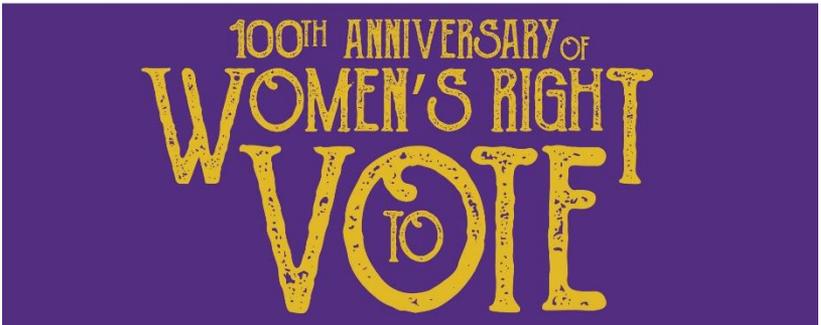

Behind Lady Liberty's Back How the Vote Was Won

*An exhibition of archival materials from Jersey City Free
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Behind Lady Liberty's Back: How the Vote Was Won

The 19th Amendment first and foremost was the splendid capstone of a heroic process of female self-definition and female self-empowerment. It would be a distortion of history to view the success of the woman suffrage movement in narrow technical terms: i.e. changing the hearts and/or minds of a certain number of male politicians.

From the day in 1851, when Dr.Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor awarded a medical degree in the US, saw and treated her first patient in Jersey City; through the day in 1895, when Mary Philbrook of Jersey City, the first woman admitted to the bar in the State of New Jersey, tried her first case here, to the day in 1906, when she became the first New Jersey woman admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States; to March 4, 1925, when Mary Norton of Jersey City was sworn in as a member of the 69th Congress, the first woman elected to represent New Jersey; the women of this city have asserted themselves in every constructive field of human endeavor.

Our exhibit tells some of their stories.

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Metropolitan AME Zion Church & Florence Sterling Randolph

Metropolitan AME Zion Church is the oldest Afro-American congregation in Jersey City (1846). Today, re-named Metropolitan AME Zion Church, it continues at the corner of Bergen and Belmont Avenues, in the Journal Square area. Shortly before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., gave one of his last public addresses there.

Florence Sterling Randolph (1866-1951), a dressmaker, came north from Charlestown, S.C. Jersey City offered Randolph better opportunities to ply her trade. Here, Randolph became a successful businesswoman, managing a shop with two dressmakers and five girl assistants. She joined St. Mark's and became a Sunday school teacher, and a youth class leader. She was committed, too, like many others in the woman suffrage movement, to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

But Randolph felt called by God to preach and in 1897, she sought the requisite denominational license. Her efforts were powerfully aided by two other extraordinary AMEZ Church people resident in Jersey City: Julia A.J. Foote, an evangelist who travelled throughout the country exhorting congregations black and white, and Bishop Alexander Walters, Pastor of Mother Zion Church in Harlem, and one of the founders of the NAACP.

Ordained deacon in 1900 and elder in 1903, Randolph pastored five churches in New Jersey and New York.; each and every one a hardship assignment. Yet, her spiritual gifts, administrative ability, and business acumen always turned the tide. However, victory meant giving her carefully tended, watered, and weeded garden, to a male successor, and starting the struggle all over again elsewhere.

Nevertheless, amazingly, Randolph made time for extensive activity in the wider community. In 1915, Randolph established the New Jersey State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs; which, by 1917, had 85 affiliated clubs. In that same year, the NJFCWC allied with the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association, on the Executive Board of which Randolph sat

The De Hart Equal Suffrage League

The beginning of Jersey City's association with the struggle for woman's suffrage is closely linked to two brief but significant periods of connection with a remarkable English family: the Blackwells. Samuel and his family lived in Jersey City from 1835-1838. He was a staunch abolitionist and a firm believer in the equality of the sexes. Samuel wrote for William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*.

Now, Samuel had a number of children; the three of interest to us are Elizabeth, Samuel Charles, and Henry B. Elizabeth became the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States and the place she started her practice in 1851 was Jersey City.

Her brother, Samuel Charles, married Antoinette Brown, the first woman ordained a minister in a mainstream Protestant church, who in 1867 helped found the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association. Brother Henry B. married Lucy Stone, who in the same year, addressed the New Jersey Legislature on the subject of "Woman Suffrage in New Jersey."

In 1904, the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association held its state convention at the recently erected Jersey City Free Public Library on Jersey Avenue, a handsome, beaux arts, Brite and Bacon building, expressive of city beautiful movement pride. Among those on hand to welcome the convention were Dr. Medina F. De Hart, president of the Political Study Club; Cornelia F. Bradford, headworker of Whittier House; and Mrs. Spencer Wiart, president of the Jersey City Woman's Club.

Dr. DeHart was an 1868 graduate of the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women. She was an inspiration and role model for her sister-in-law and daughters, all of whom followed her into the medical profession. She served over a number of years on the Executive Board of the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace (CSJP) and Margaret Anna Cusack

Perhaps, no one in the history of Jersey City can match Margaret Anna Cusack in the range of her accomplishments. The Cusack arrived in Jersey City in 1885 had written scores of books, across many genres, that had sold copies in the hundreds of thousands. She had been the friend of Edward Bouverie Pusey and met privately with the Pope. She came to America with the highest hopes for the usefulness of her order.

What brought Cusack to this country? She had an errand to undertake, to use the language of the Rev. Samuel Danforth, not in the howling natural wilderness that had confronted the Puritans, but in the man-made wilderness of urban America. She had become intensely interested in the fate of young Irish women forced to immigrate because of the baleful effects of landlordism -- underdevelopment, underemployment, and general impoverishment.

In Jersey City, she set up group homes for these women, extremely vulnerable as they were to exploitation of all kinds, where they could live safe and healthy lives, and be assisted in obtaining humane employment. Her concern widened to include indigent, abused, and homeless girls; orphans; the elderly; and the blind. Cusack's fame, gifts, ambitious plans for CSJP, independence of mind, and success, did not endear her to the Catholic male hierarchy in the United States. In Ireland, she had made common cause with the Irish National Land League against perpetual tenancy; in America, she sided with the single-tax Georgists against unearned profit. The Catholic episcopate tended to equate the latter position with an opposition to private property that conflicted with Catholic teaching.

The powerful Archbishop of New York, Michael Corrigan, told her he never wished to see her again; while the previously friendly Bishop of Newark, Winand Wigger, restricted admissions to her order.

Today, Margaret Anna Cusack lies, not in the Ireland of her ancestors, or in Jersey City, where St. Mary's Residence, Peace St. Ann's, Peace St. Joseph's, and St. Joseph's School for the Blind, are her living memorials, but in Warwickshire, at Royal Leamington Spa, in that part of its cemetery reserved for members of the Church of England.

A Harry Moore School & Dr. Margaret Sullivan Herbermann

The great Progressive Mayor of Jersey City, Mark Fagan, appointed Dr. Herbermann to the Jersey City Board of Education in 1915, the second woman so appointed. Though Fagan was nine years her senior and a man with little formal education, they had much in common. Each was a second-generation Roman Catholic Irish-American; each was a Progressive -- Herbermann a Progressive Democrat and Fagan a Progressive Republican; each was completely dedicated to increasing educational opportunities for all the children of Jersey City. Herbermann, during her years on the board, would fight to raise the abysmally low salaries of teachers; teaching, be it remembered, being a largely feminine profession.

A year before, Herbermann had been appointed the first woman surgeon at the Jersey City Hospital (later Jersey City Medical Center and presently Jersey City Medical Center/RWJ Barnabas Health). Herbermann was a forward looking doctor with a holistic approach to medical care in which the patient's environment, life-style, and diet, were seen as crucial in preventing and treating sickness and disease. For example, in her expert medical opinion, she held that better designed and better built housing for the poor would contribute substantially to their overall good health. A true Progressive as to means as well as ends, her solution was carefully drafted housing codes scrupulously and vigorously enforced. She engaged successfully in the political process to bring this result about.

Dr. Herbermann was especially interested in the education of disabled children, whose educations were generally neglected because of the lack of schools equipped to meet their special needs. A practical idealist, she sought and achieved the necessary changes in the law, and then was instrumental in establishing the Clifton Place School for Crippled Children (now A. Harry Moore School). Opened on April 18, 1921, it was at that time unique in the nation in conception, equipment, and staff.

Why A. Harry Moore School? Why not Dr. Margaret Sullivan Herbermann School? Dr. Herbermann refused to knuckle under to Mayor Frank Hague's meddling in the running of the school in the key matter of medical appointments. So, the school was named after Hague's friend rather than the woman whose vision and work were chiefly responsible for its existence.

Whittier House & Cornelia F. Bradford

Bradford was in her forties before she found her groove, and it was Jersey City that provided the opportunity. Downtown, actually. Not the upbeat, upscale Downtown of today, but the old First Ward of the late nineteenth century -- at 174-178 Grand Street.

Daughter of a reform-minded minister, who was a conductor on the Underground Railroad and a suffragist, Bradford was a second-generation suffragist.

On her travels, Bradford visited settlement houses in England -- liminal spaces physically, psychologically, and socially, where members of the conscience-stricken classes lived for a time and rubbed shoulders with the deprived masses, doing what we now call social work. She also made friends there, including J. Ramsay McDonald, who visited and stayed with her at Whittier House a couple of times, before he became the UK's first Labour PM.

Back in America, Bradford chose a particularly miserable and grey part of Jersey City as the location for her settlement house. She named it in honor of another friend, the optimistic and humanitarian poet, John Greenleaf Whittier.

In 1894, it was a neighborhood of mostly Slavic new immigrants employed on the docks, and in soap, tobacco, and sugar factories, and mills. They had nothing and needed everything.

Ironically, Whittier House's home was an old mansion built in 1862 by an earlier mayor of Jersey City. In thirty odd years, it went from mansion to settlement house -- a comment on the rapid clip of socioeconomic change in Jersey City and similar American cities in that period.

Bradford initially relied on financial help from her minister brother's wealthy congregation in Montclair, but expanded her fundraising efforts.

As a result, programs and facilities of all kinds were created and furnished: a dispensary; legal services (Mary Philbrook, the first woman admitted to the bar in NJ, was a resident for a time of the community); clubs; a library; a gymnasium; a playground (the first in JC); a kindergarten (the first in JC); classes; lectures; research projects to investigate and disseminate information on conditions in the

neighborhood; a summer camp; advocacy of anti-child-labor and tenement house regulatory laws; etc.

Her and Whittier House's contributions and achievements were recognized; H. Otto Wittpenn appointed her to serve on the Board of Education of the City of Jersey City, the first woman to do so.

As headworker, Bradford's views evolved. Starting with a "separate but equal" position in regard to race relations, she progressed to an integrationist point-of-view. On the other hand, starting with culturally pluralistic, trans-national ideas, along the lines of Horace Kallen's and Randolph Bourne's thinking, under the pressures of WWI, she became more of a "citizenizer," i.e. an Americanizer, i.e. an "Anglo-Saxonizer."



Cornelia Bradford

Clubland

Women in Jersey City, especially middle and upper middle class women, in the era stretching from the 'sixties of the nineteenth-century through the 'thirties of the last century, had an incredibly thick associational life. Pre-Radio, Pre-TV, and Pre-Internet, women placed the greatest value on personal relationships.

Women were founders, joiners, and leaders of groups created for every conceivable purpose -- including, of course, woman suffrage and equal rights. Memberships repeatedly overlapped and there were circles within circles -- one big endlessly expanding Venn diagram. All we can do here is hold up a small number of the most interesting women and organizations as well as a mere fraction of the innumerable crossing and crisscrossing relationships.

The Aesthetic Society was started in 1879 by Erminnie Adele Platt Smith and was effectively a Jersey City, European-style salon. Sumptuous, multi-course, culinary creative suppers were prepared and elegantly served. Speakers included Matthew Arnold and Oscar Wilde. All this on Pacific Avenue in Bergen-Lafayette! Erminnie knew Europe well. She had lived and studied in Germany for years. In philosophy, science, and theology, Germany was the Athens of the day, the center of the more advanced, critical higher studies.

A geologist (her large collection of minerals and rocks was one of the largest and most complete in the country, rivaling and surpassing those of most institutions of advanced learning) and pioneer anthropologist -- her book, *Myths of the Iroquois* (1883), remains in print.

In addition, she was a strong suffragist.

Dr. Medina DeHart, namesake of the DeHart Equal Suffrage League, was a member or daughter, as a member was more properly and particularly styled, of the society. (She was also a member of the Jersey City Woman's Club, about which more lately.)

The Rev. Phoebe Ann Coffin Hanaford, was another daughter of the society and another strong suffragist. Hanaford came to Jersey City as the pastor of the First Universalist Church of Jersey City. She and her husband had parted ways years before. Hanaford later met and lived with another woman, in a relationship that was to endure for more than forty years. She came to Jersey City with her friend. But it fell out that a majority of her new congregants came to object to the influence

exercised on congregational life by her friend, who served as the Sunday School teacher, and whom some referred to derisively as the minister's "husband." After leaving First Universalist, she literally went down the street and founded Second Universalist. An effective and popular preacher, Hanaford regularly drew crowds and Second Universalist flourished. A best-selling author as well, Hanaford wrote, *Daughters of America* (1883), in which Dr. Medina DeHart is favorably mentioned. Rev. Hanaford, like Erminnie Smith, was a member of the Sorosis Club (1868) of New York City, America's first professional women's club.

Cecilia Gaines (Holland), another daughter of the Aesthetic Society and another strong suffragist, founded Odd Volumes in 1887, a book club and discussion group that still continues to meet today. In 1894, she became the first president of the Jersey City Woman's Club (Mary Philbrook and Cornelia F. Bradford were members, too). Gaines and other women suffragists successfully lobbied the legislature in Trenton to pass a law permitting women to become attorneys. Philbrook became the first woman admitted to the bar in New Jersey. As a lawyer, Philbrook provided free legal services to the poor at Bradford's Whittier House.

Philbrook worked closely with one of Gaines' successors as president of the Jersey City Woman's Club, Mabel Smith Douglass, to establish a women's college in New Jersey. In 1918, the New Jersey College for Women became a reality with Mabel Smith Douglass as its first dean. In 1955, the college was renamed in her honor.





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