odds with each other. The New York-based NWSA focused on a constitutional amendment and legal challenges through women getting arrested for voting and then appealing their judgements, a tactic that unfortunately resulted in no success. The NWSA did gain a major victory over the AWSA, though, through the publication in 1881 of a three-volume history of the women's rights movement, which completely ignored the contributions of Lucy Stone and many of her colleagues, and placed Stanton and Anthony at the center of the suffrage movement.⁴ On the other hand, the Boston-based AWSA and its affiliate chapters worked on the local and state level. By 1890, the AWSA had some modest success—women had achieved full enfranchisement in Wyoming, Utah, and Washington territories, although Utah and Washington women lost the vote due to legal challenges, and a few states like Kansas and Massachusetts allowed women to vote in either municipal or school committee elections. Most importantly, however, the AWSA had done an enormous amount of grassroots organizing, making connections with women's clubs and through *The Women's Journal* raising awareness in women around the country. In the words of legal historian Barbara Berenson, “The reality is that the many ways in which

² (Berenson 2018, 45-54)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Tetrault, “To Fight by Remembering, or the Making of Seneca Falls” in (Lemay 2019, 1-27) is a very elegant summary of the mythologizing of the beginnings of the women's suffrage movement, and how Stanton and Anthony achieved their goal.

AWSA and *The Woman's Journal* supported state suffrage movements between 1870 and 1890 laid the foundations for future successes.”⁵

With the last of the first generation of suffragists growing older and a number of defeats for both AWSA's state-based strategy and NWSA's constitutional amendment, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony decided to call a truce and combine the organizations in 1890, creating the National American Women's Suffrage Association, headquartered in New York. Despite Lucy Stone's objections that none of them should be in charge of the new organization, Susan B. Anthony was elected president, thus ensuring that the Seneca Falls/Stanton/Anthony story remained the founding mythology of the movement. However, Stone and her daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell retained control in Boston of *The Women's Journal*, now the official newspaper of NAWSA. The new organization adopted just about all of the AWSA's philosophies and tactics: state-based legislation, a non-partisan focus on just women's suffrage, and an organization made up of delegates from the state chapters.⁶

Unfortunately, though, this merger coincided with the rise of Jim Crow, and under Anthony's leadership, the NAWSA retained at least one policy of the NWSA: excluding African-American women from its ranks in order to gain more support from white southern women's organizations. Like the pre-Civil War women's rights work of Lucy Stone, the Grimke sisters, Sarah Parker Remond, and others, the incredibly difficult work of African-American women, including Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell, as well as dozens of black church groups and women's clubs were omitted from the official narrative of the women's suffrage movement.⁷

Susan B. Anthony was replaced in 1900 by Carrie Chapman Catt, and the women's suffrage movement was reinvigorated by new blood and new tactics, including a savvy use of visual culture that depicted white suffragists as “Gibson Girls:” young, fashionable, intelligent, and most of all respectable, even when pursuing activities outside the home.⁸ Posters, cartoons, and illustrations in publications like Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper all aided in re-branding the suffragist. Songs, clothing, and even ceramics were produced to support the cause.⁹ Suffragists also took advantage of connections already forged between women's clubs and

⁵ (Berenson 2018, 61)

⁶ (Berenson 2018, 83-87)

⁷ For an introduction to African-American women's work for civil rights in the 19th and early 20th century, see Martha S. Jones, “The Politics of Black Womanhood, 1848-2008,” in (Lemay 2019, 29-48). Also (Lemay 2019, 139-146)

⁸ (Berenson 2018, 91-92)

⁹ (Lemay 2019, 157-161, 186-194) see also (Florey 2013)

retailers across the country to create “suffrage windows,” displays in downtown store windows with a suffrage theme.¹⁰

The younger generation of suffragists such as Alice Paul, who had taken part in the suffrage movement in Great Britain, brought back some of the British suffrage tactics, particularly their understanding of the power of demonstrations outdoors. They organized parades and pageants, and moved women’s speeches out of the confines of the church halls and clubrooms and into public spaces where female speakers could get their messages to wider and more diverse audiences.¹¹ One of the great moments of the 1910s was on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration. Paul organized about 5,000 suffragists to march in a grand parade in Washington, DC. The parade combined size, spectacle, and elements of the pageants so popular around the country at the time, and the lack of appropriate police protection garnered sympathetic coverage in the newspapers for the respectable women peacefully marching in the streets of Washington, who were subject to harassment and assault from a crowd estimated at over 500,000.¹²

One final divide in the women’s suffrage movement occurred in 1917 when Alice Paul, tired of what she and others saw as the NAWSA’s overly compliant attitude and slow progress with the state legislation, restarted the idea of a constitutional amendment. In order to achieve her object Paul began direct political protests, and formed the National Women’s Party, splitting off from the NAWSA. From 1917 to 1919, members of the rapidly growing NWP picketed the White House with banners, enduring verbal harassment, physical violence, and arrests. In jail, they participated in hunger strikes, earning sympathy for their cause, even as their protests during wartime became more controversial. The NAWSA, on the other hand, set out to make the case that women’s service during World War I made them even more worthy of the vote, and continued their state-by-state campaign.¹³ Both tactics were needed; the NWP’s pressure on President Wilson and Congress brought the amendment to a vote in 1919, and the NAWSA’s state organizations as well as their connections with women’s clubs, was vital in the ratification fight in the states.

After 1920, the two organizations continued to operate. The NAWSA became the non-partisan League of Women Voters, while the NWP continued to lobby for legislation important to women’s rights, including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1997, the NWP stopped lobbying and became a historical organization. Their headquarters in DC is now a museum and

¹⁰ (Sewell 2003)

¹¹ (Berenson 2018, 111-123)

¹² (Lemay 2019, 169-184)

¹³ (Lemay 2019, 201-215)

research center, run in cooperation with the National Park Service as Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument.¹⁴

Massachusetts' Women's Suffrage Movement

In Massachusetts, the women's suffrage movement was a victim of the post-Civil War political, social and economic changes happening within the Commonwealth. In 1869, Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, her husband Henry Blackwell, William Lloyd Garrison and others in favor of women's suffrage formed the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association. They immediately began agitating for an amendment to the state constitution, but met with defeat year after year between 1868 and the 1880s.¹⁵

One reason for this was the growing anti-suffrage movement in Massachusetts, which encompassed both men's and women's leagues, and became increasingly well-organized and sophisticated in their tactics as the century drew to a close, as well as being backed by some of the wealthiest men in the Commonwealth.¹⁶ Another reason the suffrage movement in Massachusetts struggled in the late 19th century was the political alliances and leanings of the suffragists themselves. Due to the abolitionist antecedents of the suffragists, particularly in Massachusetts, most of them were associated with the Republican Party, which in the 1860s had been the party of Lincoln and anti-slavery. By the 1880s, though, the party was becoming controlled by businessmen and industrialists, and became more socially conservative, with the result that suffrage was actually losing ground among Republicans. In addition, the Democratic Party was rising in power in Massachusetts as the increasing urbanization and industrialization of the commonwealth attracted Irish and other Catholic immigrant populations, who were courted by the Democrats as the party of labor. Going back to the 1860s, there was a strong nativist, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic streak in the Republican Party, and the earlier public statements by leaders of the national women's suffrage movement about black and Irish men being allowed to vote before white middle-class women did not help, especially when reinforced by statements like those in Harriet Hanson Robinson's 1883 *Massachusetts in the Women Suffrage Movement: A General, Political, Legal, and Legislative History from 1774 to 1881*.¹⁷ Robinson, a former Lowell Mill Girl, then wife of a journalist, was a well-known author in her time, particularly with her reminiscences of her days in Lowell. She was a founder of the Massachusetts chapter of the NWSA (Stanton and Anthony's organization), but

¹⁴ (National Women's Party n.d.) (National Park Service 2019)

¹⁵ (Robinson 1883, 264) (Berenson 2018, 68-72)

¹⁶ (Berenson 2018, 70-81) for a more general overview of the Anti-Suffrage movement see Susan Goodier, "A Woman's Place: Organized Resistance to the Franchise" in (Lemay 2019, 49-67)

¹⁷ (Berenson 2018, 56, 69-72)

knew and worked with suffragists from the MWSA.¹⁸ Describing the defeat of a bill for municipal suffrage, Robinson says:

It was enough to make the women who sat in the gallery weep, to hear the “O’s” and “Mc’s,” almost to a man, belch forth the emphatic “no;” and to think that these men (some of whom, a few years ago were walking over their native bogs, with hardly the right to live and breathe) should vote away so thoughtlessly the rights of the women of the country in which they have found a shelter and a home. Some of them must be men who have done nothing to entitle them to the right of suffrage.¹⁹

Compounding this issue was the fact that many of the suffragists, including those leading both national organizations, were also heavily involved with the temperance movement, especially the Prohibition political party and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. The WCTU, in particular, endorsed women’s suffrage as a means to their goal of prohibition. The temperance movement was dominated by Protestant evangelicals who blamed poverty among the Irish, French-Canadian, and Eastern European immigrants on their Catholic faith and cultural affinity for alcoholic beverages, which was another strike against the suffrage movement in the eyes of Democratic Party leaders and labor organizers. In addition, due to the temperance movement, anyone associated with the production, transportation, sale, or serving of alcohol had good reason to oppose women’s suffrage.²⁰

In 1879, very partial suffrage was granted to the women of Massachusetts, but the impetus for it came not from the MWSA, but the New England Women’s Club, the first women’s club in Massachusetts, which counted among its members Louisa May Alcott, Julia Ward Howe, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, and many other women prominent in activist and charitable causes, as well as some of the earliest women doctors, lawyers, and college professors in Massachusetts. In 1873, three members of the club concerned with school reform ran for seats on the Boston School Committee, and even though women had been serving on school committees in other parts of the state for years, the school committee in Boston refused to allow the women to be seated. Almost immediately, the Massachusetts legislature passed a law that women could be elected to school committees—schools and school administration were seen as well within a woman’s domestic responsibility for raising and educating children, and therefore little protest was raised.²¹ The New England Women’s Club, to support women’s election to school committees, began agitating for women to be able to vote for school committee members.²² The bill passed both houses of legislature easily, and as all the

¹⁸ (Bushman 2000)

¹⁹ (Robinson 1883, 123)

²⁰ See (Gusfield 1963) for an interesting sociological analysis of the temperance movement as a reflection of status and power. For a look at how the suffrage movement interacted with the more radical wing of the temperance movement, the Temperance Crusade, see (Blocker, Jr. 1985) also (Strom 1975)

²¹ (Robinson 1883, 118) also (Sprague 1894)

²² (Sprague 1894, 17-19)

Massachusetts Governors since 1871 had expressed their support of women's suffrage, it was signed into law in 1879. One reason that it was so uncontroversial was, in the words of Harriet Robinson, "In fact the School Committee question is not a vital one with either male or female voters, and it is impossible to get up any enthusiasm on the subject."²³

Voter registration among women was low for the school committee vote, not just because "it is impossible to get up any enthusiasm on the subject," but also because a woman had to either pay property tax (and bring proof of this to the town clerk's office to get put on the rolls) or pay a poll tax of \$2.00—the same amount as a man had to pay for full voting rights.²⁴ This was at a time when the average wage for women in Massachusetts was about \$6.00 a week for a ten hour a day, six-day work week.²⁵ It is doubtful that a shop attendant with no children would pay the equivalent of two days' wages, or that a working family could afford twice (or three times if there was a mother-in-law or adult daughter living in the household) the poll tax for simply voting for school committee members. As Robinson pointed out, the women who registered to vote for school committees were mainly suffragists who could afford it voting out of principle, and not a fair representation of the number of women who would vote if they had full suffrage.²⁶

The easy victory for school suffrage made the MWSA hopeful that they could at least expend suffrage to municipal elections—town meetings and city positions. This, they thought, would be easier to sell because local concerns could still be seen as merely an extension of women's domestic concerns; "cleaning up" social issues in local communities had long been the goal of women's charitable and church organizations. Throughout the 1880s, suffragists lobbied the General Court, gaining ground slowly with each vote on a municipal suffrage bill.²⁷ By 1894, they were very close, but anti-suffrage forces were becoming increasingly well-organized and popular. They first came on the scene in 1882 as "The Remonstrants," then more formally in 1894 as the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women. This female organization worked closely with the Man Suffrage Association to maintain the status quo enjoyed by the mainly wealthy, old New England Families who made up their ranks.²⁸ That same year, they managed to force an "informational referendum" on all ballots, men's and women's, asking if voters thought that full women's suffrage was a good idea. The anti-suffrage organizations were helped by the Democrats, particularly the Irish, who had not only endured decades of nativist insults, but also followed the Catholic Church's opposition to suffrage.

²³ (Robinson 1883, 108)

²⁴ (Robinson 1883, 107)

²⁵ (Wright 1889, 52, 81)

²⁶ (Robinson 1883, 109)

²⁷ (Berenson 2018, 79-80)

²⁸ (Berenson 2018, 76, 80)

The measure was soundly defeated in November 1895. Less than a third of men voted for suffrage. 94% of the women who voted were pro-suffrage, but only 4% of eligible women registered to vote, which the anti-suffrage forces took as a victory, saying not voting was a no vote, as no woman opposed to voting would vote.²⁹

The 1895 referendum temporarily took the wind out of the sails of the women's suffrage movement in Massachusetts, and many women left the MWSA as a result. However, by 1900 the MWSA, and the suffrage movement in general was gaining new blood and new ideas from a number of different places. One was the growing number of college-educated women who had taken advantage of expanded opportunities. Maude Wood Park, a graduate of Radcliffe, founded the College Equal Suffrage League and Pauline Agassiz Shaw funded Park and others on their travels around the country organizing branches among college women and alumni. Additionally, this new generation of suffragists reached out to the fast-growing labor movement in order to reach working class women through the Women's Trade Union League. Working women like Mary Kenney O'Sullivan and Margaret Foley were welcomed into the MWSA, and while O'Sullivan used her connections among labor leaders to gain union endorsements, Foley joined other younger women in utilizing an English suffragette strategy of outdoor speeches on street corners and near factories where they could catch working men and women on lunch breaks and as they were leaving their shifts. Trolleys and automobiles made it possible for them to also get out into the countryside and speak on town commons in more rural areas.³⁰ This combination of tactics meant that by the early 1910s, suffragists were seeing widespread support from both Democrats and Republicans. They began to target suffrage opponents on both sides, defeating first a state senator and then the Massachusetts senate president in 1912 and 1913.³¹

Suffrage supporters then proposed a full suffrage amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution. In order to amend the Constitution, the legislature had to approve the amendment in two consecutive sessions with a simple majority in the Senate and a 2/3 majority in the House of Representatives, then send the amendment to the voters at the next election.³² In 1914, the legislature overwhelmingly approved the suffrage amendment. Knowing there would be little difficulty with the 1915 legislative session approving for the second time, the suffragists began an 18-month campaign leading up to the public vote on November 2, 1915.

²⁹ (Berenson 2018, 80-81)

³⁰ (Strom 1975) (Berenson 2018, 103-106)

³¹ (Berenson 2018, 133-134)

³² (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1821, amended), Article of Amendment IX. Note: this article was replaced in 1917 by Article XLVIII, which both more narrowly defines what an amendment can encompass and reduces the legislative approval to a quarter of the votes in a joint session, for two consecutive sessions before going to the voters.

To kick off the campaign, a massive parade was organized through the center of Boston on May 2, 1914. Both the *Boston Globe* and the *Women's Journal* put the estimate of marchers at 12,000 and the crowd size at around 300,000. Yellow was the color worn by the suffragists and in the buttonholes of their sympathizers, while the anti-suffragists wore red roses and decorated some buildings along the parade in red roses and red bunting.³³

Throughout the next year the suffragists campaigned hard, with open air meetings, automobile tours, and large public assemblies. Marketing became very important to the campaign; posters appeared in trolleys, and on billboards, and the suffragists declared July 19, 1915 "Blue-Bird Day," where over 100,000 brightly painted tin bluebirds with "Votes for Women November 2" were distributed by local suffrage associations. Suffrage organizations integrated themselves into everyday life, sponsoring baseball games, and arranging with retailers to decorate "suffrage windows" in shops.³⁴

Another parade in October wrapped up the campaign, but there was reason for the suffragists to be concerned. Massachusetts had one of the most active and well-funded anti-suffrage movements in the country. Although anti-suffrage women would not descend to "unwomanly" behavior like parades and outdoor speeches, they addressed indoor gatherings, church groups, and women's clubs. Many anti-suffrage associations also set up store fronts to look like parlors where men and women could come to genteelly converse with anti-suffrage activists. Anti-suffrage posters also appeared in trolleys and on busses.³⁵ In addition, there were two other major factors working against the suffragists: the Catholic clergy in Massachusetts was by and large unsupportive of suffrage, despite statements from priests in other countries that women's suffrage was not harmful to their flocks; and the alcohol lobby was strongly against the amendment, even handing out tickets good for free drinks if the referendum failed.³⁶ The anti-suffrage movement also made connections between suffrage and Margaret Sanger's birth control campaign, which started in 1914, and suffrage and the rise of socialism, particularly the Industrial Workers of the World, or "Wobblies," a trade union organization allied with the Socialist Party, in order to raise the spectre of women voting these ideas into law.³⁷

The 1915 Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution was defeated by more than 2 to 1, on the same day that referenda were also defeated in New York and Pennsylvania. Under the influence of Alice Paul and the National Women's Party, the national suffrage movement left off trying to gain state-by-state voting rights,

³³ (Women Give Great Parade 1914) ("Anti" Emblem Sold to Crowds 1914) (A Glorious Day 1914)

³⁴ (Berenson 2018, 139-41)

³⁵ (Stevenson 1979)

³⁶ (Berenson 2018, 141)

³⁷ Ibid.

and set out to get an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Four years later, Massachusetts was the eighth state to ratify the 19th Amendment. Alice Stone Blackwell wrote in *The Woman Citizen*, the successor to *The Woman's Journal*,

These are the days of ratifications . . . But perhaps none has aroused more rejoicing among suffragists all over the United States than the victory in Massachusetts—rock-ribbed old Massachusetts, birthplace of Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony, battle-ground of this cause from its earliest years and also the home for almost a generation of the oldest and strongest anti-suffrage association in the United States . . . ³⁸

Lexington's Role in Women's Suffrage

Lexington's iconic place in American history has always made it a touchstone for any number of movements and the same can be said of the women's suffrage movement. The battle of Lexington and Concord often featured in suffrage speeches, particularly as speakers pointed out that women were paying their fair share of taxes, but could not vote for representation. However, when it comes to participation in the suffrage movement, Lexington does not feature as a critical point in the Massachusetts story. Suffrage in Lexington can be described as typical; neither more nor less active than any number of small rural towns in the greater Boston area. And as such, its activity ebbs and flows as the greater tide of suffrage enthusiasm did in Massachusetts. There are not a lot of records of suffrage activities in Lexington, but this is a chronological list of what has been found in newspaper articles and other papers.

1875: Centennial Celebrations

The first time that Lexington really gets mentioned in relation to women's suffrage after the Civil War is at the 1875 Centennial Celebrations that happened in Lexington and Concord. In *The Women's Journal*, Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Browne Blackwell both wrote scathing reviews about the lack of participation or even mention of women, let alone women's suffrage in either of the celebrations, even though many of the speakers were in favor of suffrage. "It will be seen how small a share women received of the thought and attention of the celebration. It would seem a small return to the women of Concord and Lexington, whose taxes next fall will be over \$3000—one fifth of the whole sum voted by the men at the town-meetings from which these women were excluded." One bright spot that Blackwell found was "the one man who did not forget to recognize the rights of American women at the Lexington Centennial," African-American caterer J. B. Smith, who managed the supper for the Lexington event. In response to a letter from nineteen young women from Arlington offering to help with table service for the event, Mr. Smith wrote: ". . . for myself I

³⁸ (A. S. Blackwell, *Triumph in Massachusetts* 1919)

thank you, and for the sentiment that prompted the act I thank God. It will quicken the pulsation of the patriotic heart of the world, it will hasten the day when all *persons* will be born free and equal . . .” Blackwell then goes on to point out that there were no women speakers, very few women in the audience or at the supper, and “the fact remains, that it was a celebration of men, by men, for men, and not in any true or complete sense a celebration of the people.”³⁹

1877-1887: Lectures, but no League

The next mention of women’s suffrage we find is two lectures being held in Lexington on the subject, both mentioned in *The Woman’s Journal*:

MEETINGS AT ARLINGTON AND LEXINGTON

On Monday and Tuesday evenings of this week [December 10 and 11, 1877], Suffrage meetings in the above-named places were addressed by Lucy Stone. Mrs. Nancy C. Gilman, who is more than three score and ten years of age, had secured a hall in Arlington, and Rev. Mr. Elder’s Church in Lexington [The Follen Church in East Lexington], and in part, attended to the arrangements. Mrs. Gilman was the inspiring cause of the meetings being held. Younger persons may take a lesson from the courage and perseverance of this venerable woman.

Owing to insufficient notice and the first snow-fall of the season, both meetings were small, but those who were present gave close attention. Tracts were distributed, and it is hoped that some, at least, will be induced to take a more active part hereafter.⁴⁰

Lucy Stone came back to Lexington to speak that same week, on Sunday, December 16, 1877:

WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN LEXINGTON

Last Sunday evening, the birth place of American liberty held a meeting in the Town-Hall, which was given without charge for the purpose, to consider the “moral and religious bearings of Woman Suffrage.” We had been told that there was “little sympathy felt in Woman Suffrage in Lexington,” but the large hall was filled by an intelligent and interested audience numbering several hundreds, and it was evident that this was a mistake, or at least that the people were willing to consider the question. Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell were the speakers. After the meeting, several citizens of Lexington waited to express their sympathy and to offer their co-operation in circulating a Woman Suffrage petition.

³⁹ (H. B. Blackwell, *Only Half a Celebration 1875*) (L. Stone 1875)

⁴⁰ (Meetings at Arlington and Lexington 1877)

This successful meeting was due to the effort of Mrs. Nancy C. Gilman, of Arlington, aided by the co-operation of those tried and true friends of reform, the Wellingtons of East Lexington.⁴¹

From these two items, it seems that what women's suffrage interest there was in Lexington at the time was still centered in East Lexington, in the Wellington/Simonds/Stone/Robbins families who were interconnected by marriage and who were the mainstay of the pre-Civil War abolitionist programming in Lexington. Mrs. Nancy C. Gilman, who was from Northfield, New Hampshire, was born in 1806, making her about seventy-one at the time of these lectures and she was a former teacher and a female physician who studied at the Boston Female School of Medicine, graduating in the early 1850s. She lived in Arlington, then in Lexington, between 1868 and 1890, before returning to Northfield, and it seems she was an active member of the MWSA.⁴²

Further proof that the impetus for reform was still coming from East Lexington is found in the October 2, 1880 *Woman's Journal* in a letter from Ellen A. Stone. It's not apparent which Ellen A. Stone it was, as there is no title attached to the name, and both mother and daughter were very active at this time. It is more likely that it was Miss Stone, as she was the more interested in education:

MISS EASTMAN IN LEXINGTON

Editor Journal: The friends of educational Suffrage in Lexington, held a somewhat informal meeting at the Selectmen's room in the Town Hall the afternoon of Monday last (13th). Miss Mary F. Eastman was present and spoke at some length upon our present school system, its aims, its defects, and its needs. The direct and earnest manner of Miss Eastman commanded the closest attention on the part of those present, and her remarks were the more forcible as it became evident that she spoke from practical knowledge of her subject. The meeting was very interesting as well as instructive. Very truly yours,

Ellen A. Stone
Lexington, September 25, 1880⁴³

Mary F. Eastman was one of the best speakers in the MWSA roster. Born in Lowell, she became a teacher and worked under Horace Mann at Antioch College. She had a distinguished career in both public and private schools, and became a women's suffrage advocate along with an education reformer, and was known for her logical, persuasive style of speaking.⁴⁴ She was in Lexington about a year after women gained the school committee vote, so school reform was a hot topic among women's groups.

⁴¹ (H. B. Blackwell, *Woman Suffrage in Lexington 1877*)

⁴² (Hurd 1885, 545)

⁴³ (E. A. Stone 1880)

⁴⁴ (Howe, et al. 1904, 484-489)

In the 1870s and 1880s, the suffrage movement annually presented petitions to the legislature for a women's suffrage amendment to the constitution. In 1882, Sarah Morell Millet, a widow who had been involved for many years in both abolitionist and women's suffrage activities (she had been one of the founding members of the Lexington Female Charitable Association), reported her success at getting signatures on that year's petition:

WELL DONE LEXINGTON!

The town of Lexington, in which the first gun was fired for American independence, is still true to the principle of the consent of the governed. A Woman Suffrage petition signed by seventy-eight citizens, all residing in the eastern part of the town, was received last week, accompanied by the following interesting letter:

East Lexington, Jan 17, 1882

Mrs. Lucy Stone: The names on the enclosed paper are from East Lexington only. Every person to whom I presented the petition, with the exception of two, seemed pleased to give me their names, I rejoice that the auguries for the future of our cause are today so encouraging. The addresses of the late meeting in this week's Woman's Journal, and also the notices in the [Cambridge] *Transcript* are very inspiring to those interested in the great work. Truly Yours, Sarah Millet.⁴⁵

This was not the first time that Sarah Millet had worked a petition drive; in 1879, she was one of the petitioners who started the bill for school committee suffrage.⁴⁶

Because of its proximity to Boston, Lexington was an easy trip for Boston-based speakers, and so the town was host to many lectures from well-known speakers like Mary Eastman, and some who when they appeared in Lexington were not well known, but later became extremely important. In May of 1885, the Woman's Journal narrated a week in the MWSA speaker's rounds:

SUFFRAGE MEETING AT LEXINGTON

April 30—We were entertained by Mrs. E. J. Cogswell, within a stone's throw of the spot where the first gun was fired for "No taxation without representation." The Town Hall was opened to us, as to any political party. Here was the largest meeting of the week.

Rev. Mr. Staples [First Congregational Church] presided. He advised that the School Committee be enlarged to five, two of them to be women. Professor Emerson, of the Monroe School of Oratory, Boston, was there. He attended our Salem Convention, and heard Miss Shaw speak. He said he thought it worth while to hear her again, so pleased was

⁴⁵ (Well Done Lexington 1882)

⁴⁶ (Massachusetts General Court House of Representatives 1879, 225)

he before. A league will be formed in Lexington. The next day the old scenes were reviewed by Mrs. Cogswell, who made it very interesting for us.

In the Library, Mrs. Stone, of Lexington, has placed Judge Samuel E. Sewell's bust with Hancock and Adams, with an appropriate tablet telling all who read that he is doing to-day for women what they did for men in '76.⁴⁷

“Miss Shaw” was, in fact, Anna Howard Shaw, who at that time had only recently been ordained as the first female Methodist Protestant Minister. A product of the Boston University Theological School (1878) she was at the time she spoke at Lexington just finishing up another degree in medicine from the Boston University School of Medicine (1886). However, although she was often referred to as Rev. Shaw, shortly after getting her medical degree she decided to use her significant oratorical powers to fight for women's rights. She eventually moved to work with Susan B. Anthony, whose niece became Shaw's lifelong partner, and by 1892 she was Vice President of the National American Women's Suffrage Association, then in 1904 became president of the organization.⁴⁸

Judge Samuel E. Sewall was a major figure in both abolitionism and woman's rights. As a lawyer, he defended fugitive slaves and women, and worked to change the divorce laws to be more favorable towards women.

Mrs. E. J. Cogswell is an interesting person. Emily Johnson was born in Lexington in 1818, and both her mother and sister were members of the Lexington Female Charitable Association, which indicates a familial interest in doing good work. She was an early graduate of the Lexington Normal School, and is known to have taught in Vermont in the early 1840s.⁴⁹ Emily married William Cogswell in 1850, but after losing an infant son in 1853, her husband in 1859, and her mother in 1862, she turned to Unitarian missionary work, moving to North Platte, Nebraska in 1868 to start a Sunday School and Unitarian congregation. As can be seen from this news item, she returned to Lexington before 1885, and became active in the suffrage movement for a few years. She died in 1897.⁵⁰

1887: The East Lexington Suffrage League is Founded.

Although the article in 1885 stated that a suffrage association was going to be formed in Lexington, it wasn't until 1887 that one came to fruition in East Lexington. Cora Scott Pond, a graduate from the oratory department at the New England Conservatory, was representing the MWSA and helping to found town chapters all over the state, with the goal of raising money and making things to sell at the Boston Women's Suffrage Bazaar, which she was organizing that year. She was what we would call today the Development

⁴⁷ (Suffrage Meeting at Lexington 1885)

⁴⁸ (Gordon 2000)

⁴⁹ (Mann 1845, 73)

⁵⁰ (Paoletti 2016)

person for the MWSA, raising money and organizing events like bazaars and pageants to encourage donations to the cause.⁵¹

LEXINGTON WOMAN SUFFRAGE LEAGUE

This is the fifty-second of the State! Someone may ask: "What more do you want? You have Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill!" Merely the surrender of about thirty "no" votes at our "Yorktown" and we are satisfied.

The Lexington League was organized with nineteen members, on Friday, July 8, at 7 P.M. We met in the reading-room of the Town Library for organization, and elected as our board of officers:

President: Mrs. L. W. Peaslee [Louisa Maria Wellington, b. 1834]

Vice-Presidents—Mrs. Nancy Gilman [see above], Miss Josephine May, Mrs. A. W. Bryant [Nancy Wellington, b. 1820]

Treasurer and Secretary—Mrs. E. A. Hovey

Executive Committee—Miss Caroline Wellington, Miss A. A. Smith [Most likely Adeline Augusta Smith, b. 1831. Maternal grandmother was a Wellington], Mrs. Susan R. Hall [Susan Richards], Mrs. Walter Wellington [Hannah Marcia Parker, b. 1832], Mrs. A. W. Bryant
Banner Committee—Mrs. L. W. Peaslee, Miss Josephine May, Miss Eliza Wellington [b.1824. Sister of Louisa Maria]

The League voted to put the Woman's Journal into the reading-room of the Lexington Town Library.

This town did so much for our Bazaar of 1886, that it was thought they deserved table-room for a Lexington headquarters in 1887. A good friend, Miss May, but recently converted, I believe, gave them fifty dollars last year with which to buy goods. Out of this and their work, about one hundred and fifty dollars were realized. This year the same gift is repeated. So the League starts out with over fifty dollars in its treasury. This may help them to rival Concord yet with its forty-one members.

I was entertained, while in Lexington, at the home of Mrs. Gilman. An enthusiastic friend, eighty-one years of age, whose heart is true and whose intellect is stronger than that of many a younger woman. Mrs. Gilman was happy in making calls with me. She said: "I had thought I never should do it again." It was upon her cordial invitation that the work was done there at this time. I cannot forget Mr. Gerrish, who has the entire charge of every department of Mrs. Gilman's home. He cordially rendered us his assistance.

These beautiful summer evenings, after tea, are well adapted to the formation of Leagues in our country towns . . . ⁵²

⁵¹ (Willard and Livermore 1893, 581)

⁵² (Pond, Lexington Woman Suffrage League 1887)

As you can see from the list, six of the ten founding officers were members of the Wellington Family, and although the name was the “Lexington Women Suffrage League,” it was in fact an East Lexington organization. This was pointed out by the *Cambridge Tribune*, which sniffed, “In East Lexington, a ‘Non-partisan Woman Suffrage League’ has been formed, of which Mrs. L. W. Peaslee is president. There is considerable interest in this movement in East Lexington, but the main village seems not to be ‘aroused’”⁵³

The main focus of their efforts for the first few months was to get enough members and raise enough money to participate in the great annual bazaar held in Boston as a fundraiser for the MWSA. This event was a holdover from the days of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Bazaars, which were also held in the middle of December. The women of Lexington were diligent in both increasing their membership and raising money, and the next month Cora Scott Pond reported in *The Woman’s Journal*:

From our own State comes the following:

East Lexington, Aug. 4, 1887

Dear Miss Pond: Our League, formed July 8, has within the month increased from its nineteen charter members to a membership of fifty-one, in view of which our liberal vice-president has increased her subscription from fifty to one hundred dollars. Although our first meeting was not as fully attended as was desirable, with this sum as a nucleus we are in hopes of furnishing a Lexington table, and of working in the coming Bazaar under our own banner. Ever since one of her boys was told that “something must be done,” in the face of a most formidable foe, Lexington has done something, and we shall persevere in our work, feeling sure that she will not fail us this time, and that December will find us ready to fill the space in your hall that is assigned us.

Yours hopefully, Louise W. Peaslee
President, Lexington Woman Suffrage League

Can the other fifty-five Leagues send us similar cheering intelligence?⁵⁴

The *Cambridge Tribune* reported in September and October that their work was proceeding, and they were holding regular meetings “at the house of Mrs. A. S. Parsons,” and in addition to the table at the bazaar, they attended the Women’s Suffrage Convention at Concord on the 17th of October.⁵⁵ Mrs. Parsons was Louise Francis Hobart (b. 1835 Quincy), whose second husband was Albert Stevens Parsons. Both Parsons seem to have been reform-minded members of several clubs.

⁵³ (Lexington 1887) Note: all the genealogical information on Lexington women, unless otherwise noted, comes from Volume 2 of (Hudson 1913)

⁵⁴ (Pond, Bazaar Notes 1887)

⁵⁵ (Lexington 1887) (Lexington 1887)

The Suffrage Bazaar was held from December 12 to 17 in Music Hall in Boston (now the Orpheum Theatre) and Lexington sent four delegates: Louise Frances Parsons, Louise Wellington Peaslee, Mrs. E. A. Hovey (who seems to be quite the mystery as neither she nor her husband can be found with any other name than E. A.), and Miss M.J. Wellington, who was in the class of 1887 at Boston University. The Bazaar was a combination of exhibition and gift shop, with displays of handiwork and items for sale from all over the country, as suffrage organizations from states like Pennsylvania and Kansas had sent items to fill display tables. According to the report of the event, “At the Lexington Table, a piece of embroidery done by Queen Victoria was on exhibition. It was presented to Mr. Chas. Wellington, of Lexington, by a gentleman who drew it at a charity fair in England, and Mr. Wellington lent it for the Bazaar. There were also three paintings by Ellen Robbins.”⁵⁶ Most importantly, the banner committee had come through, and it was reported that the Lexington banner carried the motto “Some Thing Must Be Done.”⁵⁷ This banner survived long enough to be carried in the 1913 Suffrage parade in Washington, and was photographed there. They were obviously very proud of it, for in 1889 when the League hosted Martha E. Sewell Curtis, one of the NWSA lecturers for the state, and a journalist and historian, in the Follen Church, *The Woman’s Journal* noted “the desk was adorned with the banner of the Lexington League.”⁵⁸ (See Appendix 1)

1887 was actually a banner year for Lexington Suffrage, for on March 4, 1887 Miss Ellen A. Stone was elected to the School Committee for the town. According to historian Edwin Worthen, 14 women registered and nine voted in that election. Ellen Stone only served for a year, but it seems to have inspired her, as in 1889 she entered Boston University Law School.⁵⁹

The 1890s: Defeat

By the time of the “Suffrage Fair” of December 1891, Lexington was relying on a donor to make up for the fact that they didn’t put together a table. Miss Josephine May “formerly of Lexington” gave \$50.00 on their behalf.⁶⁰ No trace of Miss May has been found—it is unknown if she was related to the great abolitionist minister Samuel May and his sister Abby May Alcott—and she seems to have only lived in Lexington for a short time. The suffrage fair is the last mention of a Lexington Suffrage Association in any newspapers for almost a decade. As no records have survived from the East Lexington Suffrage Association, we can only surmise that like many other suffrage associations, it faded quickly after the defeat of the municipal suffrage referendum of 1895. However, even though the formal organization had fallen apart, there were still active

⁵⁶ (A. S. Blackwell, *Bazaar Notes 1887*) (McBride 1887)

⁵⁷ (*The Banners and Mottos 1887*)

⁵⁸ (*Massachusetts Clubs and Leagues 1889*), for biography of Martha E. Sewell Curtis, see (Willard and Livermore 1893, 222)

⁵⁹ (Worthen n.d.)

⁶⁰ (*The Suffrage Fair 1891*)

members of the movement in Lexington. Suffragists continued their assault on the Massachusetts Legislature, and in 1897 they sent three petitions to Beacon Hill for 1: a constitutional amendment removing “male” from voter qualifications, 2: a law enabling women to vote for President, and 3: municipal suffrage.⁶¹ *The Woman’s Journal* listed two petitions coming from East Lexington, one with 17 signatures collected by Ellen Dana, and the other with 21 signatures collected by Alfred Peirce. Ellen Dana (b. 1838) was the niece of Sarah Millett, who assiduously collected signatures in the 1870s for similar petitions. Both these women lived in the Parker-Morell-Dana House at 627 Massachusetts Avenue.⁶² Alfred Pierce (b. 1858) was on the school committee, and his paternal grandmother was a Wellington.

1900: The Lexington Equal Suffrage Association

In 1900, there was a resurgence of interest in a suffrage association in Lexington, perhaps brought about by the fact that Francis J. Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison’s youngest son, moved to town in 1899, followed by his brother a couple years later. The minute book of the Equal Suffrage Association gives us a fascinating glimpse into how a local suffrage association worked. This document has been transcribed, and can be a rich source of study. This paper will focus on a few of the highlights; how the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association was or was not engaging with the larger developments in women’s suffrage.

First, as the organization was founded, it no longer simply reflected the family connections of a group in one geographical space, and second, reflecting the antecedents of the Massachusetts Women Suffrage Association, the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association accepted both men and women, one reason for the name being not the woman suffrage association, but the equal suffrage association. The women who came to Lexington to help get the organization started were an impressive group:

In response to an invitation about thirty ladies and gentlemen assembled on the evening of November 6, 1900, at the residence of Mr. & Mrs. George S. Jackson to participate in the formation of an Association in favor of equal political rights for men and women. The number in attendance would have been larger but for the fact that the national presidential election had taken place that day, and eagerness to learn the result as foreshadowed by the evening returns of the balloting kept several away.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Hannah McLean Greeley, who stated that it was the result of a visit to Lexington last spring of several ladies representing the Brookline Equal Suffrage Association – Mrs. Schlesinger, Mrs. Page, Mrs. Channing, and others, together with Mrs. Quincy Shaw and Mrs. Charles G. Ames of Boston – who came to urge the formation of a similar Association in this historic town. Their arguments had deeply

⁶¹ (Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Petitions 1897)

⁶² Ibid, (Lexington Historical Society n.d.)

impressed those who listened to them, and a subsequent conference in the summer at Mrs. B.F. Brown's house strengthened the conviction that this should be undertaken.⁶³

Mary McBurney Schlesinger was a well-known hostess who used her and her husband's estate Southwood to bring important progressive thinkers together.⁶⁴ Mary Hutcheson Page was the chair of the MWSA executive board, president of the Brookline Equal Suffrage Association, and founder of the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government.⁶⁵ Anna M. Channing was a very active member of the Brookline Association.⁶⁶ Pauline Agassiz Shaw was the daughter of Harvard Professor Louis Agassiz and stepdaughter of Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, who co-founded Radcliffe, and married to one of the wealthiest men in the state. She was a major funder of the women's suffrage movement in Boston, and a co-founder of the BESAGG.⁶⁷ Fanny Baker Ames was the founder of the Women's Auxiliary Conference of the Unitarian Church, the first female factory inspector in Massachusetts, and one of the original members of the board of trustees for Simmons College. With these kinds of heavy hitters, it is no wonder that "their arguments had deeply impressed those who listened to them."

The initial board of officers also reflected more diversity, both in terms of sex, and also in a mix of old and new families:

Mr. Abram Walter Stevens, President (b. Barre 1834. Probably moved to town around 1896 when his son moved to Lexington)
Mrs. George S. Jackson, Vice President (Mary Orpah Crane, b. Boston 1844, moved to Lexington in 1882 with her husband)
Mrs. Hannah Mclean Greeley, Vice President (Hannah Bishop McLean, b. Simsbury, CT 1848, moved to Lexington in 1880 with her husband, who subsequently died.
Mr. Francis J. Garrison, Recording Secretary (William Lloyd Garrison's son)
Mrs. Hannah McLean Greeley, Corresponding Secretary
Miss Elizabeth W[ard]. Harrington, Treasurer (b. Lexington, 1833. Traces family back six generations in Lexington.)

Additional board members:

Mrs. Grace Cook (possibly b. Boston 1837, mother of Radcliffe Student in Italian Medieval Literature Mabel Pricilla Cook, who moved to Lexington in 1894)
Mrs. A. M. Stevens (unknown)
Mr. Albert S. Parsons (b. Northfield 1841, moved to Lexington in 1884. He was a clubman and reformer, and his wife was a member of the old East Lexington Association.)

⁶³ (Lexington Equal Suffrage Association 1900-1920, 1-2)

⁶⁴ (Historic New England 2019)

⁶⁵ (Berenson 2018, 98,111)

⁶⁶ (Brookline Historical Society 1911, 10)

⁶⁷ (Berenson 2018, 103,111)

So in this group, we are seeing some of the next generation past the East Lexington Association; women whose children are all either in school or out of the house, and they have the leisure and money to focus on this type of work. The LESA copied the constitution of the Brookline Equal Suffrage Association, and its simple mission statement:

ARTICLE II. The object of the Association shall be secure the political enfranchisement of women.

For the first year, the LESA met bi-monthly, and mainly focused on self-education; reading papers and hearing reports from members who attended the state meetings. They also discussed how to get women to register for the school committee vote, and having registered, get them to actually vote. On March 6, 1901, they noted that “In the recent term election in Lexington, 23 women voted of 150 registered, but both candidates were excellent & there was not opposition or contest.”⁶⁸

The third meeting of the society sounds like it would have been very interesting to attend—at the March meeting, they had asked “our members to read brief papers stating “Why I am a Suffragist”, and in May:

The Association held its third by-monthly meeting at the house of Mr. & Mrs. B.F. Brown at 8 P.M., Mr. Stevens presiding. In the absence of the Secretary, Mr. A.S. Parsons kindly served as Secretary for the evening. The attendance was large and the proceeding unusually interesting, the following members reading brief, but bright and suggestive papers telling why they believe in woman suffrage: Miss Batchelder, Dr. Bertha G. Downing, Mrs. Greeley, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Parsons, Mrs. Stevens, Mrs. Tufts, and Miss Whitman.

Benjamin Franklin Brown (b 1829, Candia NH) and Sarah White Dalrymple (b.1837 West Rumney NH) moved to Lexington in 1876. He served on the school committee for two terms in the 1880s. The members who read papers out are an interesting group. Besides Mses. Greeley, Jackson, Parsons, and Stevens, whom we have already met, there was Miss Flora Batchelder (b. 1863 in Lexington, and therefore one of the younger members); Dr. Bertha G. Downing (b. 1863 Kennebunk, ME), who was a graduate of Radcliffe and the Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania. She lived in Lexington from 1902 to 1909, then went on to get her Ph.D. from Clark University and become a practicing physician. It seems her specialty was learning disabled children. Mrs. Mary G. Tufts and Miss Flora Whitman are mysteries so far.

The LESA started out their second year with positive action, voting “that this Association cause an article to be inserted in the Town Warrant calling for an amendment to the Town Bylaws, that the School Committee be increased from three to five members, two of whom shall be women”⁶⁹ Although the warrant did not pass, it raised awareness of the subject, and encouraged women to vote.

⁶⁸ (Lexington Equal Suffrage Association 1900-1920, 19-20)

⁶⁹ (Lexington Equal Suffrage Association 1900-1920, 28)

They also held their first public meeting at the Old Belfry Club House on Feb 21, 1902, with pro and anti-suffrage arguments by some of the leading lights of the day, such as Maude Wood Park, founder of the College Equal Suffrage League.

The meeting was called to order by the President, after the Treasurer has read her report, and the report of the last meeting read by the Secretary, who also referred to a woman suffrage discussion held at the Old Belfry Club House on Friday afternoon, February 21, under the auspices of Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Scott. This was attended by about one hundred & fifty ladies, and was a most interesting & successful occasion. The affirmative side of the questions was presented by Mrs. Maude Wood Park, and the negative or “remonstrant” argument by Miss Grace Chandler of Jamaica Plain, Mrs. Park making a rejoinder to the latter. Mrs. Fanny B. Ames, of Boston, closed with an earnest appeal to all those had been impressed by the suffrage arguments to at once enroll themselves as voters for school committee and many went at once to the Town hall and were duly registered.⁷⁰

This local focus seems to have been extremely effective for the LESA. They were able to get more women to register to vote, raise their own profile, and increase their membership. In 1903 they were able to report to *The Woman's Journal*:

Three years ago, there were only five women in Lexington who voted for school committee. Largely through the work of the League, the registration was increased last year to 170, and this year to 294, of whom 239 voted at the election just held. Miss Sarah Robinson and Mrs. Hannah T. Garret were elected to the school board, Miss Robinson receiving the highest vote of the five successful candidates. The large vote is the more remarkable in view of the fact that there was no contest over any of the places except Mrs. Garret's. Mr. Francis J. Garrison is also elected to the board.⁷¹

By giving local women a real example of how their vote could influence elections, the LESA helped women to understand what the power of the vote was, and make the argument to them that they should agitate for full suffrage.

The association continued with bi-monthly membership meetings, and hosting public meetings with lecturers for several years. In October 1903, they hosted Rev. Anna Howard Shaw at the Town Hall, speaking on “The Power of the Incentive;” in February 1904, Mr. John Graham Brooks on “The Economic Independence of Women”. In 1905, they didn't hold a public meeting, but opened their annual meeting to invited guests to hear William Lloyd Garrison's sons talk about their father and the early women's rights movement in celebration of Garrison's 100th birthday.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 30.

⁷¹ (Massachusetts Clubs and Leagues 1903)

White Paper 2: Votes For Women, page 22

In 1906, there are actually no minutes recorded, and at the annual meeting on February 1, 1907, the secretary reports an “uneventful and inactive year.” They also report that three of the most active members died in the past year: Hanna McLean Greeley, Elizabeth Harrington, and Theodore Robinson. Then follows a gap until January 1911, and another until November 1912 although the LESA continued to pay dues to the state organization, and then-president Mary C. Jackson was listed as a representative of the league at annual meetings of the MWSA published in *The Woman's Journal*.⁷² It seems that many of the older members of the association died around this time, and in 1910, the Garrison brothers both moved out of Lexington, leaving a huge gap in leadership, as one or both of them had filled multiple positions throughout the years.

Thanks to the work of Alice Paul and other young suffragists, though, suffrage became a hot topic again in the 1910s. In January of 1912, *The Woman's Journal* notes “A few lines in a Boston daily told of a debate in the Hancock Grammar School, Lexington, Mass, on the question, “Resolved, That Woman Suffrage is a Good Cause, and should be supported.” Four girls contended for the affirmative, four boys for the negative. It is a fair augury for the morrow that the girls of this school bearing an historic name and of the town of “around the world” renown, won the debate”⁷³ It would seem that the young women of Lexington had been listening to their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts.

Just as the national and state suffrage movements were rejuvenating in the early 1910s so too was the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association. The announcement of the Women's Suffrage Parade the day before Inauguration Day in Washington DC likely sparked interest in local organizations. In November, 1912, the league was restarted and recruited a new membership:

November 1st 1912

The withdrawal from residence in Lexington of Mr. Francis J. Garrison and Mr. James Garret robbed the League at once in 1910 of both faithful Secretary and Treasurer.

The President accepted their duties pro tem, and in accord with the desire of each member of the club, it was decided to suspend general activity for a while, continuing to collect the annual dues and to share them with the State Treasury; thereby keeping our affiliations with the larger Association.

This has now been done for two years.

An increase in interest in the community has brought the opportunity of new membership and a meeting is called for November 30th for fresh organizations and election of new officers.

⁷² (Massachusetts Quarterly Letter 1910)

⁷³ (Woman Suffrage in the Current News 1912)

Saturday, November 30, 1912

The Annual Meeting of the Association was held at Cary Hall at 3 o'clock.

The President, Mrs. Jackson, in the chair. About thirty people were present. Mrs. Jackson extended a cordial greeting to Miss Caroline Wellington (thou in her ninety second year) and to her sister Mrs. Parker. Mrs. Parker presented the society with a banner made by members of our first Equal Suffrage League formed in East Lexington in 1887, of which Mrs. Parker was president, and used at a bazaar held in Tremont Temple that [same?] year by the Bay State Suffrage Association. On the banner are the revolutionary words. "Something must be done."

As treasurer Pro tem, Mrs. Jackson reported the sum of \$45.02 in the treasury.

It was voted that the President appoint a committee of three to nominate the officers for the ensuing year. Miss Whitman, Mrs. Ferguson and Mr. Parsons were chosen. The retired and nominated for President: Mrs. Mary Jackson, for 1st Vice President: Mrs. Mable Wing Castle, for 2nd Vice President: [Mr?] John Wilson, Secretary: Mrs. Clarke P. Briggs, Treasurer: Mrs. Ralph Lane and the Executive Committee to consist of the above named officers and Mrs. Mary Ferguson, Dr. Nell (?) Crawford and Mr. Albert Parsons. They were unanimously elected.

Mrs. Jackson then introduced the speakers of the afternoon – Mrs. Marion Booth Kelley and Miss Eugenia (?) Lane.

Miss (?) Lane gave a brief but charming talk on "Why I am a Suffragist".

Mrs. Kelley, who [had?] just returned from the convention in Philadelphia, followed with a very interesting address.

The meeting then adjourned and the "tea" was served.⁷⁴

The front of the book contains a separate list of new members in November 1912. 101 names are on the list, indicating a great deal of interest on the part of the citizens of Lexington in women suffrage. Perhaps the most poignant moment of the Annual Meeting was 92-year-old Caroline Wellington passing the 1887 banner to the new generation of suffragists. At the February 22 meeting, the league voted \$30 to send Vera P. Lane, a young woman born in Ohio and married in 1897 to Ralph Edward Lane, the son of a teacher in the Lexington Schools, to the Suffrage Parade in Washington DC. She reported back at the April 4 meeting with a "most interesting assessment of the Parade." She would have marched with the state delegation, and a photograph survives of the Lexington banner just before the parade stepped off. (See Appendix 1)

⁷⁴ (Lexington Equal Suffrage Association 1900-1920, 66-68)

Interestingly, there is no mention of the grand Boston parade on May 2, 1914 that kicked off the campaign for municipal suffrage in the minutes of the executive board, but it seems that it was the responsibility of the Field-Work committee, whose report sadly has not survived. In the *Boston Globe*, however, it is clear that the LESA participated. In the printed roster of the parade is the “Lexington Section—Mrs. R. E. Lane [Vera Perin Lane], marshal; Mrs. George Jackson (Mary C. Jackson), banner bearer. 18 in line.”⁷⁵ It would seem that the Lexington banner was also brought out for this event.

The LESA participated fully in the campaign for municipal suffrage. Unfortunately, the organization by early 1915 had become large enough that there were quite a few subcommittees who were doing the on the ground work, and the surviving volume is only the minutes of the executive committee. Fortunately, there are a few crumbs of information to put together how they participated in the campaign:

- During the summer of 1914, they had public meetings both indoors and outdoors
- They had a table at the Suffrage Bazaar at Copley Plaza in, making \$526.00 for the MWSA
- Distribution of *The Woman's Journal* was a major part of the early efforts. The LESA bought subscriptions and sent them to voters and made sure they were available in the Libraries
- Donated library books on suffrage topics to the Cary library and its branch. On June 11, 1915, “The Library Committee reported an increasing demand at the public library for books on equal suffrage”
- Canvassing. Hiring canvassers to hand out pamphlets at town meeting, and to canvas houses registering voters. This was a success: for a week’s paid canvassing, they said “About 750 calls were made, and 300 cards signed. Of this number 100 were registered voters, 153 women, and 47 unregistered and duplicate names.
- Suffrage Rallies at Concord Hill, North Lexington, Woburn Street, and East Lexington.
- Pageant Sponsorship. They participated in the Lexington Pageant on June 21 and 22, 1915. Individual members were actually in the pageant, and as an organization, the LESA “engaged Cary Hall for a Suffrage Rest-Room” where women could relax, adjust their hair and hats, and use the bathroom. This sort of sponsorship was very popular to engage women in the suffrage movement. The LESA must have also been excited to learn that Virginia Tanner had been engaged as choreographer. Tanner was one of the best pageant directors working in the early 20th century, and she was also a major figure in the suffragist movement. She was the herald who led the Boston parade in 1914, and her suffrage adherence did not go unremarked by the *Cambridge Sentinel's* short review of the Pageant: “This pageant has a strong suffrage flavor, as the dancing was in charge of Cambridge’s noted dancer, Miss Virginia Tanner, who is a good suffragist,”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ (Roster of the Parade 1914)

⁷⁶ (Pageant and Suffrage 1915)

- Lawn meetings on the first Sunday of July, August, and September, 1915 as well as open-air evening meetings.
- Suffrage Windows. They worked with Mr. Thievierge, who owned Colonial Pharmacy at the corner of the Hunt Block, 1752 Massachusetts Avenue (now Rancatores ice cream shop) to put up suffrage displays. At the same annual meeting on June 11, 1915 where they thank Mr. Thievierge, they also thank the Cambridge league “for the use of their May-Pole window display,” so that may have been one of the displays at the Colonial Pharmacy over the course of the summer and fall. They were seen as important parts of the campaign, and on October 25, just before the vote, the executive committee decided, “Upon motion made and duly seconded the following vote was taken- It is the sense of this meeting, with one dissenting vote, that it is not wise to display placards at the polls in Lexington on election day, and that as an alternative we make our appeal through the suffrage windows.”
- Blue-Bird Day. On July 19, 1915, they distributed 300 tin suffrage bluebirds as part of the statewide campaign that day. They also decided to celebrate Lucy Stone’s birthday in August by distributing the bluebirds.
- Lobbying other organizations. At the June annual meeting, the president, Mabel Wing Castle, reported that the Lexington Grange had gone on record in favor of Suffrage.
- Selling suffrage memorabilia, like “Sarah’s Thread Holder”⁷⁷ a memorial to Lowell Mill Girl and very early woman’s rights activist Sarah Bagley and American Flag pins. Another item that was being sold, was also sheet music. One song that was very popular was “The Suffrage Marching Song” which was printed on the back of the information sheet for the marchers at the May parade. The lyricist, Florence Livingstone Lent, was apparently living in Lexington at the time. Lent died in 1917 from complications of an operation.⁷⁸

The defeat of the 1915 referendum was a blow to many suffragists, and it appears that Mabel Wing Castle, who had been president for three years, took it particularly hard. She resigned her position as president, and shortly thereafter moved to Chicago. Mabel Wing Castle was born in 1864 in Providence. After graduating from Wellesley she taught in Hawaii where she met her husband, who was tragically killed when the passenger steamer he was on sunk as he was on his way home to meet his new daughter. After years of traveling, she moved to Lexington in 1911 so her daughter could go to school. In only four years of residence in the town,

⁷⁷ See https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/_/KAF1pK3cyQcnug

⁷⁸ (Two Bay State Workers Called 1917)

she had become a mainstay of the suffrage movement, and her loss was sincerely regretted.⁷⁹ At the November 9, 1915 meeting, the board read this testimonial:

Mr. Wilson then read a testimonial of the appreciation of the Board for Mrs. Castle's services as President, and it was voted that the testimonial be spread upon the records of the Association.

Testimonial

The resignation of our President, Mrs. Mabel Wing Castle, marks the end in Lexington of a period important and critical to the struggle for political equality. During this period, Mrs. Castle completely identified herself with the cause of woman suffrage and gave her time, energy, money, and devotion, generously and unreservedly, to the intelligent furtherance of the movement. Our president confronted the unpopularity inevitable to the faithful presentation of an obligation unwelcome to the mind and conscience of the majority and yet maintained serenity and graciousness. By her personal influence, therefore, as a woman, will be trained and cultivated, able and tactful, she has helped win for our cause in Lexington a strong and commanding position that will ensure its final success.

Moreover, Mrs. Castle, wise and business-like conduct of the affairs of the Association has broken down hostile prejudice and crystallized sentiment in favor of the cause in a community entrenched in conservatism.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Executive Board, of the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association, accept with sincere regret the resignation of Mrs. Mabel Wing Castle as president, and herewith express to her our most cordial appreciation for her loyal and unwavering service to the cause of political equality.

For the next four years, the LESA continued their mission, meeting regularly, providing speakers, participating in fairs and bazaars, and sending representatives to the state meetings, and selling subscriptions to *The Women's Journal*. They also sold "Suffrage Fund Coffee"—over 130 pounds of it in a year and a half—as a fundraiser.⁸⁰

After October 1, 1916, there are no more records in this volume of regular executive committee meetings. At some point in 1917, Abbie C. Smith, the Secretary of the organization, wrote a long summary of activities in 1917, and after that they seem to have moved to another record for their notes. The last entry in the volume tells us what happened to the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association after 1919:

By the passage, in the fall of 1920, of the 19th Amendment to the Federal Constitution granting the right of suffrage to women, the purposes for which the Mass. Suffrage Association was founded, was accomplished.

⁷⁹ (Guide to the Mabel Wing Castle Papers n.d.)

⁸⁰ (The Marketing of the Movement: "Every Drop You Drink, Kind Friend, Will Help Undo A Wrong" n.d.)

The Assn. therefore automatically passed out of existence. It is succeeded by the "League of Women Voters"

The last Executive Board meeting of the "Lexington Equal Suffrage Association" was held at the home of the president, Mrs. Charles P. Briggs, Friday, May 13, 1921, with the president in the chair.

Members present were:

Mrs. Charles P Briggs,

Mrs. Fred Emery,

Mrs. Hugh McLellan,

Mrs. Randolph Kelley,

Mrs. Irwin Locke,

Mrs. Hollis Webster,

Miss Abbie Smith.

Secretary read minutes of last annual meeting in June 1919; they were approved.

Treasurer's report read and accepted.

It was voted that the money in the treasury be given to Lexington Branch League of Women Voters.

It was voted that the tea service be given to the Buckman Farmer Community House.

It was voted that the records of the Secretary and Treasurer be presented to the Lexington Historical Society.

A vote of appreciation was given to the president, Mrs. Briggs-for her ability and fidelity with which her many duties had been performed.

It was voted that the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association be dissolved.

The meeting adjourned, a social half hour followed.

Abbie C. Smith,
Secretary.

Anti-Suffrage in Lexington

If tracking suffrage in Lexington is difficult, the Anti-Suffrage organization in Lexington is even harder to trace. We know that there was an active anti-suffrage association in Lexington in April of 1914, because the LESA minutes record that the Anti-Suffrage Association requested they move a lecture, as they would

otherwise be anti- and pro-suffrage speakers on consecutive nights. The LESA obliged, but voted that they should send a court stenographer to record the proceedings for the LESA's information.⁸¹

Edwin P. Worthen's notes on Women Suffrage include a list of the officers of the LESA in 1900, and then go on to say "This prompted the opponents to organize the Lexington Anti-Suffrage Society. Leaders in that society were: Mrs. Frank C. Childs, Miss Martha M. Harrington, Mrs. James P. Prince Mrs. Mary Lizzie Cliff."⁸² Mrs. Frank C. Childs was Edith Jewett Robinson. Her husband was a trustee of the bank. Martha Mead Harrington (b. 1853) was a member of a family that went back to the 17th century in the town. Caroline Ellen Hodgson Prince (b. Boston 1862). She died in 1911. Mary Lizzie Cliff doesn't appear in the Lexington Genealogy, so she wasn't born in Lexington and didn't have any children here. Worthen does not mention when this anti-suffrage society was formed, but because Ellen Prince dies in 1911, it is likely that this was formed around the same time as the LESA.

The only two other names associated with the Anti-Suffrage society in Lexington are Mrs. William R. Munroe (Helen Hilger Gookin, b. 1862), listed as chair in 1914 of the Lexington Branch of the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women in their quarterly newspaper, *The Remonstrance*, and Mrs. Charles B. Davis (Emma Spaulding Whiting, b. Wilton, b. 1867 Wilton NH), the chairman in 1915.⁸³

About their activities we have even less evidence. We know that they were having an anti-suffrage speaker in April 1914 from the records of the LESA, but no other speaker announcements appear in the papers. The only other evidence of their activities is in the July 1915 *Remonstrance*:

. . . Passengers who leave a subway train at "Harvard" to take a street car for North Cambridge, Arlington, or Upland Road are faced by an attractively lettered sign, which reads:

VOTE "NO" ON WOMAN
SUFFRAGE
LESS THAN 10 PER CENT OF
THE WOMEN WANT IT
DOUBLING THE VOTE MEANS HIGHER TAXES
MASSACHUSETTS HAS BETTER
LAWS THAN ANY SUFFRAGE STATE

⁸¹ (Lexington Equal Suffrage Association 1900-1920, 82)

⁸² (Worthen n.d.)

⁸³ (Branch Committees 1914) (Branch Committees 1915)

THE POLITICAL INTERESTS OF
MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN
ARE SAFE WITH MASSACHUSETTS MEN
WOMAN SUFFRAGE THREATENS
THE HOME
Massachusetts Anti-Suffrage Association
SAFETY FIRST

The first sign is paid for by the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Association; the second by the Cambridge, Arlington, Lexington, and Winchester Branches. Both are signed by two officers of the State Association, in compliance with the law regarding appeals to voters.

Any of the Branches of the Massachusetts Association might well copy and post conspicuously in their neighborhood, during the months previous to the election, either of these signs, or might use any equally compact statement of the anti-suffrage argument. But it should be borne in mind that there must be in every case, in addition to the Association, the names of two individuals.

Every such sign will be a continuing reminder to voters, through the campaign, of the real issues at stake, and will prompt them to “Stand by the Woman” and to seek “Safety First.”⁸⁴

Signage was a very typical activity for a woman’s anti-suffrage organization; its members would not have done anything so unladylike as outdoor speaking or door-to-door canvassing, so this type of sign was the only way they had to make contact with a large number of people.

Finally, in 1916, an article in the *Cambridge Tribune* states that anti-suffragists from Lexington participated in raising money for the Iowa anti-suffrage campaign by a very feminine activity: a bridge party given by the Cambridge Anti-Suffrage Association.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ (Anti-Suffrage Signs 1915)

⁸⁵ (Anti-Suffrage Bridge 1916)

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APPENDIX 1: The Lexington Banner.



Harvard University, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, 20010152_1

This photograph was taken at the 1913 Women's Suffrage Parade in Washington DC. The Lexington Banner that was made by the East Lexington society for the 1887 suffrage bazaar. It is a dark color, probably either a dark blue or crimson, most likely of silk, as that was the most common fabric for banners and flags then, and looks to be surrounded by gold fringe. "Lexington" is diagonal across the center, with "1887" at the top left (the year the society was founded) and probably the seal of the town of Lexington on the lower right. Across the bottom it says "Some Thing Must Be Done."

White Paper 2: Votes For Women, page 35

APPENDIX 2: Members of the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association

Taken from pages 7 to 14 of Lexington Historical Society #7365: Record book of the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association.

Members of the Lexington Equal Suffrage Association

A.W. Stevens
Mary C. Jackson
Hannah McLean Greeley ["deceased" added]
Francis Jackson Garrison
Elizabeth W. Harrington ["deceased" added]
Grace Cook [crossed out] ["withdrawn" added]
Elizabeth E. Stevens ["deceased" added]
Jessie Whiting Gilmore
Mary G. Tufts ["deceased" added]
Margaret Minot Jaimson ["moved away" added]
Theresa Holmes Garrison ["deceased" added]
Harvey H. Putnam [crossed out] ["withdrawn" (Mr & Mrs) added]
Laura Brown Whiting ["Mrs" added]
Marie Clarke Stevens [crossed out] ["withdrawn" added]
Harriet K. Estabrook [crossed out] ["Mrs" added]
Geo. O. Whiting ["deceased" added]
Cordelia Howard Putnam [crossed out] ["Mrs" "moved" added]
James Benton Werner [crossed out] ["moved" added]
Mrs. Sarah W. D. Brown [crossed out] ["deceased" added]
Benj. F. Brown ["Mr & Mrs" added]
Geo S. Jackson ["deceased" added]
Mary Lee Jackson ["Miss" added]
Ellen Wright Garrison [crossed out] ["moved" added]
Wm Lloyd Garrison [crossed out] ["deceased" added]
Charles Garrison ["Mr & Mrs", "moved" added]
Hamish F.H. Carter ["Mrs", "moved" added]
Rebekah G. Robinson [crossed out] ["Mrs", "deceased" added]
Theodora Margaret Robinson ["Miss", "deceased" added]
Theodore Robinson [crossed out] ["deceased" added]
Flora L. Batchelder ["Miss", "moved" added]
Sarah B. Gould ["Miss" added]
Katharine Whitman
Bertha C. Downing ["Pd. Dues.", "moved" added]
Albert Stevens Parsons ["moved" added]
? Parsons ["moved" added]
Harrison Reed ["deceased" added]
Sylvia J? ["deceased" added]
? E. Jackson [notation added]

White Paper 2: Votes For Women, page 36

Marion W. Jackson [~~“Mrs Geo H J”~~ added]
Sarah A Smith [?]
Georgie E. Locke [~~crossed out~~] [~~“withdrawn”~~ added]
Mrs. Amy L. Morse [~~crossed out~~] [~~“Resigned”~~ added]
Mary W. Ferguson [“+ Miss Rich” added]
Fred. S. Piper [~~crossed out~~] [~~“resigned”~~ added]
Grace Judkins Piper [~~crossed out~~]
Ellen ? Tuckerman [~~crossed out~~] [~~“D”~~ added]
Salisbury Tuckerman [~~crossed out~~] [~~“D”~~ added]
Sarah Hays Jacobus [~~crossed out~~]
Helen Tufts [~~crossed out~~]
LW Peaslee
Cornelius Wellington [~~crossed out~~] [~~“deceased”~~ added]
Caroline Wellington [~~“deceased”~~ added]
Eliza Wellington [~~“deceased”~~ added]
L.D Cochran [~~crossed out~~]
James R. Garret [~~crossed out~~]
Hannah J. Garret [~~crossed out~~]
? Ellen E. Dana [~~crossed out~~] [~~“deceased”~~ added]
Mrs. George O Davis

November 1912

Mabel Wing Castle
Florence Annette Wing
William Roger Greeley
Marjory H. Greeley
Nell Cutler Crawford
John Mills Wilson
Helen B. Wilson
Philip G. ?
Howard Triban Crawford
Pearle C. Shragru
Helen E. Muzzey
Barbara Mackinson
Marian P. Kirkland
Vera P. Lane
Edwina M. Hall [~~crossed out~~] [~~“deceased”~~ added]
Sarah Shaw [~~crossed out~~] [~~“deceased”~~ added]
Elizabeth Smith
Sarah Shaw
Charlotte E. Smith
Grace Wing Crockett
Sarah P. ? Greene
Katharine Wiswell

Beulah Locke Sherburne
Gertrude L. Q. Briggs
Agnes H. Roop
Florence L. Wiswell
Alice T. Giles
A.E. Scott
Cecil g. Scott
Anna G. Reuck
Mary E. Woodward
F. Russell Herrick
H.C. Valentine
Lu E. Lusk
Clara ? Barbour
Grace P. French
Ina Foster Cutter
Ida F. Chatfield
Ethel F. Osgood
Alta M. Walker
Carolyn Locke
Nancy C. Holden
Frances R. Eaton
Maizee E. Williams
Elinor H. Castle
Marion E. Pense
Maude Steele Smith
Bertha B. Harris
Bessie O. Martin
Agnes Keechie
Mary S. Piers
Ellen R. Sherburne
Caroline ?. Hol?
Helen Gruff
Marian J. Wrightington
Mina McKellan
Helen ?
Anita ? Pickett
James W. Smith
Julia M. A. Clements
Cleora r. Smith
Sally J. Sherburne
Dorothea Redman
Katherine Whitney
Nina M. Steele
Mary E. O'Connor
Mary E. DeVeau

Eleanor M. Nitchie
Mary A. Culliman
Margaret E. O'Connor
Leander J. Wing
Frank P Cutter
Ernest W. Martin
Amos ? Jones
L. Frances Sturtevant
J? L.C. Henderson
Alie A. Spicer
Mrs. A.J. Bicknell
Mr. A.J. Bicknell
Katherine Brown
Dorothy Wilson
Anna R. Richardson
Helen Woodward
Eugenia V. Brown
Edith L. Stratton
Mabel F. Stratton
Abbie C. Smith
Margaret G. Brown
Abbie M. Simonds
Margaret E. Anders? ?
Maud G. Mitchie
Edith F. Beardsell
Sylvia R. Brown
Sarah B. Smith
Maude W. Kelly
Ada H. Rowse
? M. Kelley
Janet ? Calder
Marion r. Leonard
Louise Whitney
Mrs. M.A. Chandler Atherton
Mrs. Lilian N. Champney
Mrs. Leslie M. Blake
Mary Louise Downer